Man Proposes:
Imaginary Northwest Passages and the British Fur Trade

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A thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Doctorate in Philosophy degree in History

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ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes that the Northwest Passage is better understood as a dynamic, socially constructed cultural artefact than it is as a static fact of geography. As an object of the imagination, the meaning of the Passage naturally changed over time as those who did the imagining also changed. The ways in which the Passage was understood in public conversations and speculations, and the ways in which its explorers pictured their task and conducted themselves, therefore, changed dramatically over time. Furthermore, it argues that the study of these changes can be used to help illustrate certain changes and movements that took place within the cultures that sought after the Passage.

To pursue such a study, this thesis refers to a number of case studies from the history of the British fur trade during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – most often with reference to the Hudson's Bay Company, but also to a small number of other outfits. Fur traders launched a plethora of their own expeditions, interacted with a number of visiting explorers, and actively took part in the public debates that negotiated its changing cultural contours. In these actions they demonstrated the waxing and waning of each of the most important meanings of and motivations for pursuing the Passage, while remaining always situated within the confines of a shared history, setting, and fundamental purpose that makes effective comparisons possible. Through the actions of individuals working in the fur trade, this paper therefore demonstrates the ways in which the Passage was transformed in the public mind from a potential boon for private commerce, to a "nationalized" object intended for the public benefit, to a destination in which prestige-making science could be conducted, and to a site of emotionally-defined Romantic adventure, before finally losing its ability to serve as a tabula rasa upon which Britain could write its cultural dreams as its final contours were mapped.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people made this dissertation possible. Some of them – the many kind, patient, unknown people who helped me to navigate and understand the libraries, archives, conference halls, websites, seminar rooms, airports and train stations that my research brought me to and through – made fleeting positive impacts on my life and work that, cumulatively, I could never have succeeded without. Others made special contributions that I would like to thank specifically.

This dissertation would not be possible without the work of my supervisor Nicole St-Onge. Thank you for your patience, experience, and wisdom, and for your generous funding of my journey to Churchill, where I looked out over the Bay as so many people in this story did before me. In broader terms, my life as I know it – living on the opposite side of the world with a loving partner and fulfilling days of work and play – would simply not have come to pass if you hadn't taken a chance on a student contacting you out of the blue from 5,000 kilometres away. Thanks for answering that email.

Academically, I would also like to thank Galen Perras and Heather Murray, who guided me through my two other doctoral fields at uOttawa and offered their help and advice when it came time for me to design the syllabus of my own undergraduate course, and the Faculty at Arts at large for their generous funding of my work and travels. Casting a wider net, I also offer my gratitude to James Campbell at the University of Leicester for his supportive supervision of my Masters dissertation, in which I entered the world of the Northwest Passage for the first time, and to everyone who discussed my ongoing work with me as it was presented at the Canadian Historical Association, Britain and the World, and Pierre Savard conferences.

To my family – my parents Helen and Ian, my brother Miles, and my dog Rocky – thank you for your support and for taking the news that I would be moving halfway across the world to stare intently at old books with remarkable grace. To my friends on both sides of the Atlantic, thank you sincerely for all the moments of levity between the work. Finally, to Kel. To have pursued, achieved, and persevered through everything that you have over the last four years while also never once failing to find time to help me is a remarkable feat for which I will always be grateful. I love you.

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List of Abbreviations

BL:	British Library, London.
DRO:	Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock.
HBC:	Hudson's Bay Company.
HBCA:	Hudson Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg.
KGSC:	King George's Sound Company.
LAC:	Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.
NA:	National Archives, Kew.
NWC:	North West Company.
PRONI:	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast.
RAC:	Russian-American Company.
SPRI:	Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge.

INTRODUCTION

'The Discovery of a NW Passage, has been a favourite Object of Pursuit, from the remotest period of our Navigations; but the early idea of such a Passage has been much misconceived, for it did not mean what has been in modern Times understood by the NW Passage.'

– Alexander Dalrymple, 1789.[1]

GOLD, COAL, LUCIFER, AND SPREADSHEETS

Martin Frobisher set out from Blackwall on 7 June 1576. He was bound for the North Atlantic, and beyond that, he hoped 'the discouerie of the passage to Cataya and the East India'.[2] Such a passage, wrote Humphrey Gilbert that same year, would certainly help British merchants to 'to possesse y^{e} welth of all the Easte parts of the worlde, which is infinite… for through the shortnesse of the voyage, we should be able to sell all maner of Merchandize, brought from thence, far better cheape, then either the *Portingal*, or *Spaniarde*', both of whom would have to take the long and dangerous route around the tip of South America.[3] Five centuries later, on 9 October 2013, the MS *Nordic Orion* arrived at the Port of Pori, Finland, with a shipment of 73,500 tons of coking coal delivered from Vancouver, Canada.[4] By making this journey through the Northwest Passage, rather than following the standard route through the Panama Canal, her operators Nordic Bulk Carriers had shortened her voyage by 1,000 nautical miles and thereby saved $80,000 in fuel costs.

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[1] Alexander Dalrymple, *Plan for Promoting the Fur Trade, and Securing It to This Country, by Uniting the Operations of the East-India and Hudson's-Bay Companys* (London: George Bigg, 1789), 1.
[2] George Best, *A True Discourse of the Late Voyages of Discouerie, for the Finding of a Passage to Cathaya, by the Northweast, Vnder the Conduct of Martin Frobisher Generall...* (London: Henry Bynnyman, 1578), 1.
[3] Humphrey Gilbert, *A Discourse of a Discouerie for a New Passage to Cataia* (London: Henry Middleton, 1576), [page unnumbered].
[4] David L. VanderZwaag, 'Climate Change and the Shifting International Law and Policy Seascape for Arctic Shipping', in *Climate Change Impacts on Ocean and Coastal Law: U.S. and International Perspectives*, ed. Robin Kundis Craig and Randall S. Abate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 300.

The Northwest Passage, one might conclude, was and is a convenient shipping lane. Commercially minded people had searched in hope for a commercial shortcut and, eventually, they had found one. The mission, so to speak, had been accomplished.

Except… *the* mission? Far from being such a static concept, "the" Northwest Passage took on a wide range of differing meanings for those who sought it across a range of time periods. The ways in which Frobisher understood his task, or even fundamentally what he understood that task to be, differed significantly from the equivalent understandings of the executives of Nordic Bulk Carriers. Frobisher, for example, lived at a time when the belief was widespread that demons had a material presence on the Earth and were responsible for such phenomena as droughts, crop failures, and storms. The far north, where such phenomena were abundant, was popularly understood as the Earthly centre of power for Lucifer, to quote Frobisher's contemporary William Shakespeare, 'the lordly monarch of the north'.[5] Similarly, Gerardus Mercator's 1569 map of the world, referred to by the Frobisher expedition, by presenting the North Pole as a space divided by four rivers 'running violently and delivering themselves into a monstrous receptacle and swallowing sincke', invoked the image of hell's analogue Hades, a land of mist and gloom separated from our normal world by the rivers Styx, Acheron, Lethe, Phlegethon and Eridanos.[6] This would have had an enormous impact on Frobisher's conception of his task. As Colleen Franklin explains, 'unarmed with scientific method or an aesthetics of landscape that could provide them with an alternative mode for representing this entirely unfamiliar region', Frobisher and his

[5] Colleen Franklin, 'An Habitation of Devils, a Domicill for Unclean Spirits, and a Den of Goblings', in *The Mysterious and the Foreign in Early Modern England*, ed. Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 27–28; William Shakespeare, *King Henry VI, the First Part* (London, 1591), Act 5, Scene 3.

[6] Sophie Lemercier-Goddard, 'George Best's Arctic Mirrors: A True Discourse of the Late Voyages of Discoverie … of Martin Frobisher (1578)', in *The Quest for the Northwest Passage: Knowledge, Nation and Empire, 1576-1806*, ed. Frédéric Regard (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 58–59; The quotation from the Frobisher expedition comes from Best, *A True Discourse of the Late Voyages of Discouerie*, 34.

peers 'were forced to negotiate with… medieval structures of belief'.[7] Dionyse Settle, a chronicler of Frobisher's expeditions, for example, reported an episode in which the expedition captured 'an olde wretch, whom divers of our Saylers supposed to be eyther a divell, or a witch'.[8] It is unlikely that those accompanying the *Nordic Orion*'s payload of coking coal saw themselves as enacting 'God's will and pleasure' in any such similar manner.[9] Likewise, the target awaiting Frobisher on the other side of the Passage, as he imagined it, was the fantastical, mysterious, unfathomably rich Orient, one of the most famous culturally constructed geographies of them all.[10] By contrast, exact, complex economics took the *Nordic Orion* from Canada to Finland. Its trade was deeply embedded in an interconnected web of globalized commerce, a far cry from the competitive zero-sum game invoked by sixteenth century Passage provocateurs in their references to Spain or Portugal, or indeed France and the Netherlands. Its arrival also had obvious implications in conversations regarding climate change and the disappearance of the polar ice caps – concepts anathema to the very foundations of the way that the Northwest Passage had been understood for centuries.[11] To suppose, then, that Frobisher and Nordic Bulk Carriers – despite any number of invocations of phrases like "the quest for the Northwest Passage" – were somehow peers engaged in the same, continuing endeavour is facile at best. Their Northwest Passages operated on different assumptions, promised different prizes, and invoked different conversations. The same can be said

[7] Franklin, 'An Habitation of Devils, a Domicill for Unclean Spirits, and a Den of Goblings', 27; See also Shane McCorristine, *Spectral Arctic: A History of Dreams and Ghosts in Polar Exploration* (London: UCL Press, 2018).
[8] Dionyse Settle, *A True Reporte of the Laste Voyage into the West and Northwest Regions, &c. 1577. Worthily Atchieued by Capteine Frobisher of the Sayde Voyage the First Finder and Generall. With a Description of the People There Inhabiting, and Other Circumstances Notable* (London: Henrie Middleton, 1577), 35.
[9] Ibid., 10.
[10] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
[11] For examples of such conversation, see V. C. Khon et al., 'Perspectives of Northern Sea Route and Northwest Passage in the Twenty-First Century', *Climatic Change* 100, no. 3–4 (June 2010): 757–68; VanderZwaag, 'Climate Change and the Shifting International Law and Policy Seascape for Arctic Shipping'; Daniel Stein, 'Protecting the Arctic Environment from Northwest Passage Shipping in the Era of Climate Change', *Tulane Environmental Law Journal* 32, no. 2 (2019 2018): 239–56.

many times over for all those who pursued or wrote about the Northwest Passage in the five centuries between them.

THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE AS CULTURAL ARTEFACT

This dissertation, therefore, proposes that the Northwest Passage is better understood as a dynamic, socially constructed cultural artefact than it is as a static fact of geography. As a location largely unknown to those who discussed it for most of its history, conversations regarding the Passage bore little relationship to the ways in which other geographies – the path of the River Thames or the height of Ben Nevis – were discussed.[12] If the wilderness, in the words of Ian MacLaren, was 'constructed as much as witnessed, refined as much as recorded, and [often] by people who did not experience it', then it seems much more appropriate to treat the Northwest Passage – one of the most enduring wildernesses of them all – not as a place, but as an idea.[13] As object of the imagination, the meaning of the Passage naturally changed over time as those who did the imagining also changed. These changes can be seen in the differing ways in which the Passage was discussed in public conversations and speculations, and the ways in which its explorers pictured their task and conducted themselves. It is my primary intent to trace these changes.

Furthermore, I propose that by studying these changes in the ways that the Northwest Passage was understood we can help illustrate certain changes and movements that took place within the cultures that sought after it. In other words, cultural currents in the metropole can be seen reflected in the dreams that were projected on to the Northwest Passage. As Robert McGhee

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[12] 'The stakes in the visual depiction of the Arctic have always been different from those for nearly any other place on earth', Russell A. Potter, *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 3.

[13] I. S. MacLaren, 'From Exploration to Publication: The Evolution of a 19th-Century Arctic Narrative', *Arctic* 47, no. 1 (1994): 47.

argues in *The Last Imaginary Place*, the Arctic as pictured today is an amalgamation that holds within it the influences of imaginings from centuries of exploration.[14] In a hauntological sense, then, the waterways and literature of the Passage are haunted not only by such literal things as 'weathered, broken bones and a long-forgotten lonely cairn of stones', but also by the dreams, ambitions, and concerns of past eras.[15] To examine the history of the Northwest Passage, then, is to study a number of significant episodes from the cultural history of Britain itself.

The Passage serves this function so well partially for the simple fact of how long it endured. The history of its exploration encompassed a remarkable number of changes in European culture. The very epistemological foundations of exploration – what it means to have explored and to explore – changed during the lifetime of the Northwest Passage. Equivalent imaginary geographies, such as Terra Australis or El Dorado, as obvious targets for the imperial extraction of resources, were more swiftly actualized or disproven by the waves of interest that they induced. The Northwest Passage – remote, dangerous, and lacking in obvious natural resources – could remain for far longer in the worlds of imagination rather than fact. It goes without saying that it is harder for a known, mapped, or colonized location to serve as an empty vessel to be filled up with the dreams of culture than it is an unknown region.[16] Indeed, when the Northwest Passage finally did slip away as a relevant cultural touchstone and worthy object of expense in the late nineteenth century, it did so because its geography had finally been comprehensively mapped, and when it

[14] Robert McGhee, *The Last Imaginary Place: A Human History of the Arctic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[15] Stan Rogers, *Northwest Passage* (Fogarty's Cove Music, 1981); The concept of hantology – the study of the return or persistence of ideas from the cultural past - began with Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: L'état de La Dette, Le Travail Du Deuil et La Nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1993) and has since been applied to sociology, anthropology, and literary and music criticism.
[16] To quote another historian: 'blank space, like blank paper, can be scribbled over with the wishes of the onlooker', Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (London: Faber, 1996), 58.

returned to public conversation in the wake of climate change it did so because the known bounds of its geography had become destabilized.[17]

Furthermore, it argues that a case study history of the British fur trade during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – most often with reference to the Hudson's Bay Company, but also to a small number of other outfits – can provide an efficient window into this history, which might otherwise prove too unwieldy for the bounds of one study. Following the founding of the HBC, which was done with one eye on 'the Discovery of a new Passage into the South Sea', fur traders engaged in a plethora of exploratory endeavours concerned with the Passage, interacted with a number of visiting explorers seeking it for other masters, and actively took part in the public debates that negotiated its changing cultural contours.[18] Fur traders, in these actions, demonstrated the waxing and waning of each of the most important meanings of and motivations for pursuing the Passage, while remaining always situated within the confines of a shared history, setting, and fundamental purpose that makes effective comparisons possible. Furthermore, the fact that fur traders so frequently elected to engage in such activities and conversations for their own benefit helps prove how potent the Passage and the cultural movements it reflected were in the British imagination. It could also be argued that, with their longer-term commitment to the geography involved, as compared for example to the fleeting visits of a James Cook or John Franklin, fur traders were more greatly impacted, and therefore invested, by changes in the meaning of the Passage. The choice of the fur trade as the lens through which to study Northwest Passage also

[17] See the Conclusion for a discussion of the way that the HBC, Admiralty, and British press alike were quite contented to leave behind Northwest Passage expeditions at this time.

[18] Hudson's Bay Company, *Charter and Supplemental Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company* (London: J. Causton, 1884), 4; 'There was thereby interwoven into the evolving fabric of commercial transcontintentalism, represented by the Hudson's Bay Company through its charter, a continuing thread of that older and larger geographical strategy, the search for a shorter, more economical, and hopefully safer water passage around the north of... the American continent', Richard Ruggles, 'British Exploration of Rupert's Land', in *North American Exploration, Vol. 2: A Continent Defined*, ed. John Logan Allen (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 206.

offers perhaps the best opportunity to note the ways in which its pursuit was impacted by the interplay of the whims of individuals and the needs of institutions.

Methodology and Sources

In pursuing my analysis of the changing values of a particular group – that is, fur traders interested in exploration – at particular times, my most important point of reference is naturally the methodologies of cultural history, with its interests in representation and struggles over meaning.[19] It could also be considered a work of intellectual history or "the history of ideas", as its primary purpose is to unravel the history of the ways in which people conceptualized and discussed a central idea, namely the idea of the Northwest Passage.[20] Additionally, my work draws upon the theories of aggregate authorship, of which there is a robust recent tradition, when discussing the literature produced by those involved in the search.[21] By understanding that such documents bear the indelible stamps not only of institutional influence but also the assumptions, values, and priorities of their time and peers rather than simply representing the thoughts of one individual – or worse, a simple empirical recounting of facts – the historian can learn far more about the ways in which these documents not only reflected the Arctic imagery of their time but also helped construct such imagery. Each of my chapters also ground themselves in the biographies of certain individuals, who serve as both avatars for the attitudes of their times and as ways of drawing other important figures and examples. The chapters proceed chronologically from one another, as I believe that this is the best way to demonstrate evolutions and changes. Finally, small amounts of

[19] For a comprehensive explanation of these methods see Peter Burke, *What Is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).
[20] See the introduction to Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 3–23 for a mission statement regarding the parameters and operations of intellectual history.
[21] More details on this body of work can be found in the Historiography section of this Introduction.

economic history, deployed during the chapters in which the Passage was viewed as a fundamentally commercial entity, and literary analysis, used when discussing representations of the Passage in popular culture, are deployed.

My methodological choice to engage with exploration and geography as fundamentally cultural issues owes a debt to John L. Allen's theoretical chapter "Lands of Myth, Waters of Wonder: The Place of the Imagination in the History of Geographical Exploration", in which he proposed that 'the process of exploration is conditioned by the imagination, and thus the study of exploration should focus on imagination's influence'.[22] As Allen explained, imagination exerted influence over every aspect of exploration:

> When exploration is viewed as a process rather than as a series of distinct events, its major components – establishment of objectives, performance of operations to implement them, and the consequences of the operations – are clearly related to the imagination. No exploratory venture begins without objectives based on the imagined nature and content of the lands to be explored. Imagination becomes a behavioral factor in geographical discovery as courses of action are laid out according to preconceived images; later decisions based on field observations may be distorted by these images. The results of exploration are modified by reports written and interpreted in the light of persistent illusions and by attempts made to fit new information into partly erroneous systems and frameworks of geographical understanding.[23]

Therefore, he suggested, imagination should be the central concern for the historian of exploration. This framing both serves as the key to unlocking more nuanced understandings of exploration and allows the historian to use exploration to gesture at wider conclusions regarding culture at large. This is, in many ways, the bedrock upon which this study of the Northwest Passage is built.

In pursuing such a study, I engage very infrequently in the recounting of exploratory progress in the field. The perception and production of exploration is considered to be much more

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[22] John L. Allen, 'Lands of Myth, Waters of Wonder: The Place of the Imagination in the History of Geographical Exploration', in *Geographies of the Mind*, ed. D. Lowenthal and M. Bowden (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 58.
[23] Ibid., 43.

revealing than the actual exploration itself. Which channel an explorer passed through, who he encountered there, and how cold it was – these are viewed largely as tangential questions. When such information appears in my text, it always does so in service of the broader question of how the explorer understood his mission, rather than because I consider its telling to be a worthy endeavour in and of itself.

One of the foremost benefits of choosing to approach such a study through the lens of the British fur trade is the bounty of historical documentation it produced. As a considerable proportion of the business of fur trading took place thousands of miles from its administrative headquarters – for the HBC, KGSC, and the other late eighteenth century sea otter-based enterprises travelling to the Pacific Coast of North America, this was London, and for the NWC it was Montreal – the careful keeping of standardized records was essential to operations. As early as 1671, the HBC mandated record keeping, such as the preservation of financial ledgers, meeting minutes, official instructions, and correspondence, and from 1683 its factors in North America were required to maintain journals of occurrences at their posts.[24] Some traders, such as James Knight, the central character of this dissertation's first chapter, held idiosyncratic relationships with their official journals and confided extraordinary amounts of personal feeling to such journals. From the early eighteenth century onwards, yearly reports from each factor regarding the activities, objectives, and accomplishments of their station were also addressed to the HBC's ruling London Committee.[25] As opposed to the complex transatlantic reciprocal networks of correspondence described for example in the works of Bernhard Siegert and Caroline Winterer, in which mutually

[24] HBCA A.1/1, ff. 11-14, Governor and Committee Minutes, 7 November 1671; HBCA A.6/1, f. 28, Instructions for Henry Sergeant Esqr, 27 April 1683. For more information, see Deidre Simmons, *Keepers of the Record: The History of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2007).
[25] The London Committee is often referred to simply as "the Committee" in this dissertation.

constructive information and ideas travelled between metropolises and colonial outposts, the HBC, particularly in the eighteenth century, was a relatively simple network, in which communication travelled in discrete hierarchical directions and in many important cases only on an annual basis as prescribed by the Company's supply ship schedule.[26] Furthermore, factors were incentivised to report in detail their accomplishments, which of course included matters of exploration. As Bruce Greenfield explains: 'It was through written communications that traders and clerks and bayside governors registered their service to the company, and asserted their claims for recognition and reward. A job well done needed to be well described in order for it to be fully present to and appreciated by readers in London'.[27] The relative mundanity of day-to-day operations at a fur trading post also ensured that when something interesting, such as exploration, occurred, it was sure to be recorded.[28] Such a culture of clear, voluminous, eager, and verbose record keeping and communication ensured that, despite some inevitable losses to the ravishes of time, a veritable treasure trove of preserved documentation exists from which I can draw, across the breadth of my time period. This forms the bedrock of my research, particularly in my earlier chapters.

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[26] Adriana Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster: Authorship and Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 172; Bernhard Siegert, *Relays: Literature as an Epoch of the Postal System* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Caroline Winterer, *American Enlightenments: Pursuing Happiness in the Age of Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

[27] Bruce Greenfield, '"Now Reader Read": The Literary Ambitions of Henry Kelsey, Hudson's Bay Company Clerk', *Early American Literature* 47, no. 1 (2012): 35.

[28] 'Life at the fur-posts was at times almost unbearably lonesome and monotonous. For months no new faces were to be seen, the same scenes, the same ceaseless, changeless round of duty stared in the face day after day without variation or change. No wonder the arrival of a stranger was hailed with so much pleasure', Clarence A. Vandiveer, *The Fur-Trade and Early Western Exploration* (Cleveland: Clark, 1929), 286; Regarding the mundanity of daily life in the HBC, James Hargrave wrote: 'I can as usual say little of myself. I perform the same duties, write at the same desk, lodge in the same room as I have done for these 5 years past. Time rolls round & brings me back every season the same faces to transact the same business which occupied the last, and so our years slip by. From such a quiet & unvaried round nothing can be drawn worth relating'. James Hargrave to John Hargrave, 2 July 1832, James Hargrave, *Letters from Rupert's Land, 1826-1840: James Hargrave of the Hudson's Bay Company*, ed. Helen E. Ross (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 219.

The majority of this material – that produced and preserved by the HBC and NWC – is accessible through the Hudson's Bay Company Archive in Winnipeg, or through microfilm scans at Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. Other important sources reside in a smattering of other archives. The documentation of the King George's Sound Company, which provides both an important example of the ways in which the emergence of Baconian science affected the search for the Northwest Passage and a valuable point of comparison to the HBC, is kept in the British Library. Records pertinent to the production and operation of exploration led by the British Admiralty in the first half of the nineteenth century, some of which the HBC played host to, are held at the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge University, the National Archives (Kew), and the Derbyshire Record Office. Letters from the life and career of Arthur Dobbs are held at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Select portions of relevant archival material, such as the journals of George Simpson, tranches of HBC Committee correspondence, and the letters of John Rae, have been compiled into collected volumes, most frequently by the Hudson's Bay Record Society and the Hakluyt Society.[29] When I have drawn information or quotations from such volumes my citations will reflect that fact, but otherwise I will cite to the relevant archival listings.

Other important sources of information for this study come from historical publications intended for public consumption rather than internal use. The importance of such sources increases as the dissertation progresses through time, in parallel to the growth of the reading public in Britain. These texts – exploratory narratives, manifestos, pamphlets, press releases – reveal not only the activities of those involved, but also the ways in which these activities were shaped by expectations

[29] George Simpson, *Journal of Occurrences in the Athabasca Department, by George Simpson, 1820 and 1821, and Report*, ed. E. E. Rich (London: Champlain Society, 2013); E. E. Rich and Alice M. Johnson, eds., *Hudson's Bay Copy Booke of Letters, Commissions, Instructions Outward, 1688-1696* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1957); John Rae, *John Rae's Correspondence with the Hudson's Bay Company on Arctic Exploration, 1844-1855*, ed. E. E. Rich (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1953).

regarding public responses and what this can tell us about evolutions in culture. As Charles Batten explains, 'generic convention, not personal taste, dictates to a great extent what a traveler says'.[30] When authorship of such sources is understood as the expression of a combination of personal, institutional, and cultural forces, they can prove particularly revealing to a work that combines cultural and institutional history such as this.[31] The HBC, after being stuck stringently to a policy of almost absolute secrecy in its earlier years, entered the world of public communication in the mid-eighteenth century specifically over the issue of the Northwest Passage, as discussed in Chapter Three. As Arctic exploration increasingly became more valuable to the fur trade for its value in the intangible currency of reputation rather than on commercial terms, so did the frequency with which it publicized its involvement. One particularly noteworthy example of this was Geroge Simpson's efforts, explored in Chapter Five, to produce a bestselling adventure story to rival those of John Franklin or William Edward Parry out of the explorations of Thomas Simpson and Peter Warren Dease, a process with considerable implications for the way in which the role and value of the explorer had changed in British culture. To properly track the changes in the cultural understanding of the Northwest Passage, this study will also draw from publications produced from outside the world of the fur trade, particularly the Arctic narratives produced by the Admiralty, the proceedings and findings of parliamentary committees, and articles and reviews printed in journals and newspapers. Finally, as this study tracks changes in wider culture, it will also occasionally draw from literature, poetry, theatre, and visual art, when appropriate. The

[30] Charles Batten, *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 15.
[31] See Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

particular importance, consequences, and implications of each varying form of published material will be discussed in the introductions of each chapter in which they enter the narrative.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The earliest historiography to consider the Northwest Passage as subject of historical interest was published during the nineteenth century, usually by authors arguing in favour of its continued pursuit. These histories, reflecting the contemporary attitude that national pride and prestige could be generated and proven in peacetime through acts of exploration – in the words of one such historian, 'a secondary sphere, within which were to be encountered toils and dangers almost as formidable' – that served as moral proof of British superiority, constructed narratives purporting that it had ever been thus.[32] John Barrow's 1818 *A Chronological History of Voyages into the Arctic Regions*, for instance, informed its readers that 'the discovery of a north-west passage to India and China has always been considered as an object peculiarly British', describing a tradition of 'bold and persevering efforts to pierce through frozen seas' that had and would continue to enrapture Britons, who 'strove eagerly, in their own persons, to share in the glory and the danger of every daring adventure'.[33] His 1846 *Voyages of Discovery and Research within the Arctic Regions, from the Year 1818 to the Present Time* declared more dramatically that:

> To have abandoned any attempt any further attempt to fulfil an object which has never ceased to occupy the attention of the British government since the days of our Elizabeth... to have left it to be completed by a foreign navy, after the doors of the two extremities of the passage had been thrown open by the ships of our own, would have been little short of an act of national suicide.[34]

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[32] Hugh Murray, *Historical Account of Discoveries and Travels in North America*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, 1829), 159–60.
[33] John Barrow, *A Chronological History of Voyages into the Arctic Regions: Undertaken Chiefly for the Purpose of Discovering a North-East, North-West, or Polar Passage Between the Atlantic and Pacific: From the Earliest Periods of Scandinavian Navigation to the Departure of the Recent Expeditions Under the Orders of Captains Ross and Buchan* (London: John Murray, 1818), 364, 52.
[34] John Barrow, *Voyages of Discovery and Research within the Arctic Regions, from the Year 1818 to the Present Time* (London: John Murray, 1846), 22.

This framing simultaneously served to legitimise the continued search for the Northwest Passage, by then an aesthetically engaging but patently useless endeavour as far as commerce was concerned, as an object worthy of popular support and to co-opt the popularly understood prestige of England during the Elizabethan "golden age" for modern pursuits. These authors, therefore, ultimately published histories of the Passage that reinterpreted a fragmented and discordant past as a teleological centuries-long continuing national quest. This deceptively simple framework has continued to appear in many histories of the Passage ever since and it is one of the aims of this study to challenge this tendency.[35]

As the assumptions of empire came into question in the early twentieth century, histories of exploration began to distance themselves from such overt nationalism. These histories tended to structure themselves as storybooks of exciting tales of courage in adversity, thereby retaining the nineteenth century's Romantic conception of the explorer while moving away from the connotations that the demonstration of these values used to denote. Paeans to the glory of expanding empire were replaced in effect by paeans to the glory of man in a more abstract, less overtly political sense – although of course the lionization of such figures involved the retention of certain implicit political assumptions, such as the almost-exclusive foregrounding of white voices and the inherently imperialistic assumption of "virgin land" central to the concept of "discovery". Jeanette Mirsky's *To the Arctic!*, published in 1949, demonstrates these changes. It declared to its readers that it was 'a history not for the aggrandizement of a nation', but rather one that set out instead to regale stories of 'fearless, tireless men [who] enlisted to do battle against a

[35] As examples from across a range of publication dates: Stephen Leacock, *Adventurers of the Far North: A Chronicle of the Frozen Seas* (Glasgow: Brook, 1914); Leslie Neatby, *In Quest of the North West Passage*, 1958; George Malcolm Thomson, *The Search for the North-West Passage* (New York: MacMillan, 1975); Edward Struzik, *The Northwest Passage: The Quest for an Arctic Route to the East* (London: Blandford, 1991); James P. Delgado, *Across the Top of the World: The Quest for the Northwest Passage* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2009).

wily adversary that fought to keep its secret by starving them out, freezing them out, rotting them out with scurvy'.[36] Similar works of note were produced by Leslie Neatby, Farley Mowat, and Vilhjalmur Stefansson.[37]

Later academic studies of exploration, particularly from the 1980s onwards, with strong influence from post-colonialist studies, moved their focus away from the imperial explorer and instead to the subjugated peoples he encountered.[38] In the words of Luca Codignola, 'discovery and exploration have recently become unfashionable, if not altogether disreputable, subjects of study among historians'.[39] As P. E. H. Hair stated in his history of the Hakluyt Society, documents from the history of exploration increasingly ceased being cited to 'narrate and implicitly to approve the alleged achievements of European out-thrust to other continents', but rather became primarily deployed 'to claim and to illustrate the alleged human and environmental disasters caused by European out-thrust and cultural encounter'.[40] In performing such a task, these historians, in an ironic symmetry with nineteenth century historian-propogandists, understood explorers first and foremost as vanguards of imperial expansion. By dismissing all other rhetoric – be that regarding the scientific aims of exploration, tales of personal courage, or aesthetic appreciation for Arctic landscape – as mere cover and legitimisation for raw imperial ambition, there is a danger of

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[36] Jeannette Mirsky, *To the Arctic!: The Story of Northern Exploration from Earliest Times to the Present* (London: A. Wingate, 1949), viii, 97.
[37] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Great Adventures and Explorations* (New York: The Dial Press, 1947); Neatby, *In Quest of the North West Passage*; Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Northwest to Fortune: The Search of Western Man for a Commercially Practical Route to the Far East* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1958); Farley Mowat, *Ordeal by Ice* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960).
[38] As Germaine Warkentin wrote in her introduction to Germaine Warkentin, ed., *Critical Issues in Editing Exploration Texts: Papers Given at the Twenty-Eighth Annual Conference on Editorial Problems* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), ix, the book's discussion of exploration writing 'would have been treated very differently had it been addressed in our first conference in 1965'.
[39] Luca Codignola, 'North American Discovery and Exploration Historiography, 1993-2001: From Old-Fashioned Anniversaries to the Tall Order of Global History?', *Acadiensis* 31, no. 2 (2002): 185.
[40] R. C. Bridges and P. E. H. Hair, *Compassing the Vaste Globe of the Earth: Studies in the History of the Hakluyt Society, 1846–1996* (London: Routledge, 2018), 19.

producing oversimplified, flattened narratives and losing sight of the genuine importance that such issues held for those at the time and what that can tell us about evolutions in wider culture. It is an intention of this dissertation to mitigate this problem.

In such modern histories of exploration – Felipe Fernandez-Armesto's *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration* remains a notably influential example – "contact" and "cross-cultural exchange" have largely replaced "discovery" as the primary organisational framework.[41] Whilst this is of course a welcome development, it is not necessarily a perfect fit for the specific study of the history of the Northwest Passage. While indigenous actors were frequently important in and affected by this history and historians are right to highlight them – my first chapter, for example, discusses both the individual Chipewyan interpreter, Thanadelthur, who exercised great influence over James Knight's thinking, and the effects that York Fort exerted over various indigenous trading groups and vice versa – Passage exploration often took place in uninhabited regions. Furthermore, considerable portions of the geography involved, particularly in the nineteenth century, offered very little for the interests of imperial extraction. This concern is obviously less pertinent in the parameters of my study, which foregrounds the inherently and undeniably imperialistic fur trade, but it is worth pointing out as regards the field at large.

Post-colonialist history also encouraged new methodological mores, most notably the erosion of the epistemological assumption that objective truth can be determined through the empirical analysis of texts, to be replaced by the notion that knowledge is relative and determined by the power relationships of the parties involved in its construction. In practice, for the history of exploration this means understanding texts produced by explorers not as exact records of historical

[41] Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2006).

events, but rather as deliberately constructed documents that reveal much about their creators and the cultures that produced them. This is an indispensable addition to the toolkit of any historian of exploration, which widens not only the field of potential objects of study, but also what is possible to conclude from such studies. Perhaps the most impactful works in the modern historiography of exploration are Paul Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay* and Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*, both of which utilize such methodology to deconstruct the process by which exploratory narratives constructed an imperialist worldview by presenting an uneven power relationship between an active Western *investigator* class and a passive, savage *investigated* class.[42] The influence of such methodologies on the historiography of the Northwest Passage can be seen for example in the work of Janice Cavell, Adriana Craciun, Ian MacLaren, and Kathleen Venema, who have examined the construction of published Arctic narratives as adapted from the field journals of explorers before their release to the public.[43] These authors, however, have largely thus far examined quite specific periods rather than tracking how the construction of Arctic narratives changed over time and what this can tell us about evolving cultural trends.

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[42] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (New York: Knopf, 1988); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1991).

[43] Janice Cavell, 'Representing Akaitcho: European Vision and Revision in the Writing of John Franklin's Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea', *Polar Record* 44, no. 1 (2008): 25–34; Janice Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative: Arctic Exploration in British Print Culture, 1818-1860* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Adriana Craciun, 'Oceanic Voyages, Maritime Books, and Eccentric Inscriptions', *Atlantic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2013): 170–96; Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*; I. S. MacLaren, 'Alexander Mackenzie and the Landscapes of Commerce', *Studies in Canadian Literature* 7, no. 2 (1982): 141–50; I. S. MacLaren, 'Samuel Hearne and the Landscapes of Discovery', *Canadian Literature* 103 (1984): 27–40; I. S. MacLaren, 'Samuel Hearne's Accounts of the Massacre at Bloody Fall, 17 July 1771', *Ariel* 22, no. 1 (1991): 25–51; I. S. MacLaren, 'Exploration/Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Author', *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 5 (Spring 1992): 39–68; I. S. MacLaren, 'Samuel Hearne and the Printed Word', *Polar Record* 29, no. 169 (1993): 166–67; MacLaren, 'From Exploration to Publication: The Evolution of a 19th-Century Arctic Narrative'; I. S. MacLaren, 'The HBC's Arctic Expedition 1836-1839: Dease's Field Notes as Compared to Simpson's Narrative', in *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference*, ed. Jennifer Brown, W. J. Eccles, and Donald Heldman (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 465–79; Kathleen Venema, 'Mapping Culture Onto Geography: "Distance from the Fort" in Samuel Hearne's Journal', *Studies in Canadian Literature* 23, no. 1 (1998): 9–31; Kathleen Venema, '"Under the Protection of a Principal Man": A White Man, the Hero, and His Wives in Samuel Hearne's "Journey"', *Essays on Canadian Writing* 70, no. 70 (2000): 162–90.

A small number of historians have conducted similar studies to that which is held within these pages. Robert McGhee, in *The Last Imaginary Place*, has examined the ways in which the popular image of the Arctic as an exotic, remote world cut off from civilization has been produced through centuries of southern speculation about the north.[44] My work expands this idea and reframes McGhee's questions. Rather than studying the Arctic as it is seen today, I discuss the way that this image changed over time, and rather than seeking to dispel such myths I aim to contextualize them as the cultural truths of their time. Francis Spufford, Robert G. David, Russell Potter, Jen Hill, and Katherine Bowers have all studied the way in which the Arctic was imagined in visual culture and literature during the nineteenth century, and as such my fifth chapter, which discusses that period, owes a debt to their work.[45] I aim to expand their work on this, to quote Spufford, 'second kind of polar history, largely uncharted; an intangible history of assumptions, responses to landscape, cultural fascinations, aesthetic attraction to the cold regions', by comparing the culture they describe with a number of distinct evolutions in the eighteenth century and by expanding attention beyond the exploration conducted by the Admiralty to also include important case studies from the fur trade.[46] I also reframe the discussion specifically on to the Northwest Passage, which was not always understood in the same fashion as the wider Arctic world, not least because it offered a specific prize to its explorers rather than simply an environment. This makes a study of cultural desires, rather than just attitudes and assumptions, more viable. Furthermore,

[44] McGhee, *The Last Imaginary Place*.
[45] Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*; Robert G. David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination, 1818-1914* (Manchester: University Press, 2000); Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*; Jen Hill, *White Horizon: The Arctic in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008); Katherine Bowers, 'Haunted Ice, Fearful Sounds, and the Arctic Sublime: Exploring Nineteenth-Century Polar Gothic Space', *Gothic Studies* 19, no. 2 (November 2017): 71–84.
[46] Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*, 6.

the self-perception of explorers forms just as vital a part of my analysis as the ways in which they were perceived by wider society, which is the predominant focus of these works.

The vast majority of writing produced concerning the Northwest Passage, however, are not academic studies, but rather works of popular history intended for a mass market that engage with few of these ideas.[47] These books tend to remain in the mould of early twentieth century scholarship, their pages dominated by accounts of courageous adventures, usually those of the "great men" commanding them. Little thought is given to the institutional and cultural forces behind the production of such escapades, or what they can tell us about the societies that produced and valued them. They are also usually presented with a flagrant disregard for citation or historiographical debate, and some take even greater liberties. Ken McGoogan's *Fatal Passage*, for example, descends at times into what is essentially a novel, complete with reams of unsubstantiated dialogue and inner monologue.[48] To exacerbate matters further, this corpus contains a substantial imbalance of attention towards the infamous lost Franklin expedition of 1845.[49] Not only is the topic over-studied at the expense of others, it also has a tendency to produce

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[47] Some notable and/or recent examples include Pierre Berton, *The Arctic Grail: The Quest for the North West Passage and the North Pole, 1818-1911* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988); Fergus Fleming, *Barrow's Boys* (London: Granta Books, 1998); Kenneth McGoogan, *Fatal Passage: The Story of John Rae, the Arctic Hero Time Forgot* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2002); Ray Edinger, *Fury Beach: The Four-Year Odyssey of Captain John Ross and the Victory* (Penguin Group (USA) Incorporated, 2004); Martin W. Sandler, *Resolute: The Epic Search for the Northwest Passage and John Franklin, and the Discovery of the Queen's Ghost Ship* (New York: Sterling, 2006); Delgado, *Across the Top of the World*; Glyndwr Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth: The Quest for the Northwest Passage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Anthony Brandt, *The Man Who Ate His Boots: The Tragic History of the Search for the Northwest Passage* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011); Ken McGoogan, *Dead Reckoning: The Untold Story of the Northwest Passage* (New York: HarperCollins, 2017); Brian Castner, *Disappointment River: Finding and Losing the Northwest Passage* (New York: Doubleday, 2018).

[48] One short such episode reads: '"Come, Doctor!" Sir James led Rae to a larger table that was covered with a map of the Arctic. "You must demonstrate." Using the map to trace his route, his voice a mixture of excitement and seriousness, John Rae began to tell his tale', McGoogan, *Fatal Passage*, 205.

[49] Alan Day's definitive Alan Edwin Day, *Search for the Northwest Passage: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland, 1986) lists 38 whole pages of publications regarding the Terror and Erebus expedition, 405-442, and a staggering 124 pages of publications regarding the search for Franklin, 443-567. In the decades since this 1986, this issue has only exacerbated; Notable recent publications on the subject include Brandt, *The Man Who Ate His Boots*; Russell A. Potter, *Finding Franklin: The Untold Story of a 165-Year Search* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016); Gillian Hutchinson, *Sir John Franklin's Erebus and Terror Expedition: Lost and Found* (London: Adlard

ahistorical flourishes, as a considerable portion of the relevant source material disappeared with the ships. Even when these books cast a wider net, the nineteenth century is usually favoured over the eighteenth, the period when a considerable portion of fur trade exploration occurred. Ultimately, while plenty is being published regarding the Northwest Passage, relatively little is currently actually being said.

In almost all of this literature, academic or otherwise, the role of the fur trade is taken for granted or ignored, with the obvious exception of biographies of men explicitly from that world such as Samuel Hearne and Alexander Mackenzie – although in even these the institutional influences on their travels are usually neglected in favour of accounts of their explorations as they played out in the field. A typical passage from Glyndwr Williams' *Arctic Labyrinth* reads: 'Their preparations completed, [George] Back and [Richard] King left England in February 1833, and by August with their Canadian voyageurs and Indian guides had reached Great Slave Lake'.[50] How and why said voyageurs had come to accompany Back and King is not explained, and they do not reappear in the entire telling of the history that expedition. Back and King are seen to walk through the territory and forts of the Hudson's Bay Company, but the question of how their hosts felt about their presence is never contemplated. Likewise, regarding the origins of Peter Warren Dease and Thomas Simpson's 1836 expedition Pierre Berton wrote: 'Meanwhile the Hudson's Bay Company was bestirring itself, suddenly mindful of a clause in its original charter charging it with the task of discovering a North West Passage'.[51] Why the Company was suddenly mindful of such a clause,

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Coles, 2017); Paul Watson, *Ice Ghosts: The Epic Hunt for the Lost Franklin Expedition* (New York: McClelland & Stewart, 2017); Owen Beattie and John Geiger, *Frozen in Time: The Fate of the Franklin Expedition* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2017); Michael Palin, *Erebus: The Story of a Ship* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2018); W. Gillies Ross, *Hunters on the Track: William Penny and the Search for Franklin* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2019).

[50] Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth*, 251.

[51] Berton, *The Arctic Grail*, 131.

or why it had been neglectful of it beforehand, the reader can only guess. In fact, while whole bookshelves could be filled regarding the lost Franklin expedition, only very two short articles, one pamphlet, and one book have been published in the last century specifically concerning that most fascinating of expeditions.[52] Certain lesser-known explorers from the fur trade – John Scroggs, John Bean, William Christopher, Magnus Johnston, George Barnston, and to a slightly lesser extent James Colnett, Nathaniel Portlock, Charles Duncan and Samuel Black, all of whom appear in this study – have been the subject of almost zero scholarly interest. By ignoring the insights that can be gleaned not only from studying these overlooked figures, but also by not integrating the fur trade's more famous characters into wider histories of exploration, historians are leaving a lot of untapped potential on the table.

This historiographical imbalance of attention, somewhat ironically, reflects the sentiments of the actual fur traders involved in the pursuit of the Northwest Passage, who routinely believed that they were not receiving enough credit. This was seen most overtly at the 1749 parliamentary inquiry into the HBC, as discussed in Chapter Three, in which its contributions to the search was a central topic of discussion; but also during the age of Romantic exploration, in which Governor George Simpson battled at length for the Company to receive sufficient credit for its efforts, as discussed in Chapter Five; and during the search for the missing Franklin expedition, during which John Rae complained that W. J. S. Pullen, who he believed held 'an evident dislike to the Company or those connected with them', and his party of 'donkies' would return to Britain from Rupert's Land and 'publish some tales' in which difficulties routinely weathered by fur traders would be

[52] George Pendleton, 'Thomas Simpson: Explorer of the Western Arctic Coast', *Beaver* 259, no. 3 (December 1928): 107–9; Marjory Harper, *Thomas Simpson: Dingwall's Arctic Explorer* (Dingwall: Dingwall Museum Trust, 1989); MacLaren, 'The HBC's Arctic Expedition'; Peter Warren Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia: The Arctic Journal of Chief Factor Peter Warren Dease 1836-1839*, ed. William Barr (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

represented as 'the most severe and harassing duty he had ever experienced during his 22 years of a seamans life', so as to gather undue credit and earn promotion.[53]

The historiography of the North American fur trade has likewise traditionally afforded little time for the issues that I discuss. The most influential studies – most famously Harold Innis' *The Fur Trade in Canada*, with its "staple thesis", and Donald Creighton's *Commercial Empire of the Saint Lawrence* – have sought to explain the roots of Canadian (and in some cases, American) expansion and nationhood through the history of the fur trade and have, understandably, primarily turned to the methodologies of economic history in pursuing such topics.[54] A mid-century wave of biographies concerning fur trade explorers, which recounted the daring adventures of "great men" in the manner discussed above, reinforced this nationalist framework by celebrating the expansion of commerce and "civilization" into the wilderness while also subsuming any discussion of exploration into such discussions, marginalizing it from discussions of cultural history.[55] Even modern publications that challenge traditional Canadian national narratives tend to nonetheless engage in this discussion of nation building rather than treating the fur trade on its own terms.[56] As an example, Jean Barman's *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest*, which seeks to restore missing voices to fur trade history, does so by

[53] SPRI MS 274; BJ OS, 16, f. 3. John Rae to George Simpson, 23 April 1851.
[54] Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1930); Donald Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1937).
[55] The works of Marjorie Wilkins Campbell make for typical example. See Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *The Nor'Westers: The Fight for the Fur Trade* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1954); Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *The North West Company* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1957); Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *McGillivray: Lord of the Northwest* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1962); Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, *Northwest to the Sea: A Biography of William McGillivray* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1975).
[56] For an in-depth discussion of this tendency, see Carolyn Podruchny and Beth Saler, 'Glass Curtains and Storied Landscapes: The Fur Trade, National Boundaries, and Historians', in *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories*, ed. Benjamin Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 275–302.

framing its subjects as the heart of the western expansion that produced modern Canada.[57] The fur trade has also formed a vital part of histories of alternative nationhoods, such as the emergence of a distinct Métis people.[58] While these are of course important considerations, it should not be forgotten that the vast majority of fur traders, especially those in decision-making positions, in the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth century did not picture themselves as the constructors of a new nation, but rather saw themselves as members of an existing British polity. It feels more appropriate to consider the cultures expressed by the subjects of my study to be reflective of the culture that they identified with than it does to retrospectively read them as avatars of an identity that they never contemplated.

The publication of academic literature concerning the fur trade's role in exploration has slowed to a trickle in the face of scholarly interest in social histories of the fur trade's impacts on and accommodation of marginalized communities such as indigenous peoples, women, and workers. Some of the most influential of these studies are Arthur Ray's *Indians in the Fur Trade*, Ray and Donald Freeman's *"Give Us Good Measure"*, Sylvia Van Kirk's *Many Tender Ties*, and Jennifer S. H. Brown's *Strangers in Blood*.[59] These studies, fundamentally interested as they are

[57] Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014).

[58] Examples include Jacqueline Peterson, 'Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lakes Metis: Ethnohistory', *Ethnohistory* 25, no. 1 (Winter 1978): 41; Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985); Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, eds., *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014); Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Robert Foxcurran, Michel Bouchard, and Sébastien Malette, *Songs Upon the Rivers: The Buried History of the French-Speaking Canadiens and Métis from the Great Lakes and the Mississippi Across to the Pacific* (Montreal: Baraka Books, 2016).

[59] Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Arthur J. Ray and Donald B. Freeman, *'Give Us Good Measure': An Economic Analysis of Relations Between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company Before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

in communities and more populated areas, naturally focus on other geographic areas than the far north. This naturally marginalizes any considerations that people might have given to the Northwest Passage. Some such studies have discussed the role of geography in defining these social structures, particularly river networks, buffalo migrations, and territoriality, but considerations of the impact on the fur trading world exerted by the imagined geographies that drove exploration are rare.[60]

When the fur trade's relationship with exploration is discussed, the subject is usually the exploration of the west – as per the narrative of developing Canadian nationhood – rather than exploration in the north.[61] The Northwest Passage, therefore, despite its evident presence in the history of the fur trade, is not a common feature of fur trade historiography and therefore, when it does appear, only does so in simple terms. To take a recent example, Stephen Bown's *The Company* refers to the Passage only on rare occasions, always as a statically understood commercial target that occasionally, unexplainedly, reared its head to momentarily inspire people.[62] Some recent volumes, such as Ted Binnema's *Enlightened Zeal*, have done valuable work, but do so in contexts where the Passage is of secondary or subsidiary concern (in this specific example Binnema discusses the HBC's relationship with science and scientific networks at large).[63] No comprehensive long-term examination of the fur trade's evolving relationship with

[60] See for example Patricia Albers and Jeanne Kay, 'Sharing the Land: A Study in American Indian Territoriality', in *A Cultural Geography of North American Indians*, ed. Thomas E. Ross and Tyrel G. Moore (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 47–71; Theodore Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001); and George Colpitts, *Pemmican Empire: Food, Trade, and the Last Bison Hunts in the North American Plains, 1780-1882* (Cambridge: University Press, 2014).
[61] Such as in Theodore J. Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983); or Ruggles, 'British Exploration of Rupert's Land'.
[62] Stephen R. Bown, *The Company: The Rise and Fall of the Hudson's Bay Empire* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2021).
[63] Ted Binnema, *'Enlightened Zeal': The Hudson's Bay Company and Scientific Networks, 1670-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

the Passage has yet been published, despite what it can tell us about the evolving policies and priorities of the fur trade.

My research, therefore, by synthesising the study of the Northwest Passage with fur trade history – two fields which have remained thus far unsatisfactorily disconnected – within the methodological frameworks of cultural and intellectual history, proposes to enrich and expand the study of both, and in doing so, provide a fascinating new way of discussing certain episodes from the cultural history of Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The dissertation opens with a discussion of James Knight, the most interesting figure in the early history of the Hudson's Bay Company's relationship with the Northwest Passage. Knight, an influential figure within the Company, became enraptured by reports of gold deposits in the far north and, acting on indigenous reports that seemed to indicate the existence of a Northwest Passage, attempted to reach them by sailing through a portion of it. I counter accepted assumptions by proposing that Knight was motivated to pursue such action through an explicit desire to prop up the then-ailing business of the HBC.[64] His story illustrates the British attitude towards the Passage at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Knight, like his peers, understood the waterway as simply that, an economic tool through which seaborne commerce could pass, the kind of tool it would be natural for a struggling business to turn to. The endeavour was so devoid of symbolic value at this stage that Knight saw no reason to actually complete the Passage and sail through the opposite side. In order to make this argument, I also challenge historiographical assumptions by

[64] I made the same argument for the CHA. Douglas Newham, 'James Knight: The Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Passage in the Early Eighteenth Century' (Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Toronto, 2023).

arguing that Knight had the full backing of the HBC's ruling Committee in pursuing his risky venture. The common misconception to the contrary has for too long painted Knight as an eccentric outsider, precluding any opportunity to use his motivations and conceptions in a broader study of contemporary business attitudes and the long-term history of the Passage.

The conclusions of this chapter are reinforced through the contrasting examples provided in the second chapter, which analyses the 1720s and early 1730s, decades which have previously served as mere footnotes or lacunae to be skipped over in histories of the Northwest Passage. As the HBC continued to struggle to secure its financial future in the years immediately following Knight's departure, it continued to gamble on the risk of the Northwest Passage. This was considered a business decision as the Passage was popularly understood as a purely financial entity. When the Company's economic situation improved due to rapid expansions in the hat-making industry, it rapidly withdrew from such exploratory activities. That the HBC faced no pressure to continue demonstrates that the Passage had yet to develop the broader, more abstract, connotations of national duty, scientific interest, or national prestige that would move the Company to pursue it in later years regardless of the immediate implications for their balance sheets. To demonstrate that the Company's interest in the Passage was directly correlated to its financial situation, this chapter will turn to appropriate methodologies from economic history.

Chapter Three analyses the HBC's public conflict with Arthur Dobbs, who challenged the Company's monopoly with the justification that it had not done sufficient work to fulfill its duty to pursue the Northwest Passage. Dobbs was a proponent of the popular "gospel of commerce", which preached that the unhindered expansion of commerce would bring prosperity to Britain and peace to the world. Through Dobbs, this cultural attitude was cast on to the Northwest Passage, the discovery of which he believed would open nationally beneficial trade with the East, bring

British benign influence to newly discovered lands in the north, stimulate British manufacturing, and provide employment for the poor. All of this, in contrast to the private concerns of Knight, would supposedly 'be of service to the Publick'.[65] The HBC first attempted to awkwardly incorporate Dobbs' interest in the Passage into their current operations while ignoring his wider beliefs, then, realizing that Dobbs had managed to link the Passage in the public eye to his beliefs, reacted with patent fear to his expeditions led by Christopher Middleton and William Moor, both of which wintered at HBC posts. Despite fending off Dobbs' legal challenges, the HBC ultimately adopted policies that indicated that it had come to accept his beliefs concerning exploration, of which the pursuit of the Northwest Passage was a key emblem. By studying the Company's attempt to control, then resist, and ultimately buckle under Dobbs' pressure regarding the Northwest Passage, we can better understand an important cultural development in the way that Britons understood commerce.[66]

With the "nationalization" of the Northwest Passage in the public mind complete, it could subsequently serve as a key prop in the pursuit of subsequent "national missions". During the second half of the eighteenth century, science increasingly became assimilated as a concern of the state. Through a combination of the Baconian idea that scientific experimentation should produce beneficial effects for the common good and the continuing sentiment that the power of the British Empire was the primary vehicle through which the common good was to be achieved, "disinterested" science came to be understood, like commerce before it, as both a tool in service of the glory of the British Empire and a symbol of that glory.[67] The Northwest Passage, despite by

[65] HBCA E.18/1, ff. 1-2. Reasons for the Probability of a (North-West) Passage, 1731.
[66] I have also presented these conclusions for the CHA. Douglas Newham, 'Arthur Dobbs, the HBC, and the Nationalization of the Northwest Passage' (Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, Montreal, 2024).
[67] "Disinterested" means "performed without economic interest" in this context.

this point being clearly unsuitable for commercial traffic, was easily adopted as a target for the new, nationally-minded science. Chapter Four explores this development with reference to three separate fur trading case studies. First, it explores the ways in which Governor Samuel Wegg attempted to translate, via the power of these connotations, the optics of pursuing the Northwest Passage regardless of cost into public confidence that the HBC's continued existence was in the national interest.[68] It also examines the flurry of expeditions that flocked to the Pacific Coast of North America in the second half of the 1780s hoping to profit from the trade in sea otter furs while also maintaining a steady interest in finding a western entrance to the Northwest Passage. Finally, the chapter will analyse the ways in which Samuel Hearne, despite leading the most commercially-minded fur trade Northwest Passage expedition of his period, nonetheless went to great lengths in his published accounts to present himself as a scientific observer. This will demonstrate the changes that this period produced in the ways in which explorers understood themselves and their task, and the ways in which public expectations regarding these matters changed. Through an examination of a cast of fur traders, then, we can see that by the end of the eighteenth century the exploration of the Northwest Passage, no matter how commercial, could hardly be performed without participating in scientific endeavours, and that the Passage, benefiting from these new associations, began to wield a different kind of influence.

By the nineteenth century progressive expeditions had pushed the possible route of the Northwest Passage into frozen latitudes evidently devoid of commercial or strategic use, but despite this, the idea of the Passage reached a previously unprecedented level of cultural relevance. My fifth chapter proposes that the Passage, precisely because of its danger and lack of apparent

[68] This understanding of Wegg's policies owes an obvious debt to Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*.

purpose, became an ideal fixation for a nation enraptured by the Romantic movement.[69] During this period the Passage became completely abstracted from any tangible reward and came instead to be constructed and reacted to along almost entirely emotional lines. Its explorers were understood as symbols of Britain's superiority explicitly because of their emotions: bravery in the face of Sublime landscapes and chivalrous masculinity. The primary resource that Britain hoped to extract from the Passage at this time was not financial or scientific, but rather the emotional projection of its power and prestige. As landscape played such an important role in the construction of Romantic images of the Arctic, this chapter draws from the tradition of applying studies of aesthetics to polar history, as articulated most famously by Chauncey Loomis.[70] I propose that the power of these perceptions is demonstrated through the ways in which fur trade governor George Simpson attempted to attach the reputation of the HBC to the expeditions that visited its forts and produce its own expedition to rival their bestselling Romantic thrills. Ultimately, I propose that in cultural conceptions of the Northwest Passage and its explorers in the early nineteenth century, we can see in reflection the values of the Romantic movement as a whole, and that examples from the fur trade can serve as well as any in producing this analysis.

This chapter will also briefly discuss the effect of the Franklin disaster upon popular imaginings of the North. While the events and aesthetics of this period have already received ample study, I believe that by reframing these diverse imaginings, which contrastingly supported or cast doubt upon the values of Romantic exploration, as a demonstration of how the possibility for one major cultural narrative to define imaginings of the Northwest Passage disintegrated with the

[69] In the words of Frederic Regard, at this point in time, 'if the passage had a use, then its discovery would be no more glorious than flushing out a clogged pipe', Frederic Regard, *Arctic Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: Discovering the Northwest Passage* (London: Routledge, 2016), 10.
[70] Chauncey Loomis, 'The Arctic Sublime', in *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, ed. U. C. Knoepflmacher and G. B. Tennyson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 95–112.

expansion of the reading public in Britain, we may better understand the Romantic conception of the Passage, how it had been sustained up to around 1845, and in broader terms how the Passage had served as a malleable object for earlier cultural leaders throughout its history. Despite these post-Franklin changes, however, the Northwest Passage remained a world fundamentally defined in emotional terms, rather than as regards its resources. To make my arguments on this subject, I use John Ross' 1850 expedition, financially backed by the HBC, as a case study.

Finally, I conclude by briefly examining the HBC's involvement in James Anderson's 1855 expedition to the mouth of the Back River, understood here as one of the last gasps in the dying world of the public Northwest Passage, which had been gradually shorn of its ability to stand in as an avatar for the desires of British culture due to centuries of discovery. In doing so, I demonstrate by contrast the ways in which the Passage had previously served this role and reflect back on its long history that had seen it used as a tool of private financial interest, invoked as a symbol of nationalized commerce, pictured as a scientific lab, used as an outlet for Romantic emotions and as a representation of imperial prestige – all of which will have been demonstrated through examples drawn from the fur trade.

LIMITATIONS AND OTHER ISSUES

My use of the word "explorer" throughout this study to refer to those who travelled through lands unknown to them, regardless of the time period, is, as explained by Adriana Craciun, anachronistic.[71] That term emerged during the nineteenth century as advocates for exploration attempted to create a historical lineage in which they could legitimize their actions with reference to antecedents. These earlier figures, to borrow a list from Craciun, were known in their time

[71] Adriana Craciun, 'What Is an Explorer?', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 45, no. 1 (2011): 29–51.

varyingly as 'Savant, voyageur, navigateur, philosophe, herborizer, mathematician, mariner, privateer, whaler, traveler, adventurer, surveyor, factor, trapper, agent, interpreter'.[72] Despite this, the term explorer, for the modern reader, serves as an efficient synecdoche for this range of terms and thereby allows me to trace evolutions in the ways in which those involved in the task of pursuing the Northwest Passage understood themselves and were themselves understood without cluttering and diluting my conclusions with endless caveats.

My work also restricts itself to Anglophone exploration. The Northwest Passage was also pursued by speakers of Spanish, French, Danish, and Russian, and fur trading operations based in Russia and the United States were also participants in the history described, but these exercised a considerably lesser effect over British imaginings of the Arctic. It is also beyond my personal abilities as a historian to examine sources in such a range of languages. For similar reasons this dissertation will also neglect the complicated and diverse perspectives of the indigenous and Francophone voyageur actors involved but will point to their agency when appropriate. It must be understood, however, that this agency is glimpsed through the distorting lens of English language sources, in which inherent power imbalances indelibly colour their representation.

The English language itself evolved across the time period addressed in this dissertation. As a considerable portion of the archival material that I have referenced contains unorthodox spelling and grammar, especially in my earlier chapters, I have refrained from using [sic] outside of exceptional circumstances and simply present the language in its original form. Without this restraint, my text would become distractingly littered with such notation. Quotations taken from published collections of source material that have "updated" the spellings used retain the changes

[72] Ibid., 31.

made by these editors. British dating conventions also changed during the period described. Until 1752 the New Year was conventionally understood to fall on 25 March. This means, for example, that the events of February 1726 took place only two months, not fourteen months, before the events of April 1727. Certain editors have taken it upon themselves to simply update such dates into today's schema, but this can cause confusion within the text of the sources involved. In the interests of clarity, I have therefore presented such dates as follows: 1 February 1726[7].

Finally, my work also sometimes refers to "Arctic exploration" in situations where the relevant events actually took place in the Subarctic. As I am discussing the Arctic, or in more general terms "the North", as a culturally constructed idea rather than as a strict geographic zone, this modern distinction is inappropriate and would serve only to confuse the text. What those involved in this history referred to as the Arctic, so will I. Similarly, many of the names assigned to specific geographic features have also changed over time. So as to avoid creating confusing discordances, whenever my analysis refers to geographic features that have also been mentioned in quotations from the source material, I will use the same toponym as the historical figures involved.

WHY STUDY THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE TODAY?

The shared national mythology of Canada has long drawn upon images of the Arctic. The exploration of the Northwest Passage both played an important role in the process of constructing these modern images and itself forms an important facet of them. The most obvious example of this is Stan Rogers' "Northwest Passage", which has been declared, both by public polling and by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, to be an unofficial or alternative Canadian national

anthem.[73] Margaret Atwood, herself a symbol of Canada, argued in her book *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* that the story of the Franklin disaster in particular has been repeatedly told and retold in Canadian culture, drawing examples from other iconic Canadiana such as the poetry of Robert W. Service and the work of Robertson Davies.[74] Sherrill Grace has written that the North 'permeates all aspects of our culture, from painting to comic strips, from politics to classical music, and it encompasses the entire country' and noted that British explorer narratives had been used to claim continuity with a past pre-dating Canada's existence.[75] Indeed, a range of locations associated with the history of the Northwest Passage, including the wintering sites of John Franklin, George Back, and William Edward Parry, and the St. Roch, the Canadian vessel that became the first to transit the Passage from west to east, have been designated as National Historic Sites of Canada, in attempts to define them explicitly within the "story" of Canada.[76] The Harper Administration in particular routinely invoked the North when discussing Canadian identity, stating, for example, that the 'the history of explorers like Hudson, Franklin, Frobisher and Amundsen… the stories of writers like Pierre Berton, Farley Mowat, Jack London and Robert Service… and the harsh climate that touches all Canadians at least some part of the year have planted the North deep in the Canadian soul'.[77] Harper's encouragement of the search for the Franklin wrecks has been described as a deliberate exercise in fostering Canadian nationalism.[78] When the HMS *Erebus* was discovered in 2014, he declared it a 'historic moment

[73] Rogers, *Northwest Passage*; Stephen Harper, 'The Call of the North', 17 August 2006, Government of Canada, https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2006/08/call-north-address-prime-minister-stephen-harper.html; 'The Great Canadian Song Contest', *Morningside* (CBC Radio, 3 March 1995).
[74] Margaret Atwood, *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
[75] Sherrill Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 15, 172.
[76] Government of Canada, 'National Historic Sites', accessed 8 August 2024, https://parks.canada.ca/lhn-nhs.
[77] Harper, 'The Call of the North'.
[78] Steve Rennie, 'Franklin Find as Much about Sovereignty as Solving a Mystery', *CBC News*, 11 September 2014, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/franklin-find-as-much-about-sovereignty-as-solving-a-mystery-1.2763117.

for Canada', stating that the mystery of its location had 'for more than a century… been a great Canadian story'.[79] To better understand, as this study aims to do, the ways in which imagery of the Passage and the Arctic have historically been malleable and culturally constructed, often with imperial intent, is to be better equipped to understand the construction of and role played by such rhetoric in today's world. Just as various eighteenth and nineteenth century cultural movements in Britain projected their attitudes on to the Northwest Passage in revealing ways, so too do modern Canadians when they invoke its place in their identity.

The idea that the Arctic is intrinsically related to Canadian nationhood is also deeply linked to the contentious issue of Arctic sovereignty. Canada claims sovereignty over the waterways of the Arctic Archipelago, including the route of the Northwest Passage. The United States, among other nations, however, considers these to be international waters. This issue has long divided, and continues to divide, the two otherwise close allies.[80] Harper's invocations of the North and the history of the Northwest Passage's importance in his projections of Canadian identity were deeply linked to his battles to assert Canadian dominance more conclusively over this issue and to build public support for his policies. The *Erebus* and *Terror*, to take one high profile aspect of his efforts, were on paper British ships that sailed decades before Canadian Confederation, but if they could be weaved into a narrative of Canadian identity then they could be used to help justify Canadian control in the High Arctic. As global warming increasingly allows more shipping to pass through the Passage, and as nations increasingly turn to Arctic deposits of oil and natural gas, the matter

[79] Steven Chase, 'Finding of Franklin Ship Fuels Harper's New Nationalism', *The Globe and Mail*, 9 September 2014, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/finding-of-franklin-ship-fuels-harpers-new-nationalism/article20508270/.

[80] For a history of this divide, see Adam Lajeunesse, *Lock, Stock, and Icebergs: A History of Canada's Arctic Maritime Sovereignty* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016); To take a most recent example of these continuing disputes, in January 2024 the two nations competed over claims to the sea floor in the Beaufort Sea. Bob Weber, 'Canada Pledges to Work with U.S. over Competing Claims to Arctic Sea Floor', *CBC News*, 3 January 2024, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/canada-work-with-us-artic-sea-floor-claims-1.7073547.

of who controls its waterways becomes increasingly important.[81] The urgency, therefore, of understanding the Northwest Passage is only increasing. As present and future discourse regarding political issues in the Arctic are and will be shaped both knowingly and unknowingly by the legacy of the history discussed here, it can serve as a good place to start.

In a broader sense, picking nationalist imagery such as that which invokes the Northwest Passage has become an imperative task as nationalist policies and sentiments, frequently laden with dangerous implications, increasingly proliferate within contemporary politics. Samuel Hearne's accounts of the Bloody Falls massacre, for instance, when taken at face value rather than understood within the contexts of complex editorial networks and emerging public demands for sensational tales of exploratory adventure, has been used as "evidence" in attacks made against indigenous political, cultural, and economic systems.[82] Emilie Cameron's *Far Off Metal River: Inuit Lands, Settler Stories, and the Making of the Contemporary Arctic* discusses in length the ways in which narratives from the history of the Northwest Passage, particularly Hearne's, have shaped and been used to justify the ongoing colonization and economic exploitation of Inuit communities in the North co-opted by southern Canadians in such a manner.[83] Likewise, lingering nineteenth century images of the Arctic Sublime, which depend in part upon the notion of an empty north, have been linked to the devaluation of Inuit voices in discussions of northern policy.[84] Properly contextualizing such understandings as constructed and transient could perhaps help offer

[81] Regarding the increasing relevance of Arctic oil and natural gas, and the battles to control it, see Roger Howard, *The Arctic Gold Rush: The New Race for Tomorrow's Natural Resources* (London: Continuum, 2009); Michael Byers, *Who Owns the Arctic?: Understanding Sovereignty Disputes in the North* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010).
[82] Frances Widdowson and Albert Howard, *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry: The Deception Behind Indigenous Cultural Preservation* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2008), 263–64; Regarding the contexts that produced 'Hearne's' final text, see MacLaren, 'Samuel Hearne's Accounts of the Massacre at Bloody Fall, 17 July 1771'.
[83] Emilie Cameron, *Far Off Metal River: Inuit Lands, Settler Stories, and the Making of the Contemporary Arctic* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015). Cameron discusses Widdowson and Howard's theories specifically on page 43.
[84] Franklyn Griffiths, *Politics of the Northwest Passage* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 267.

a path forwards. If this paper can make any positive contribution to such discussions such as these it would gratify the author.

We also live at a time when exploration is once again a topic of mainstream discussion, specifically the exploration of our solar system. Influential business figures like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos have publicly discussed their ambitions to finance missions to Mars, with plans for eventual permanent human colonies.[85] Most recently, in March 2024 the European Space Agency announced its plans to send a probe to Saturn's moon Enceladus in search of signs of extra-terrestrial life.[86] In broader terms, the Trump Administration instituted a "National Space Strategy", including six "Space Policy Directives", the first of which called upon NASA to:

> Lead an innovative and sustainable program of exploration with commercial and international partners to enable human expansion across the solar system and to bring back to Earth new knowledge and opportunities. Beginning with missions beyond low-Earth orbit, the United States will lead the return of humans to the Moon for long-term exploration and utilization, followed by human missions to Mars and other destinations.[87]

The Biden Administration has continued to increase NASA funding, additionally stressing the role that space exploration could play in battles against climate change.[88] The "final frontier", is of course, a frontier analogous to those probed in previous bouts of exploration. The way in which space is understood as a target of exploration, just like the Northwest Passage before it, is culturally constructed and malleable. The policies, ambitions, and understandings of modern space

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[85] Kenneth Chang, 'Elon Musk's Plan: Get Humans to Mars, and Beyond', *The New York Times*, 27 September 2016, sec. Science, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/28/science/elon-musk-spacex-mars-exploration.html; Jamie Carter, 'Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin Bags New NASA Contract For Mars Mission', Forbes, 10 February 2023, https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamiecartereurope/2023/02/10/jeff-bezos-blue-origin-bags-new-nasa-contract-for-mars-mission/.

[86] 'Saturn's Moon Enceladus Top Target for ESA', 25 March 2024, https://www.esa.int/Science_Exploration/Space_Science/Saturn_s_moon_Enceladus_top_target_for_ESA.

[87] Donald J. Trump, 'Presidential Memorandum on Reinvigorating America's Human Space Exploration Program', 11 December 2017, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-memorandum-reinvigorating-americas-human-space-exploration-program/.

[88] Roxana Bardan, 'President's NASA FY 2025 Funding Supports US Space, Climate Leadership - NASA', 11 March 2024, https://www.nasa.gov/news-release/presidents-nasa-fy-2025-funding-supports-us-space-climate-leadership/.

exploration – with focuses on settlement, resource extraction, and biology – patently differ to those of the mid-twentieth century Space Race era. A more informed engagement with these developments, and their ensuing abundant ethical dilemmas, can be achieved by better understanding their antecedents and the way in which such discussions are both shaped by and reflective of transient cultural movements.[89]

Finally, this study also arrives at a time in which the Northwest Passage has undergone a certain revival of interest in public culture, likely driven by the search for, discovery of, and subsequent study of the *Erebus* and *Terror* wrecks. Aside from the bevy of works of public history discussed above, Dan Simmons' bestselling fictionalized account of Franklin and his expedition's demise, 2007's *The Terror*, was adapted in 2018 for AMC, to great critical success.[90] Shortly after Simmons, two other fictionalized accounts of Franklin were published. First was Richard Flanagan's *Wanting*, which viewed his explorations in retrospect during his time as Governor of Van Diemen's Land, shortly followed by Dominique Fortier's *On the Proper Use of Stars*, which juxtaposed dual narratives of Francis Crozier and Jane Franklin with ephemera from Arctic expedition such as letters, on-ship theatrical scripts, recipes, and poetry.[91] More recently, 2017 Giller Prize nominee *Minds of Winter*, by Ed O'Loughlin, tells the story of two people brought together by a mystery surrounding relics from the Franklin expedition.[92] 2018's *A Land So Wild*, by Elyssa Warkentin, tells a story of gay romance that unfolds among the letters and ship's log of a fictional Northwest Passage expedition.[93] Greer Macallister's 2020 *The Arctic Fury* situates a

[89] For an example discussion of the ethics of modern space policy, see Matthew R. Francis, 'Musk and Bezos Offer Humanity a Grim Future in Space Colonies', Scientific American, 26 June 2023, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/musk-and-bezos-offer-humanity-a-grim-future-in-space-colonies/.
[90] Dan Simmons, *The Terror* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007); *The Terror* (AMC, 2018).
[91] Richard Flanagan, *Wanting* (New York City: Knopf, 2008); Dominique Fortier, *On the Proper Use of Stars* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2010).
[92] Ed O'Loughlin, *Minds of Winter* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 2017).
[93] Elyssa Warkentin, *A Land So Wild* (San Jose: Carnation Books, 2018).

fictional story of Arctic disaster within the real history of the Franklin searching expeditions.[94] Most recently, Kaliane Bradley's 2024 *The Ministry of Time*, which features the *Erebus*' Graham Gore dislocated to the modern day, appeared on bestseller lists on both sides of the Atlantic and has already been commissioned for adaptation as a BBC series.[95] The Northwest Passage has also been the subject of recent travel literature, such as *Rowing the Northwest Passage: Adventure, Fear, and Awe in a Rising Sea*; *Disappointment River: Finding and Losing the Northwest Passage*; and *Inside: One Woman's Journey Through the Inside Passage*, all published in the late 2010s, and, on television, recent engagements include Billy Connolly's *Journey to the Edge of the World,* Ray Mears' *In Arctic Footsteps*, and Discovery's 2020 *Expedition to the Edge*.[96] In 2022 Ottawa's National Arts Centre hosted a run of playwright Colleen Murphy's *The Breathing Hole / Aglu* ᐊᒪᓗ, a five century odyssey through Inuit history, in which encounters with the Franklin expedition make up most of the middle act.[97] A more thorough understanding of the Passage's history – and especially the breadth of its history, in contrast to this overwhelming focus on Franklin – can help readers and viewers engage critically with this media, or offer an informative next step for those who become interested in the subject through it.

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[94] Greer Macallister, *The Arctic Fury* (Naperville: Sourcebooks Landmark, 2020).
[95] Kaliane Bradley, *The Ministry of Time* (London: Sceptre, 2024); Louise Griffin, 'BBC Commissions A24 Time Travel Series the Ministry of Time', Radio Times, accessed 6 August 2024, https://www.radiotimes.com/tv/sci-fi/ministry-of-time-bbc-commission-newsupdate/.
[96] Kevin Vallely, *Rowing the Northwest Passage: Adventure, Fear, and Awe in a Rising Sea* (Vancouver: Greystone Books Ltd, 2017); Castner, *Disappointment River*; Susan Marie Conrad, *Inside: One Woman's Journey Through the Inside Passage* (Kenmore: Epicenter Press, 2016); *Billy Connolly: Journey to the Edge of the World* (ITV, 2008); 'In Arctic Footsteps', *Ray Mears's Northern Wilderness* (BBC Two, 2009); *Expedition to the Edge* (Discovery, 2020).
[97] Colleen Murphy and Siobhan Arnatsiaq-Murphy, *The Breathing Hole / Aglu* ᐊᒪᓗ, trans. Janet Tamalik McGrath (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2020).

CHAPTER ONE:

JAMES KNIGHT AND THE YELLOW METTLE

'Endeavour to find out the Streights of Anian, and to make what Discoveries you Posibly can, and to Obtain in all sorts of Trade & Commerce for Such Comodities as shall be for the Companies Advantage Especially to find out the Gold and Copper Mines'.

– "Y^{r} Loving Friends", 1719.[1]

INTRODUCTION

James Knight was a crotchety and obsessive old governor, bearing little resemblance to the popular ideal of the brave and dashing explorer that formed in more Romantic times, and his reasons for pursuing the Northwest Passage had little in common with those who succeeded him. He was also perhaps the most important figure in the early history of the Hudson Bay Company's relationship with the Northwest Passage.[2] His story epitomises the British attitude towards the Passage at the turn of the eighteenth century – that it was simply a tool, a passageway that might lead its commuters to commercial rewards – by taking it to its absolute extreme. Knight viewed the Northwest Passage as such a dry, unromantic economic instrument that he did not even plan to sail out of its other side. Quite unalike his nineteenth century descendants, there would have been no symbolic reason to do so. Not only was his target not such abstract concepts as scientific advancement, prestige, or adventure, his target was not even the Pacific or Asia. His goal was that

[1] HBCA A.6/4, f. 32v. The Underwritten is to be Sealed up and not to be Opened but in Case of the Death of Cap^{t} James Knight, 1719.

[2] Zachariah Gillam, on the Nonsuch in 1668, did not actually pay much heed at all to the matter of the Northwest Passage. As Richard Ruggles explains, his 'goals were to gauge the potential of the trade in furs with the Cree Indians in the Bottom of the Bay, to assess the feasibility of this large region as a colony, and to advance the quest for valuable minerals', Ruggles, 'British Exploration of Rupert's Land'.

personification of financial interest: gold. Here, therefore, in the shape of a fur trade governor, is a story that represents the commercial understanding of the Northwest Passage at its very zenith.

The recent publication of the journals that Knight recorded during his tenure as governor at York Fort from 1714 to 1717 by Arthur J. Ray as *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea* has greatly aided this study.[3] My analysis largely rests upon the frequent moments in these journals in which Knight's plans and personality were laid bare. Knight kept journals unorthodox for his time and profession and recorded an atypical volume of content. While other factors were content to record sparse, dry reports of weather and daily routines, Knight believed that the HBC as a whole should formulate policy based upon detailed field reports. As such, he provided extensive detail not only on all aspects of York's business, but also on his personal health, desires, frustrations, and hopes. To the Committee, Knight described his 1716 journal, for instance, as 'a more particular account of your country then yet you ever have had from any one heretofore… if you please to give yourselves the trouble to read them'.[4] This conscious bearing of his soul provides an invaluable insight into motivations and values of those who pursued the Northwest Passage in the early eighteenth century. It is this that enables him, in contrast to his predecessors, to be studied in a fashion amenable to the goals of this dissertation.[5] Indeed, such was the length of Knight's journals that the Company had to command his successor to include a summary of all misbehaviours that had taken place at York in a general letter, rather than his journal, so that 'wee may be apprised of it upon Open^{g} the Packet' and avoid so a repeat of 'the Like Case Concerning Tho^{s} Butler who

[3] James Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea: The York Fort Journals of Hudson's Bay Company Governor James Knight, 1714-1717*, ed. Arthur J. Ray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).
[4] 'The general letter from Governor Knight at York Fort in Hudsons Bay 1716', 17 September 1716, K. G. Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay, 1703-40* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1965), 59.
[5] The journals of Knight's predecessors, in the words of E. E. Rich, 'lack the human touch'. Without the wealth of recorded correspondence that exists for Knight and his antecedents, 'there is no method of getting an insight into the conditions of life and trade in the Company's posts' for such figures. E. E. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol. 1 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960), 587.

was sent home by Gov[r] Knight 1716 and was Paid his Wages before we knew what was Chargd against him, By Reason wee had not time to Read the Gov[rs] Journall, it being so Voluminous'.[6] While comparisons between Knight's post journals and the journals kept by explorers in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are strained as the latter were much more self-consciously designed and edited for public consumption, Knight nonetheless did nonetheless perceive of his journals as *something to be read*, even if just within Company walls, much more than most of his peers, frequently addressing his reader and adorning his title pages with intricate calligraphy.[7] I have taken Knight's cue and closely read his journal.

Only two months of journaling, however, have survived from Knight's subsequent, briefer, stay at Churchill. These were published by James F. Kenney in 1932 as *The Founding of Churchill*.[8] While these records, which focus mainly on the construction of the fort, contain much less information pertinent to this study, they do still offer some valuable insights into his attitudes, such as the ways he pictured past Arctic explorers and natural phenomena. Unfortunately, the loss of Knight's journals for the rest of his 1717-18 season means that we are deprived of the documentation in which Knight would have recorded his final resolution to undertake his expedition in search of the Northwest Passage. His fort journals recorded during his late-seventeenth century stays in Hudson's Bay have also been lost. We are lucky, then, that he had been such a verbose journalist at York, where he offers us more than enough information to piece together his decision-making and attitudes at other times. Other information is drawn from

[6] HBCA A.6/4, f. 29, Governor and Committee to Cap[t] Henry Kelsey & Councell at York Fort, 4 June 1719.
[7] Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*, 159.
[8] James Knight, *The Founding of Churchill: Being the Journal of Captain James Knight, Governor-in-Chief in Hudson Bay, from the 14th of July to the 13th of September, 1717*, ed. James F. Kenney (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1932).

correspondence – some of it published – instructions, commissions, financial ledgers, and the minutes of Committee meetings.[9]

While there has been some scholarly study of Knight, the quantity of this is dwarfed by that regarding most other Arctic explorers. In comparison to the shelves that could be filled with titles concerning Samuel Hearne or John Franklin, there has been only one book which counts Knight as its principal protagonist, John Geiger and Owen Beattie's *Dead Silence: The Greatest Mystery in Arctic Discovery*.[10] Large swathes of Geiger and Beattie's text, however, focuses on the unknowns of Knight's disappearance and the modern hunt for its archaeological remains – questions tangential to the study of the cultural meaning of the Northwest Passage at the time. The only journal articles that focus on Knight also exclusively look at these issues.[11] Knight appears briefly in some longer-term histories of exploration or the HBC, but almost always with the same standard, often erroneous, conclusions. This lack of study is partially because the HBC made little attempt to publicize the expedition. In contrast to the nineteenth century, when the prestige attached to the Northwest Passage made men like George Simpson eager to conduct exploration as conspicuously as possible, the HBC in the early eighteenth century considered Knight's expedition – and by extension, the Northwest Passage – to be an entirely internal business affair. Without the contemporary outside attention of the kind generated by explorers in the public eye,

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[9] Relevant correspondence can be found published in E. E. Rich, ed., *Copy-Book of Letters Outward &c. Begins 29th May, 1680, Ends 5 July, 1687* (London: Champlain Society, 1948); Rich and Johnson, *Copy Booke of Letters*; Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*. Davies has, however, regretfully modernised the language used in the correspondence he has published.

[10] John Geiger and Owen Beattie, *Dead Silence: The Greatest Mystery in Arctic Discovery* (Toronto: Viking, 1993).

[11] Fred Bruemmer, 'Marble Island', *Beaver* 300, no. 2 (1969): 36–41; Ralph Smith and William Barr, 'Marble Island: A Search for the Knight Expedition, August 6-15, 1970', *Musk-Ox*, no. 8 (1971): 40–46; Ralph Smith, 'Discovery of One of James Knight's Ships at Marble Island: A Preliminary Report', *Musk-Ox*, no. 9 (1971): 12–14; W. Gillies Ross and William Barr, 'Voyages in Northwestern Hudson Bay (1720-1772) and Discovery of the Knight Relics on Marble Island', *Musk-Ox*, no. 11 (1972): 28–33; Ralph Smith, 'Relics of James Knight', *Beaver* 302, no. 4 (1972): 36–41; Walter Zacharchuk, 'The House That Knight Built', *Beaver* 304, no. 2 (1973): 12–15; David Pelly, 'Marble Island Revisited', *Above and Beyond* 6, no. 4 (1994): 21–22; Ken Schmalz, 'Unlocking the Secrets of Marble Island', *Up Here* 10, no. 1 (1994): 20–28; Peter Unwin, 'Searching for James Knight', *Beaver* 80, no. 4 (2000): 22–29.

Knight exists in history largely without cultural impact or interest for historians looking to sell copies to appeal to.

Knight has recently mainly been seen in shadow form as a background character in postcolonial and indigenous studies works regarding Thanadelthur, his trusted Chipewyan translator. Thanadelthur was an extraordinary figure – in Sylvia Van Kirk's description, 'the most outstanding female diplomat in fur-trade history' – who travelled immense distances in the name of peace-making.[12] These studies, however, engage with Knight not as a figure in the history of exploration, but rather as a face of British imperialism. Their focus is simply on a different cultural narrative. The function of empire at the turn of the eighteenth century can for the purposes of this study largely be taken for granted as, while the Northwest Passage would develop value as a symbol of imperial might in later decades, Knight and his peers viewed it in purely commercial terms, thus rendering such studies interesting but tangential. They also, as Adriana Craciun has effectively demonstrated, misrepresent Knight by forcing him into a role that he does not necessarily neatly fit: a caricature of a totemic, unfeeling, and violent colonial overlord.[13] While he was of course an instrument of the Hudson's Bay Company, meaning that his relations with indigenous people were fundamentally extractive, it is hard to see in his writings – in which he works relentlessly to secure peace between indigenous groups, is genuinely devastated by the death of Thanadelthur, and expresses paranoia, isolation, and anger towards his employers – the kind of 'genocidal wish fulfillment' described for instance by Julia Emberley.[14]

[12] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 66; See Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*, 149–52 for an effective overview of the historiography regarding Thanadelthur.
[13] Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*, 151.
[14] Julia V. Emberley, '"A Gift for Languages": Native Women and the Textual Economy of the Colonial Archive', *Cultural Critique*, no. 17 (1990): 27.

This lack of scholarly attention regarding Knight has allowed certain early, but faulty, hypotheses to survive. The most notable of these is the idea that the HBC did not share Knight's interest in the Northwest Passage and only agreed to support him after some kind of metaphorical arm-twisting. Glyndwr Williams, for instance, wrote that there was a 'distinct lack of enthusiasm for his plans' and Peter C. Newman stated that 'it is impossible not to conclude that the HBC really did not want the old explorer to succeed'.[15] This stance is a legacy of Joseph Robson and Arthur Dobbs' politically motivated invectives against the HBC later in the mid-eighteenth century, and ahistorically supplants the Company's negative attitudes towards Knight and exploration *after* his expensive and embarrassing disappearance onto events that took place before his departure.[16] The

[15] Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth*, 89; Peter C. Newman, *Company of Adventurers* (Markham: Viking, 1985), 298; Williams offers reasons why the HBC could have been convinced by Knight, but does not explain why they would have been against his plans in the first place, neither here, nor in Glyndwr Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Longmans, 1962), 18, where he quotes from another openly agenda-driven mid-century source that has allowed subsequent events to colour its interpretation ; Arthur Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence: Wherein His Conduct During His Late Voyage for Discovering a Passage from Hudson's-Bay to the South-Sea Is Impartially Examin'd... Whereby It Will Appear, With the Highest Probability, That There Is Such a Passage As He Went in Search Of...* (London: Jacob Robinson, 1744): 'The Company were against him going; but as he was opiniatre, they durst not disoblige him, lest he should apply elsewhere'.

[16] See for example, Joseph Robson, *An Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's-Bay from 1733 to 1736, and 1744 to 1747* (London: Printed for J. Payne and J. Bouquet, 1752), Appendix I, 33, 'but by these instructions it appears, that [searching for Knight after his disappearance] was the least part of their care; tho', had they sent out Knight willingly in search of a passage, it may be presumed that they would have been as anxious for his safety as for Kelsey's: but the case was quite the reverse; Knight and Barlow went out contrary to their inclinations, and they thought themselves amply recompensed for the loss of their ships, by getting rid of those troublesome discoverers'.

Another example from Robson – 'Knight, made more sanguine by an opposition which he could not expect, told them, that they were obliged by their charter to make discoveries and extend their trade; and particularly to search for a north-west passage by the straits of Anian to the south-sea; but that if they would not fit out ships under him and Barlow for the discovery he came about, he would apply to the crown, and get others to undertake it; and accordingly waited upon one of the secretaries of state. When the Company perceived him so resolute, and that his troublesome zeal, if left to itself, might actually bring on an inquiry into the legality of their charter, they thought it necessary to comply, and fitted out the ship and sloop before-mentioned' – demonstrates his ahistorical tendencies, in this instance by making Knight's story a matter in which the challenge and renewal of the HBC charter was a pivotal issue. In doing so, he similarly transplants later concerns, this time those contemporary to him, onto an earlier era in which they do not apply. Ibid., Appendix I, 37.

Perhaps the most absurd statement in Robson's account is that by ordering Knight to 64ºN, a point further north than Robson believed the Northwest Passage to lie, 'the Company had no intention to find out Anian, or a passage to the western American ocean, but only to defeat Knight's scheme'. The idea that the Committee would attempt to "defeat" Knight's plans by allowing him to sail across the globe at great expense, but to the wrong place, rather than simply not dispatching him in the first place is obviously ridiculous. Ibid., Appendix I, 38.

Robson's arguments also suffer from damaging inconsistencies, such as when he refers to 'the uncontrollable influence which the governors in the Bay maintain over the Company; an influence which neither omissions of duty, positive injuries with regard to their interest, oppression of their servants, nor the worst of crimes, is capable of diminishing'

only way to properly understand how the HBC felt about Knight's proposals is to study the actions it took at the time that Knight actually proposed them. As I will demonstrate, the Company had a long history of putting faith in Knight and his journalling habits mean that it is hard to imagine the Committee being unpleasantly surprised by Knight's proposals – he had been keeping London abreast of his interest in northern gold for years. The Company had ample opportunity to ask him to stop, but never did. The undeniable fact of that period is that the Knight *did* set sail for the Northwest Passage under the auspices and funding of the HBC. This simply would not have happened if the Committee did not want it to. The importance of correcting this point is that it demonstrates that Knight's understanding of the Northwest Passage was shared by his peers, rather than being the thoughts of an eccentric who was actively resisted. Knight can therefore serve effectively as an avatar for his period, representing in heightened form the perception of the Northwest Passage at the turn of the eighteenth century.

It is also sometimes assumed that Knight was motivated by the simple allure of gold in its most basic, lust for lucre terms[17] or by the timeless magic of adventure inherent to the Northwest Passage.[18] The latter is not appropriate for this period. The former is closer to the truth but misses a vitally important detail. Given Knight's considerable age and wealth, he was certainly not lusting

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in order to describe how such men prevented any exploratory endeavour from the men under their command, but does nothing to answer the obvious question of why Knight, Governor in the Bay, would suddenly find himself bereft of such ultimate influence when proposing his expedition to the Committee. Ibid, Appendix I, 38.
Geiger and Beattie make their unfortunate debt to Robson explicit, 'Robson was certainly a prejudiced observer, yet the indifference with which the Company received the news of the expedition's discovery lends credence to his allegations', *Dead Silence*, 9.

[17] Examples include Knight, *The Founding of Churchill*, 64: 'James Knight was perhaps the first of white men to be lured to his death by the gleam of gold amid the snows of Canada's northland'; Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 9: 'thought it was a Gold Mine, and having a great Share in the Company's Stock, he desired Leave to return home, and then pressed the Company, to give him two Ships lo go upon the Discovery and Trade, and had Strong Chests made to hold the Gold he was to bring home'; In the novel James Houston, *Running West* (Toronto: M & S, 1989), 154–55 Knight is depicted stating: 'The fur is something that should properly belong to this Company. But any precious stones or metal... that's another matter. The way I see it, anything we find belongs to us'.

[18] Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 7; Bown, *The Company*, 102.

after the gold because he himself needed money. I propose instead that he held grave doubts about the future of the HBC – 'I am persuaded', he wrote, that 'the Beavor trade will only will never make the Company \very/ rich by reason of the Smallness of the Consumption and the fewness of the Buyers' – and, acting on his permanent assurance that he knew best, took it upon himself to save the Company.[19] This is what the gold was for. The Northwest Passage would form part of his quest to secure it.

A Company to be Saved

It is true that the Company was in dire straits during Knight's time. It was heavily in debt and was unable to pay out dividends to its shareholders for nearly three decades between 1690 and 1718. It also struggled to pay its employees' wages. Knight himself became one of the Company's prominent creditors due to missed wages.[20] This situation was no secret amongst the rank and file of the Company; Thomas Butler, for example, was disciplined in 1715 for having 'Strove to make the men uneasy by telling them the Company was poor and could not pay them their wages'.[21]

The occupation of Bay forts following the French Hudson Bay Expedition (1686) had taken a significant toll on the HBC's finances, both by removing Company revenue streams and by necessitating costly repairs to post infrastructure. The Nine Years' War (1688-1697), the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), and their attendant embargoes and taxation, also caused great disruption to beaver pelt markets and greatly increased the Company's operating costs. A 1691 letter from the Committee to Port Nelson implored its council to 'consider the great Losses we have sustained & the extravigant Rate we pay for our Commodities, Every thing being dearer then

[19] 1 September 1716, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 299–300.
[20] Knight, *The Founding of Churchill*, 42.
[21] 27 December 1715, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 192.

formerly'.[22] In 1695 the Committee could not even afford to send a supply ship to Fort Albany, writing to Knight the following year that 'It may be reasonable for us to let you know of Cause why wee sent noe ships the last yeare, our wareshouses were full of goods, & the market in London so dull wee could sell none'.[23]

Just as damagingly, the Western European adoption at the turn of the century of a Russian technique of combing parchment beaver to produce a higher quality product devastated the value of coat beaver, which the HBC had up to this point been prioritizing the acquisition of.[24] Despite a lack of European demand, HBC factors continued to purchase coat beaver from indigenous traders in order to retain their patronage, causing it to become excessively over-supplied in Europe and its price to plummet even further.[25] Knight was commanded in 1697 'to Suppress by all ways Imaginable' the trade of coat beaver, as 'Wee have about 70 thousand of them upon our hands & can not sell them'.[26] A year later the unsold furs numbered 80,000.[27] In 1699, 'nothing but the Martins would Sell'.[28] By 1715, such was the quantity of unsold furs that the Company was

[22] 'A Letter to Governor Geyer and the Rest of the Councell at Port Nelson', 21 May 1691, Rich and Johnson, *Copy Booke of Letters*.
[23] 'The Generall Lettr to Govr Knight & the rest of his Councill at Albany Fort', 30 May 1696, ibid., 275.
[24] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:393–95. "Coat beaver" referred to furs that had been processed and worn for a season by indigenous hunters before being traded to Europeans. During the fur's time being used by indigenous people, friction with the body would remove the beaver's guard hairs and human sweat would apply a glossy sheen. "Parchment beaver", on the other hand, was unworn and therefore still carried these barbed hairs. Once techniques to remove these hairs in Europe were developed, the need to wait for indigenous hunters to have worn the skin for a season before its acquisition by European traders was removed.
[25] See Rich and Johnson, *Copy Booke of Letters*, xxxvi–xlviii for a thorough overview of the fluctuating price of beaver furs and the deplorable condition of the HBC at the end of the seventeenth century.
[26] HBCA A.6/3, f. 29v. Generall Letter Gov^{r} Knight & our Councell at Albany Fort, 31 May 1697.
[27] HBCA A.6/3, f. 38v. Generall Instructions to be Observed by our Gov^{r} & Councell in Hudsons Bay, 6 June 1698. Knight was also ordered to split his small skins into pieces so that the Company could avoid having to pay duties that it could not afford.
[28] HBCA A.6/3, f. 43v. Generall Letter to Govern^{r} Knight, 20 May 1699.

ordering its factors to burn coat beaver furs in front of indigenous traders in order to discourage the trade.[29]

In response to the Company's financial difficulties, Knight and his associate Robert Sandford proposed a swathe of cost-cutting measures to the Committee in 1686. His recommendation that 'There is no possibility of sending English men up to the Heads of the Rivers but ye way to Improve our Trade & to destroy that of the French is to Imploy the Indian Capts who loge up at a great Distance to persuade & invite the Indians to come to the English Factories' became the HBC's business model for decades.[30] This policy would in later years invite criticism that the Company "slept at the edge of a frozen sea" and could do little to aid the faltering value of beaver, but it did succeed in bring operating costs down.[31] The fact that the Company was willing to re-orient their operations along Knight's wishes – even at a time when he was not even in the Company's employ – demonstrates both the respect that its Committee afforded him, and that he was ever active in pursuing improvements to the Company's financial situation. These two situations would culminate in his fateful expedition.

[29] HBCA A.6/3, f. 134v. Instructions to Mr Tho Macklish Now going Chief at Albany Fort, 3 June 1715. Knight defied this particular inflammatory order, James Knight to the Committee, 17 September 1716, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 57.

[30] HBCA A.1/84, ff. 28v-29. Foul copies of Governor and Committee minutes, 28 April 1686. Another significant recommendation that the Committee followed was the abandonment of Charlton Island.

[31] E. E. Rich described this policy as 'strange mixture of timid conservatism and shrewd realism', but I think that this is harsh, and ahistorically reads later, more justified, accusations of timidity into a period when austerity was justified. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:183; Arthur J. Ray, on the other hand, writes of the proposals: 'the Knight–Sandford strategy additionally was sound from a business perspective because the company was heavily in debt during and immediately after the War of Spanish Succession and was awash with unsold furs. Therefore, it was not the time to saddle the Company with the increased fixed overhead costs that would have been associated with the establishment of an inland trading network'. Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 32.

A Shared Vision

James Knight was a figure evidently held in high esteem by the Company. He entered its service in 1676 as a carpenter and shipwright and for his services in this role he was paid a gratuity of £16 in addition to his wages, 'for all his good service'.[32] Shortly after his return to London in 1681 he was called to report to the Committee, where he impressed with 'a good account of th Estate of the Country both Indians & Factorys'.[33] After providing further consultation he was appointed as Chief Factor at Albany Fort in February 1681[2],[34] before swiftly being promoted to Deputy Governor in the Bay that May on the basis of having been found 'very ingenious and knowing… in the business of our trade'.[35] Knight subsequently left Company employment in 1686 under the 'severe charge' of private trading, but during this time the Committee continued to consult him, most notably regarding the strategy he proposed with Sandford.[36] Evidently the Committee continued to respect Knight's opinions – to such a degree that even a "severe charge" could not tarnish them. Nevertheless, the episode had what Arthur J. Ray describes as a 'a permanent impact on his psyche'.[37] Knight would remain paranoid of fictitious enemies in London despite the Committee's continued support of him. I also argue that this episode left him feeling as though he had a point to prove. Whether this was aimed at making a name for himself or proving his "doubters" within the Company wrong, the situational framework that Knight had to work within

[32] HBCA A.1/2, f. 63. Governor and Committee Minutes, 3 February 1681[2].
[33] HBCA A.1/2, f. 49v. Governor and Committee Minutes, 31 October 1681.
[34] HBCA A.1/2, f. 63v. Governor and Committee Minutes, 8 February 1681[2]. The Committee wrote that Knight had 'bin a faithfull and true Servant to the Comp[a] and find him able and dextorouse'.
[35] HBCA A.1/2, f. 74. Governor and Committee Minutes, 11 May 1682; 'London Committee to Governor Nixon', 15 May 1682, Rich, *Copy-Book of Letters Outward*, 38.
[36] 'London Committee to Henry Sergeant', 20 May 1686, ibid., 187; For more on these accusations see Knight, *The Founding of Churchill*, 30.
[37] Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 30.

meant that his means of proving that point would be the same regardless: a dedication to securing the financial success of the HBC.

Knight would not be out of Company employ for long. In 1692 the Committee 'did unanimously make choice of M[r] James Knight to goe Chief Govern[r] of the Bottom of the Bay' and charged him with clearing French forces from their forts.[38] The Company had great confidence in his success, telling York Fort:

> we [have] fetched upon Mr. James Knight for Governor in the Bottom of the Bay, an honest & a descreat man from whose Prudent management Wee promise ourselves great Success not only in reestablishing Our properties, but in settling in those parts againe a lasting & flourishing trade.[39]

One of Knight's powers as governor would be the ability to name his successor[40] but such was the Company's faith in Knight and his record of success that they simply offered him the role again, despite his nomination of John Fullertine.[41] He accepted the role 'upon Certaine Conditions now agreed to', demonstrating his repeated ability to translate Company trust into Company action.[42] He was also honoured with a new 48 ton frigate, 'which in respect to you wee call the Knight Frigtt'.[43] In 1700 he returned to London to join the Committee and remained there during the War of the Spanish Succession, during which time he became a dominating influence in Company affairs. At the war's close, Knight was unanimously chosen to accompany Governor Bibye Lake

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[38] HBCA A.1/14 f. 11, Governor and Committee Minutes, 14 March 1691[2]. The contract was finalised a few months later, after Knight extracted a potential £500 bonus for successfully recapturing the Bay, HBCA A.1/14 f. 20, Governor and Committee Minutes, 17 June 1692. His official instructions and commission can be found in Rich and Johnson, *Copy Booke of Letters*, 144-8, 164-5.

[39] 'A Letter to Governor Geyer & the Rest of the Councell at Yorke Forte in Hayes River in Hudsons Bay', 17 June 1692, Rich and Johnson, *Copy Booke of Letters*, 135.

[40] 'The Compies. Comission to Governr James Knight', 30 May 1694, ibid., 242.

[41] HBCA A.1/20, f. 15, Governor and Committee Minutes, 6 May 1698. One demonstration of this record of success and its recognition can be found in 1696, when the Committee wrote to Knight 'Wee heartily thanke you for the Improvement. you have made in our trade', praising his 'Ingenuity & Industry' and gifting him a gratuity of £100 (nearly £15,000 in today's money, as per "Inflation Calculator", Bank of England, 16 November 2022, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator).

[42] HBCA A.1/20, f. 15, Governor and Committee Minutes, 6 May 1698.

[43] 'The Generall Lettr to Govr. Knight & the rest of his Councill at Albany Fort', 30 May 1696, Rich and Johnson, *Copy Booke of Letters*, 273.

at the peace negotiations and appointed once more as Governor in the Bay.[44] This time, however, his wages ballooned to £400 a year.[45] To summarise, then, the HBC had a long history of trusting, supporting, and rewarding the judgement of James Knight. There is no reason to suspect that this relationship would have disappeared when he proposed an expedition to search for the Northwest Passage in 1719.

In agreeing to his last appointment, Knight demanded ten percent of any profits the Company could make on 'all Minerals of what Nature soever as I Shall discover' and secured from the Company 'Cruseables, Melting Potts, Borax &c. for the Trial of Minerals' before he departed.[46] Clearly, Knight had great faith in the mineral deposits of the Bay. What is often less remarked upon, however, is that the Company shared his enthusiasm. Geiger and Beattie, for instance, attempt to present an image of Knight engaged in a personal, unsupported, quest that he could only pursue by wrestling himself free of accountability. They do this by misquoting his reasonable and Company-serving request to 'not be Tyed to Orders or Instructions to Winter or to go to other places, than [those that] I shall see most Convenient for their interest to winter at for the most advantage to them [the HBC]' as a general demand to not 'be Tyed to Orders or Instructions'.[47]

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[44] He was 'unanimously Chosen to goe over with Bibye Lake Esq into Holland in order to Solicit the Companys affaires at the next treaty of Peace', HBCA A.1/32, f. 7v. Governor and Committee Minutes, 22 February 1709[10].

[45] HBCA A.1/33, f. 52. Governor and Committee Minutes, 20 May 1713. His wage translates to around £62,000 a year, as per "Inflation Calculator", Bank of England. The remarkable nature of such a pay rise is put into perspective when one considers that the Committee had in 1686 flatly refused a previous request from Thomas Phipps, Governor at Port Nelson – another man who bore the 'particuler marke of our Favour' – that his salary be doubled to £200, stating that '[we] shall never advance our salleries to encrease our charge which is already to great'. 'London Committee to John Bridgar', 20 May 1686, Rich, *Copy-Book of Letters Outward*, 177.

[46] HBCA A.1/33, f. 52. Governor and Committee Minutes, 20 May 1713; HBCA A.1/33, f. 97v. Governor and Committee Minutes, 1 June 1714.

[47] HBCA A.1/33, f. 52. Governor and Committee Minutes, 20 May 1713; Geiger, *Dead Silence*, 32; Knight would express similar sentiments in 1716, when he told the Committee that 'to tie me up too close to follow your instructions I think it will not be for your advantage'. Sure, he was truculent and always thought he knew best, but the ultimate aim of his combativeness and desire for control was always to secure the best possible outcome for the Company itself. 'The general letter from Governor Knight at York Fort in Hudsons Bay 1716', 17 September 1716, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 56.

The Company, in reality, backed his quest for minerals to the hilt. The Committee had been commanding York Fort to actively search for alternative trade goods to beaver fur since 1689, with minerals growing in prominence within these instructions with each passing year.[48] Knight's instructions for 1694, for instance, stated that 'wee [the Committee] doe assure you wee shall never be backwards in promoteing & *Rewarding any person who shall in any wise advance our Interest by discovering any new Trade or Comodity Perticularly that of Mines & Mineralls of wch. you sent us several samples by the Last Shipping*'.[49] In 1695 the Committee thanked Knight for 'verry valuable' samples he had sent them and commanded him to '*Continue sending us more samples* of all sorts'.[50] 1697's instructions bid him to 'Digg into the Bowells of the Earth where you Conceive any Mineralls are & soe gratifie our Expectations which are greatly hightened in hopes'.[51] Wartime may have seen activity in search of mines paused, but the Committee's interest did not wane, as can be seen in a 1710 letter to Henry Kelsey, in which they informed him that 'as for discoveries of mines etc it is noe time to thinke upon them now In times of Peace Something may be done'.[52] By the time that peace had been restored, Knight had transmuted the Company's

[48] Rich and Johnson, *Copy Booke of Letters*, 65, 101, 138, 189.
[49] 'The Generall Letter to Govr. Knight & the Rest of his Councell at Albany Fort', 30 May 1694, ibid., 230–31. While it is true that Knight's instructions for 1693, ibid., 201-210, made no reference to minerals, we can assume from quotes like this that it had not left their minds, but was rather taken as a given at a time when there had been little new developments of note.
[50] 'The Generall Lettr to Govr. Knight & the rest of his Councill at Albany Fort', 30 May 1696, ibid., 272.
[51] HBCA A.6/3, f. 30, Generall Letter Gov^{r} Knight & our Councell at Albany Fort, 31 May 1697. 1698 added the order to 'endeavour to gett them as Deepe out of the Earth as possible for the Deeper they are the Better', HBCA A.6/3, f. 38v, Generall Instructions to be Observed by our Gov^{r} & Councell in Hudsons Bay, 6 June 1698.
[52] Committee to Henry Kelsey, 29 May 1710, Henry Kelsey, *The Kelsey Papers*, ed. Arthur G. Doughty and Chester Martin (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1929), xxvii.

general interest in enticing unknown [53] minerals into a firm belief in the presence of Arctic gold.[54] It was his intention to secure it.

Knight was as confident in his scheme as he was needlessly defensive about it. He wrote asides in his journal that began 'Gentlemen, You may think I have \not/ done well, but...' and implored the Company: 'Pray Gentlemen consider your own Interest and do not Starve a good cause, as the Lawyer Says, for want of a Little money'.[55] When his instructions for 1715 informed him that the Committee desired 'an Acc^{tt} what Allowance of provisions are deliver'd out y^{e} Factory weekly', a perfectly reasonable request for a Company tight on resources,[56] Knight reacted as though he had been placed under immense personal scrutiny.[57] It seemed the only conclusion he could draw was that he had fallen victim to the machinations of imagined enemies in London, writing back 'Gentlemen, I have just cause and reason to suspect that you have had some misinformation against me or have conceived some groundless opinion of my extravagancy when you send for a weekly account of our expenses of provisions', dramatically concluding that he would rather be recalled than 'lie under any suspicion'.[58] It appears to have escaped Knight's notice that Thomas Macklish at Albany Fort had received the exact same instructions, with slightly elaborated details that made it clear to the more junior man that if there was any suspicion it lay at

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[53] In the letter of 1696 the Committee had remarked that Knight's most interesting samples were the ones of which 'no account' could be made by those who tested them, 'The Generall Lettr to Govr. Knight & the rest of his Councill at Albany Fort', 30 May 1696, Rich and Johnson, *Copy Booke of Letters*, 272.

[54] On 12 July 1716, Knight wrote that while in England he had heard rumours of the presence of 'Yellow Mettle' to the west of Hudson Bay, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 267–71.

[55] 1 September 1716, ibid., 300; 10 May 1716, ibid., 237.

[56] In response to Knight's outburst, the Committee reminded him that the instructions were 'for y^{e} Benefitt & Advantage of the Comp^{a}, Especially when you Consider how hard it is upon us this year'. HBCA, A.6/4, ff. 3-3v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} James Knight & the Rest of Our Council at York Fort, 15 May 1716

[57] HBCA A.6/3 ff.132-133v. General Letter to Cap^{t} James Knight, 3 June 1715.

[58] 'From James Knight [to the Committee]', 17 September 1716. Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 60; He expressed similar sentiments in journal entries for 7 September 1716, writing 'If the Company has conceiv'd an Ill Opinion of me it is without cause, but if it is by any Information as the Company has had against me by any Man… he is a Villan and does me much wrong, for I have Sought their Interest with all the Dilligence and care Imaginable'. Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 306; and on 6 March 1716[7] and 23 May 1717, ibid., 371, 417–18.

the feet of rank-and-file men who were prone to taking more than their allocated share and conducting damaging side trading.[59] It is perhaps from these paranoic outbursts that the incorrect image has emerged of the HBC only reluctantly agreeing to support Knight. In reality, however, the Company clearly still supported him throughout this period. Needless to say, the HBC did not recall him under this "suspicion", and even sent him an expensive demonstration of faith and good will: 'We have Likewise sent you A Vessel with a small Boat to attend Her… in order for Discoverys & hope to hear of the Good Effects of your Industry'.[60]

THE HUNT FOR YELLOW METTLE

Quickly after arriving at York, Knight began interviewing as many indigenous traders as possible about the geography to the north of his factory. It is for this reason that Knight enlisted the services of Thanadelthur on 24 November 1714, writing that she would 'be of great service to me in my intention'.[61] While the indigenous traders did at times stretch the truth or tell Knight what he wanted to hear, both parties were happy to continue the process. While Knight grumbled that 'the Indians in general are naturally given to lying', he deployed strategies to mitigate falsehoods, most notably by independently interviewing multiple members of a group so as to cross-reference their reports.[62] This technique is most clearly expressed in the journal entry for 28 August 1716, wherein Knight explains 'Here was 2 Upland Indians Old Men that I took Occasion to Discourse them about the Upland part of the Country that lyes between them & their Enemys. I Examin'd one on

[59] HBCA A.6/3 f. 134v, Instructions to M[r] Tho. Macklish now going Chief at Albany Fort, 3 June 1715: 'We would have you also send us an Acc[tt] what Allowance of Provisions are deliver'd out weekly'. Macklish's name appears with various spellings in different sources.
[60] HBCA A.6/3, f. 133. General Letter to Cap[t] James Knight, 3 June 1715.
[61] 12 November 1714, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 97–98.
[62] 'The general letter from Mr Thomas Macklish, Chief at Albany Fort', 16 July 1716, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 44.

one Day and the other another Day and apart and they both agreed'.[63] Ultimately, he thought that he could separate fact from fiction, and that such a task was more than worth it if it meant saving the Company. As far as most of the indigenous traders were concerned, it was a good deal to be able to extract patronage and payment in exchange for answering a few questions.

Far from Glyndwr Williams' suggestion that 'Knight intended to promote a far-reaching programme of expansion and exploration', Knight had very specific goals in mind when conducting these interviews.[64] As a demonstration of his limited goals, he wrote in 1717 to discourage further exploration around Port Nelson, noting that he 'thought it not worth While to make any further Discovery of that, as y^{e} Comp was not like to have any benifitt'.[65] As his journal makes clear, his interviews concerned the whereabouts of mineral deposits, particularly gold. As he articulated on 8 May 1716,

> I find all things agree by these Indians and all the Slaves as ever I Examind, there is abundance of Indians in those parts [somewhere to his north] as never has had either trade or Commerce with any people… All their Knives, awls, handcuffs, Rings, bands as goes about their headgear, [are] of Pure Virgin Copper as they take up out a River… but that is not still what I am Endeavouring to gett, or Endeavour to Discover. Thare is a Parcell of Indians as lyes upon the west Seas as has a Yellow Mettle as they make use of \as these/ Use of Copper.[66]

While the abundance of references to copper in Knight's journal shows that it excited him as a trade commodity, it was clearly the "Yellow Mettle" that most fascinated Knight.[67] Joseph Robson would later quip that Knight had asked so many questions after its location that he 'knew the way

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[63] 28 August 1716, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 296–97. Ray uses bold to note passages in the manuscript that were highlighted by marks such as asterisks in the margins.
[64] Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth*, 86.
[65] 'Coppy of Letter Sent to M^{r} Mackcleish at Albany Fort', 11 August 1717, Knight, *The Founding of Churchill*, 155.
[66] 8 May 1716, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 231.
[67] On 7 August 1716, for example, he offered chisels to two "Northern Indians" in order to entice them to 'bring a great deal of it in a Little time to trade', 7 August 1716, ibid., 285 Other references to copper can be found on pages 48, 57, 146, 148, 222–23, 225–26, 227, 231, 236, 240–41, 247, 267–71, 277, 283, 285, 317.

to the place as well as to his bedside'.[68] Of this metal, Knight was 'fully assur'd it could be nothing \else/ but gold'.[69] Gold in such 'plenty that they ["Northern Indians"] found varse bigg Lumps and hammered it into Dishes with Stones', no less.[70] He had so much confidence in this resource that he believed that 'three parts of four of the Country Proffit might a come from the Norwar'd' [71] and, in his wildest estimation, that he could use it to increase the value of HBC stocks by 1900%.[72] With such a resource for the taking, he concluded 'I do not care whether there is a Skin in the Country or no to be had'.[73] No wonder then, that he considered himself to have 'lay'd Such a foundation for promoteing the Compys Profitte' that he was 'Sure I have taken Such care & thought… as Ever Man could do in Endeavouring to promote the Comp^{ys} Interests'.[74] In fact, in his mind, 'to make the Company Amends for thare great charge… could not be done by any other Means then the Method I have taken'.[75]

Knight planned to get his hands on this gold by trading for it. Two things, however, made the journey required for this impracticable. The first issue was that the local Cree people, York Fort's chief source of fur, were determined to prevent their northern enemies the Chipewyan (who Knight referred to as the "Northern Indians"), from encroaching on their territory. This, however, would be necessary if the Yellow Mettle was to be brought down to York. Knight planned therefore

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[68] Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, 15. A kinder description comes from Knight's surgeon, who testified that Knight was 'very earnest in this discovery, which was always his topic'. *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. 2, 1803, 231.
[69] 1 September 1716, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 298.
[70] 1 September 1716, ibid.
[71] 7 May 1716, ibid., 230. Of the territory owned by the HBC, Knight was convinced of the north that 'they have not such \another/ flower amongst them'. 1 September 1716, ibid., 299.
[72] 7 May 1716, ibid. 'Other Companys stock is so Valuable as 1000£ of East India Stock [and] would sell for as much as 4000£ of our Stock, when in Reality a 1000£ of our Stock might be made worth 5000£ of the East Indian Company Stock'. In doing so, he hoped 'to make the Company Amends for thare great charge which could not be done by any other Means then the Method I have taken'.
[73] 7 May 1716, ibid.
[74] 30 January 1716[7], ibid., 351.
[75] 7 May 1716, ibid., 230.

to do as much as he could to foster peace, writing that '[the Chipewyan] have a Yellow Mettle Amongst them… It would be no ways very Difficult to have a trade from them if wee could once bring them to a peace'.[76] His most notable action to these ends was to dispatch in 1715 an expedition led by William Stuart, accompanied by Thanadelthur and 150 Cree, to negotiate with the Chipewyan. Knight's orders to Stuart made clear that not only was he departing to 'make firm & Lasting peace' but that he 'above all' must also 'make a Strict Enquiry about their Mineralls &, likewise, if You see any thing of a Minerall, to bring Samples with You'.[77] When the party returned on 7 May 1716, it was with promising news on both counts. Knight toasted his success, writing that 'By this Success I believe our company may begin to be thought a rich Company in a few Years'.[78] When Thanadelthur told Knight about the conversations about Yellow Mettle that had taken place during the negotiations, Knight confirmed again that 'It was the Same from those Informations & reason that caused me to Use all of my Indeavour to make \a/ peace between these Nations… which I was Sensible if I did not I should meet always with Obstructions & hinderances in I what I Designd'.[79]

Secondly, a journey between York and the far north would be a dangerously long one. Knight's proposed solution to this was to build a more northerly post on the Churchill River. Knight was told by an informant whose named has not survived that once Churchill was built, 'there would be much greater trade than here and the Indians as come here is nothing in comparison

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[76] 18 August 1716, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 296–97. See also 12 July 1716, 267: 'Since I began to write upon this Subject I shall Declare the reason what Induc'd me to be at the charge & Trouble to make a peace betwixt the Northern Indians and these Southern Indians, which I have done with great difficulty & some Charge. To the first was fore something I had heard of in England, which I Enformd the Committee of before I came out of England. I found a Confirmation after I had discours'd them of what I had heard of Before. That they told me there was to the Westward of them two Places where the Indians did gett Yellow Mettle'.

[77] 27 June 1715, ibid., 146–47.

[78] 7 May 1716, ibid., 227–28. Notably, he praised Thanadelthur as the 'Chief Instrument' in this achievement.

[79] 27 July 1716, ibid., 277; A year later, he similarly employed Cree traders to 'go amongst the Cocauchee, or Crow Indians… and make a peace and bring me down a great deal of that Yellow Mettle'. 1 September 1716, ibid., 300.

of what will come there'.[80] Knight's interviews had likewise convinced him that Churchill offered access to northern traders living as far away as the 'West Sea', where he imagined many of the gold deposits to be, due to 'there being such Varse Rivers & Lakes to bring them Along for their conveniency'.[81] Churchill was also crucial in his plans for settling peace. Indeed, in describing his decision to build Churchill, Knight wrote that 'what first Induc'd me to it was in making the Peace'.[82] Likewise, after Stuart's return, Knight wrote that 'Neither could I [have] made a peace with these Indians If I had not Threatned them to go and Settle at Churchill River'.[83]

The clearest articulation of Knight's plans can be found in his journal entry for 12 July 1716. After interviewing the head of a group of traders about softish lumps of stone 'which I am Satisfy'd it is Sparr as Gold Lyes in', he took the opportunity to expound at length on all he was doing to acquire it.[84]

> Now I have been writeing upon this Subject… that the Company may be made sensible that there is a great prospect of a great deal of Treasure as may be had out of this Country if a right measure should be taken according. It may be somebody may Say why do I write of things of such a Distance and give them no account of nothing nearer? …
>
> … I shall Declare the reason what Induc'd me to be at the charge & Trouble to make a peace betwixt the Northern Indians and these Southern Indians, which I have done with great difficulty & some Charge. To the first was fore something I had heard of in England, which I Enformd the Committee of before I came out of England. I found a Confirmation after I had discours'd them of what I had heard of Before. That they told me there was to the Westward of them two Places where the Indians did gett Yellow Mettle. By the best Account I can learn from them one of them lyes upon the West Sea upon 3 Islands in the Lattitude of 70 Deg at least, by reason there is no Night all Summer, being NW^{t} & by Nor from Churchill River. The other lyes W^{t} & by N through Land near the west Seas. Now every one of these Indians tells me they have seen some of it and these men that came here in the Spring tells me the Same, but here is 2 of the Women of that Country as was taken confirms. More at large and tells me the Manner how they gett it & assures me that she does not tell a lye. She has both seen it taken & took it up out of the River her Self as it has washt down out of the Bank. It is very Yellow,

[80] 27 July 1716, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 276.
[81] 24 April 1717, ibid., 400. In his more fanciful moments, he even believed that Churchill would attract the far-away Inuit, allowing him to heal the bitter, bloody divides between them and the peoples to their south. 2 August 1716, ibid., 283.
[82] 27 July 1716, ibid., 277.
[83] 28 July 1716, ibid., 278. Stuart's instructions had included the command to 'Acquaint all they see as are their friends of our comeing to settle at Churchill River next fall'. 27 June 1715, ibid., 147.
[84] 12 July 1716, ibid., 267. It is not clear to which group the moniker 'Mountain Indians' referred to.

> Soft & heavy and that they find Lumps so bigg sometimes that they hammer it betwixt Stones and make dishes of it…
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> … I am Sensible if wee was to send the great Quantity of Beavors as is to be got in this Country it would rather make the Company poor then Rich by bringing such a great Dead Stock upon their hands more then there is a Consumption for. Therefore, it shall be all ways my Endeavour whilst I live to Encourage the bringing other Commodities and rather discourage the beavr trade, for I know the Glutt of that will be to great.[85]

This is as frank a discussion of Knight's goals, methods, and motivations as one could ask for. He had departed England with a plan to save the HBC, struggling as it was in the contemporary beaver market, by accessing remote gold deposits. Everything that he did in Hudson Bay was directed towards this end.

SETBACKS IN HUDSON'S BAY

Knight's plans to trade for the gold were dealt a mortal blow by a combination of bad luck and incompetence. When Knight had initially inherited the fort, it had been in a deplorable state, its wooden walls as 'Rotten & Soft as a piece of Wett Bread'.[86] A devastating flood in the Spring of 1715 destroyed what repairs Knight's men had managed to make since then and ruined a considerable quantity of provisions and other stores.[87] This left Knight 'very Impatient' for the annual supply ship in the Summer of 1715.[88] It did not arrive. York was left for another year on the Bay with very limited resources for subsistence and trade and Knight was forced to postpone his plans to build at Churchill. He recognized this for the portent of doom that it was, concluding his journal for the 1714-15 season with the following:

> I dread the Dismall Consequence of it… the natives that comes next year to trade will be all disappointed after they have spent the whole Summer in Comeing down and going back into their Country, which will Spoil the Next years trade… Besides, many Indians [will be] Starvd

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[85] 12 July 1716, ibid., 267–71.
[86] 16 September 1714, ibid., 82.
[87] Ibid., 130–33. On 29 August 1716, Knight made explicitly clear that 'Our Scarcity has been Occasiond by the Deluge which wetted and Rotted So much which wee could no ways preserve, the Mudd & Ice laying so thick, and the badd weather wee had for sometime after', Ibid., 297.
[88] 22 August 1715, ibid., 165.

> for want of powder & for want [of] our Settling at Churchill River. It will give such a Check to that trade that I fear it will be a hard matter to keep the Natives in Friendship… I conclude my Journal this Year with a Great deal of Sorrow & Grief for the Companys Loss & our Missfortunes.[89]

As the expected time for the supply ships again approached without any sign of their appearance in 1716, Knight's pen became bitter, writing 'But lett a Man do all as lyes in his Powers, Yett it Signify nothing but heaps trouble & care upon his head without he is Assisted by the Company'.[90] By 29 August he had become very anxious, agonising that 'here is above 1000 Indians lyes about here, which will great part Inevitably perish if a Ship does not arrive here. Besides, wee are in a very great Strait our Selves'.[91] More importantly to him, his scheme was in jeopardy: 'it troubles me very much to think what an opportunity is left so that I question whether it will be ever Recoverable again'.[92]

The supply ship finally arrived on 5 September 1716. Knight soon learned from its captain that the previous year's ship had failed to appear because its captain, Joseph Davis, had somehow failed to locate York Fort. Knight angrily branded him 'drunk or Madd' and accused him of having 'all most brought the Whole Companys Interest to Ruin here'.[93] Davis was promptly discharged by the HBC upon his return to London for his mistake and became a frequently recurring villain in Knight's text.[94] 'If Ever the Devil assisted any body to do the Compy an Injury', Knight concluded, 'they could never have done it worse than Davis did'.[95]

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[89] 10 September 1715, ibid., 169.
[90] 28 July 1716, ibid., 279.
[91] 29 August 1716, ibid., 297.
[92] 1 September 1716, ibid., 299.
[93] 5 September 1716, ibid., 304.
[94] Knight repeatedly criticized the absence of the 1715 supply ship in his journal. See ibid., 169, 279, 283, 289–90, 298–301, 304, 351, 353, 359, 363, 366, 367, 368, 374–75, 377, 385, 389, 394, 395, 400, 403, 413, 432, 436.
[95] 25 March 1717, ibid., 385.

Unfortunately, the supplies of 1716 were no relief. Shortly after sending the ship back home with a message to the Committee that 'Your ship not arriving here last year has been a very great obstruction and… put a stop and check to all I had been endeavouring to do and almost to the ruin of the country', his fears came to pass.[96] The late arrival of the 1716 supply ship had delayed the departure of indigenous trading parties, during which time a mysterious illness swept through them, forcing them to travel during the harshest months of winter – one of the coldest and snowiest winters on western Hudson Bay in 300 years, no less.[97] York was by now chronically ill-equipped to treat the sick. The interpreters that Knight relied upon to keep peace and to expand trading networks northwards perished. When Thanadelthur died, Knight grieved for both his friend and his plans:

> I am so concernd for her Death, and for fear of the rest so Dangerously Ill, as they bee that I am almost ready to break my heart to think how I be Disapointed in this Undertaking wherein I had such a fair Prospect of business as would prove so Advantageious to the Companys Flourishing.[98]

This disappointment had a profound effect on his mental condition. 'I was ready to Die Last Night', he wrote on 23 February 1716[7], 'to think what Missfortunes had befallen me, which is such a hinderance to the Company when I had brought things in Such a Likelyhood as to make the company great & flourishing & gotten Creditt to my Self'.[99]

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[96] 'The general letter from Governor Knight at York Fort in Hudsons Bay 1716', 17 September 1716, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 58.

[97] The harshness of the winter was induced by a series of volcanic eruptions in Indonesia and the Philippines that introduced great quantities of ash into the upper atmosphere, which both blocked solar radiation and increased precipitation, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 334n.

[98] 5 February 1716[7], ibid., 355. Similarly, he had written on the 4th: 'It is a Miserable case that has befallen us if they all should Die and all this by Capt Davis's Obstinancy. I have done all what can be to preserve their Lives, but I fear all in Vain. This Misfortune by the Ships not arriveing no man can be Sensible what Trouble it has created me. If those die it will be a great Miscarriage to the Company in this undertakeing for here is none that can Speak a Word of this Country Indians Language, nor Understand any thing of English', 353.

[99] 23 February 1716[7], ibid., 363; Three days later he wrote that whenever he considered how 'the best designs that e're was projected in the NWt for the Companys profit has been frustrated by other Men Neglect', he suffered 'such a Melancholy… that I fear I shall hardly recover', 26 February 1716[7], ibid., 367.

Peace between the indigenous groups near York strained severely under this weight. Knight found himself so low on supplies that he did not even have so much as a pipe with which to conclude new agreements.[100] He noted rumours spreading among the Cree that peace with the Chipewyan had caused the mysterious disease of which they suffered.[101] By 30 April 1717 the Cree were in 'Such an Ill humour that they are Resolve to Seek Revenge… [I] shall have much adoo to keep them from going too Warr again'.[102] At his wits end, he wrote that Davis 'Deserves too be hangd'.[103] By May things were so bad that Knight was forced to resolve that he would end trade with the Cree if war broke out.[104] That he – a fur trader – was willing to sacrifice his best access to furs in order to protect the peace that held the key to his precious "Yellow Mettle" is indicative of the great faith he put in it.

Relief came to Knight in the form of a new Chipewyan-Cree interpreter who arrived on 6 May and a thaw that allowed him to begin cutting timber at Churchill River for the greatly delayed new fort, but it was too late.[105] Before leaving for Churchill, he received direct testimony that his original plan had failed. A visiting trader from the north told him that sickness and starvation had so ravaged his family that 'he hath Never been able too go through too Look after the Yellow

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[100] 11 March 1716[7], Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 374–75; The importance of a pipe in facilitating agreements between indigenous groups and fur traders is discussed in Christopher Parsons, 'Natives, Newcomers, and Nicotiana: Tobacco in the History of the Great Lakes Region', in *French and Indians in the Heart of North America, 1630-1815*, ed. Robert Englebert and Guillaume Teasdale (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 21–42; and Jacob F. Lee, *Masters of the Middle Waters: Indian Nations and Colonial Ambitions Along the Mississippi* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2019).
[101] 17 April 1717, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 393.
[102] 30 April 1717, ibid., 403.
[103] 4 May 1717, ibid., 405. Similarly, on 19 April, Knight wrote: 'he that has been the occasion of all this, I wonder how he can have the face to appear amongst Men, but doth not retire into the most remotest parts of the Earth from Amongst Men. Yett I shall never forget him, nor the Comp^{y} will never have reason to forgive him', 394.
[104] 3 May 1717, ibid.
[105] 6 May 1717, ibid., 406–7. Knight paid an extraordinary fee of over 60 skins value in goods for the interpreter, writing that 'have her I must. Lett it cost me what Will for here is no one Else as can Speak one Word of that Country Language'.

Mettle, or gett so farr as it is'.[106] Once he finished construction at Churchill, Knight resolved that in view of these setbacks he had done all that he could now hope to achieve for the HBC's salvation from the posts on the Bay.[107] 'What a world of Trouble has the Ships brought upon me, one of them by Returning back not finding his Port, the other Ariveing here so late, w^{ch} has Quite Overthrowd & Put by all my Designs & Allmost to the Ruin of the Comp^{y} besides', he concluded, writing that 'I May Safely Say it, there is hardly any Man Liveing besides My Self will be Able to Recover It Again'.[108] How Knight intended to recover it, and what brings his story into this narrative, was his thrilling Plan B.[109]

THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

As we have already seen, Knight believed that the Yellow Mettle lay somewhere to his north, and that some of it could be found on three islands by the West Sea.[110] Crucially, he also heard reports of 'a very Great River that comes out of the West Sea and is in the bottom of a very Great Bay where there lyes 3 Islands… where them Indians Inhabit thare and brings Yellow Mettle from thence and wares it'.[111] This was fantastic news – a great, wonderful, vein into the continent

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[106] 11 June 1717, ibid., 432.

[107] Certainly, his time at Churchill made it clear to Knight that he could no longer bear life there. His journal made constant reference to the miseries of such a life, with particular emphasis laid upon the 'intolerable' mosquitos, Knight, *The Founding of Churchill*, 118–19, 122–25, 134, 142, 147.

[108] 14 July 1717, ibid., 112.

[109] Only the first two months of Knight's journal at Churchill have survived, so we do not know if Knight received any more information during that time that would have solidified these plans. He had dispatched Richard Norton to the North from Churchill, and Norton may have carried promising news when he returned in the winter. Glyndwr Williams speculates that he may have carried promising reports regarding the deep westward opening at Chesterfield Inlet. Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 8.

[110] 12 July 1716, Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 269, 'lyes upon the West Sea upon 3 Islands in the Lattitude of 70 Deg at least, by reason there is no Night all Summer, being NWt & by Nor from Churchill River. The other lyes Wt & by N through Land near the west Seas'.

[111] 10 May 1716, ibid., 236. He also received reports of a 'Great River' to his north, which 'runs into the Sea on the Back of this Country', where 'the rocks are of Divers Coulours & by Description full of Mineralls', 27 June 1715, ibid., 146; 'a large River, or Streights', where 'the tides Ebbs & flows at a great rate & that it hardly freezes some Winters, 1 December 1714, ibid., 99-100'; and 'a River that runs down into the other Sea beyond Churchill River head', 26 June 1715, ibid., 145. We can now identify these as the Coppermine, Mackenzie, and Athabasca Rivers, but to Knight they sometimes blurred together to create a conflated image of an even more promising river.

through which traders carrying gold could travel. Such a river could also, of course, be accessed through its mouth, via the sea. Knight heard reports of ships doing just that and assumed them to be Tartar or Japanese in origin.[112] When he asked a Chipewyan trader to draw him an outline of the coast in May 1716, he began to suspect that the shape of North America was such that he too would be able to. The map showed a coastline met by seventeen rivers, with the Yellow Mettle to be found at 'one of the furthest River'.[113] He was informed that no wood grew north of the third river from Churchill, but that forest coverage resumed after the thirteenth. From this he deduced – as 'it is Impossible that there should be more Wood to the Norward then to the Southward' – that the coast turned southward again at some point to the northwest, and that the Chipewyan map therefore concluded somewhere on the west coast of America.[114] In confirmation of this theory, the trader identified the third-from-last river as 'the Copper River which I know Runs into the West Sea'.[115] If he was right, one could sail north from York and Churchill along such a coastline, follow it as it turned, and arrive at the Yellow Mettle somewhere on the West Sea. 'Please God to Spare me Life and health', he concluded of the gold and copper, 'I will endeavour to find a way to \come at/ both, either by trade, or a Vessell'.[116] When his plans for the former were foiled in dramatic fashion, he would turn to the latter.

In describing his belief in a seaborne route from Hudson's Bay to the West Sea, Knight was of course expressing his faith in a Northwest Passage, or as he phrased it, 'from their Discourse

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[112] 12 July 1716, ibid., 270.
[113] 12 May 1716, ibid., 241. A reproduction of this map survives at HBCA G.1/19. Sketch of rivers between Prince of Wales' Fort and the 'Northern most Copper Mine'. It is unknown when this was produced, but the map includes a reference to Christopher Middleton, perhaps demonstrating that its author pictured Knight within the lineage of Northwest Passage explorers.
[114] 12 May 1716, ibid., 240. Although Knight was making reasonable assumptions about tree growth, the boreal forest actually extends northward along the Mackenzie River to a point around 1,100 kilometres north of Churchill.
[115] 12 May 1716, ibid. Of course, in reality, the Coppermine River runs into the Arctic Ocean.
[116] 10 May 1716, ibid., 236.

I begin to think there may be a Passage or Straits that parts America from Asia'.[117] Knight even occasionally seemed to picture himself as part of a legacy of explorers stretching back through the history of the Passage. After receiving the fateful map, he remarked: 'And now I find what a great oversight was in me to Lend Cap[t] [Samuel] Jones my book of the Northern Journalls... which would have given me a great light so farr as they had been on those Discoverys'.[118] Similarly, when choosing the location for his new fort at Churchill he picked 'the Place where the Danes had Wintred a 100 Years Since', setting himself up beside the remains of Jens Munk's seventeenth century expedition in search of the Passage.[119] Knight clearly respected the old explorer, as he often justified his decisions by noting that Munk's judgement had been the same as his.[120] Where he differed was that his proposed destination was not Asia, but a gold-laden part of North America that one would pass along the way to it.

With the resolve that he could access the northern gold and rescue the HBC by traversing the Northwest Passage, Knight asked to be recalled from the Bay. The Company consented, and he sailed home on the *Albany* frigate. Knight, 'appearing before y[e] Committee was bid welcome Home' on 18 November 1718, but it was not until 20 March 1718[9] that a letter from Knight in which he outlined his plans was formally considered by the Committee and a sub-committee formed for further discussions.[121] This delay in formalities is likely because Knight had been laid low over winter by illness, or as one contemporary newspaper phrased it, 'by the excessive Cold he got in his Limbs'.[122] On 24 April 1719, Governor Bibye Lake and his Deputy Samuel Pitts

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[117] 12 May 1716, ibid., 240.
[118] 12 May 1716, ibid., 241.
[119] 14 July 1717, Knight, *The Founding of Churchill*, 113.
[120] Ibid., 115, 119, 120, 125.
[121] HBCA A A.1/33, f. 268. Governor and Committee Minutes, 18 November 1718; HBCA A.1/117, f. 12. Foul copies of Governor and Committee minutes, 20 March 1718[9].
[122] Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 9, quoting from the newspaper *Saturday's Post* for 20 December 1718. Williams utilizes this source when discussing Knight's health but does not

reported to the Committee 'that they had several meetings with said Cap[t] Knight & Confident of his proposal made some progress towards an agreement with him'.[123] Despite Lake's order that 'the whole Committee be desired to meet this afternoon in order to finish the agreement', it was not until 1 May 1719 that 'agreement with Cap[t] James Knight to goe upon Discovery, was this day sealed with the Comp[s] seale'.[124]

This delay in formalities might be put forward as evidence that the Company was resistant to Knight's suggestions, but this is not the case.[125] Lake's command of the 24th certainly makes him sound eager to reach a formal agreement regarding such plans, rather than wary of them. There is also considerable evidence that the Company had begun to put Knight's plans into action before Knight's formal proposal had even arrived, let alone an agreement reached.[126] Glyndwr Williams points to minutes from February 1718[9] that state a new ship 'for Discovery[s]' was being built as evidence of the Committee's foreknowledge of Knight's plans, but I propose that they knew at an even earlier date as 'an Agreement with M[r] Crotchett as Boat Builder to Build A small vessell of about 40 Tons' was made on 19 December 1718, only a month after Knight's return.[127] Knight would sail into the Arctic with a 40-ton vessel freshly constructed by Mr Crotchett. There can be no doubt that the ships were one and the same. Since the ship *Mary* had only been a year earlier,

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make the connection between this illness and the unexpected wait that occurred between Knight's arrival home and the formal discussion that took place regarding his proposals.

[123] HBCA A.1/117, f. 17. Foul copies of Governor and Committee minutes, 24 April 1719.

[124] Ibid.; HBCA A.1/117, f. 18v. Foul copies of Governor and Committee minutes, 1 May 1719.

[125] It is common to see historians describe Knight slowly winning over an initially cautious Committee, such as in Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:445, 'he silenced whatever opposition the Committee held and won full support for his plans for a sea-voyage, of discovery and gold-and-copper-seeking'.

[126] The appointment of George Berley and David Vaughan, who had sailed home to London with Knight, as Knight's ship captains also suggests that these men had been told of and readied for Knight's plans on their journey across the Atlantic.

[127] Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 9; HBCA A.1/117, f. 9v. Foul copies of Governor and Committee minutes, 6 February 1718[9]; HBCA A.1/117, f. 7. Foul copies of Governor and Committee minutes, 19 December 1718. It should be noted also that Williams does not connect the matter of when the Company learned of Knight's plans to his judgement of whether it was interested in them.

there would be little need for a new ship if business was proceeding only as normal. Lest there be any doubt over the Company's intentions for Crotchett's new boat, it was christened *Discovery* on 14th April 1719, weeks before the final agreement with Knight was sealed.[128] If the Company had little interest in sending Knight after the Northwest Passage, why were they eager to build a ship for him – no small commitment at a cost of £589.15.8 – months before an actual agreement had been concluded?[129]

Considering this, and the fact that the resultant expedition closely fit the vision outlined by Knight in his York Fort journals, it is clear that the Committee and Knight were alike in purpose, and only hashed out details during their Spring negotiations.[130] The most important issue to be ironed out had been the financing of the expedition. In the end it was agreed that Knight would put forward £142 3s 1d from his own funds, 'being his proportion of 1/8 part of The Cargoe and fitting out the Albany Friggtt and Discovery Sloop on A Discovery to the Northward in Hudsons Bay'.[131] This novel solution to financing the expedition, which the HBC never repeated, more accurately understood as a symptom of the financial realities facing the HBC at the time, has been seized upon in attempts to demonstrate that Knight had to strongarm the Committee into accepting his plans and that such was its disinterest that he had to pay for the expedition himself.[132] Williams,

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[128] HBCA A.1/117, f. 15. Foul copies of Governor and Committee minutes, 14 April 1719. Other evidence of the Company's eagerness for Knight's plans can be seen in HBCA A.1/117, f. 12, 20 March 1718[9], when Berley was commanded to bring the *Albany* into dock as soon as possible, presumably so that it could be relieved of normal duty and prepared for exploration, and HBCA A.1/117, f. 13, 10 April 1719, when it was duly ordered to have its rigging changed to match the *Discovery*, clearly indicating that they were being prepared as an exploratory pair at this early stage.

[129] HBCA A.14/7, f. 139. Grand Ledger, 1719.

[130] 'They were instructions which clearly represented Knight's personal views', Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:446.

[131] Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 10. This is generous accounting on behalf of the HBC. Their maths does not include the price of the construction of the *Discovery*, £589.15.8, only the outfitting of the two ships for the specific needs of the voyage of discovery, £912.0.10 for the *Albany* and £225.4.1 for the *Discovery*. HBCA A.14/7, ff. 139, 141, 142. Grand Ledger, 1719.

[132] Ibid., 18; Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 68; Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*, 168; Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, Appendix I, 15; Christopher Middleton, *A Vindication of the Conduct of Captain Christopher*

for example, highlighted the deal in making such an argument because the Company had, in his words, 'by this date had largely recovered from the disruption of the war years and functioned in a conventional business-like manner, paying dividends to the shareholders'.[133] However, this is misleading. 1718 was the first time the HBC had paid dividends in decades.[134] The Company went on to turn a loss in 1719.[135] Despite a recovery in revenues in 1720, Governor Lake summoned the General Court of the Hudson's Bay Company for three special sessions to discuss 'the scarcity of money and deadness of credit' after his plans to increase the value of HBC stocks failed.[136] The fact that Knight received promises that he would secure a 1/8 share of any riches he secured also offers another possible explanation for his personal contribution to the funding – that it was pushed for by Knight rather than the Committee, and serves as another example of the entrepreneurial spirit that had led him in 1713 to negotiate a guarantee for a tenth of any mineral profits he uncovered in the Bay.[137]

A. S. Morton has, unique in his agreement with my conclusions, argued that Lake's tripling of HBC stock following Knight's departure [138] could only have been justified by a belief that Knight's expedition would produce a great expansion in Company trade, therefore meaning that the Committee 'were as much carried away by the dreams of copper and gold as the oversees

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Middleton, in a Late Voyage on Board His Majesty's Ship the Furnace, for Discovering a North-West Passage to the Western American Ocean: In Answer to Certain Objections and Aspersions of Arthur Dobbs, Esq... (London: Jacob Robinson, 1743), 18.

[133] Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 10.

[134] HBCA A.15/6. Grand Journal, 22 December 1718; HBCA A.42/1, ff. 1-1v. Governor and Committee Dividend Payment Book, 15 November 1718.

[135] The Company's ledgers indicate that £27,381.17.5 in debit was outpaced by £36,398.7.9 in credit for the year. HBCA A.14/7, f. 143. Grand Ledger, 1719.

[136] HBCA A.2/1, f. 39. A General Court held for the Hudsons Bay Company, 23 December 1720. See also HBCA A.2/1, f. 36. 23 August 1720 and HBCA A.2/1, f. 36v. 29 August 1720. The General Court usually only gathered once a year to sign off on the continued premiership of its governor, to call three extra sessions was an extraordinary measure.

[137] Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 68.

[138] £31,500 of stock in 1719 became £103,950 in 1721, HBCA A.42/1, ff. 2v-3v. Governor and Committee dividend payment book.

Governor'.[139] However, while I agree with the sentiment, it is hard to claim that Knight's expedition was the sole reason behind the HBC's stock manoeuvring. After all, as Glyndwr Williams states, it is difficult to see why the Company would have waited fifteen months after Knight set sail to act in this way.[140] It is best to conclude instead that the HBC was interested in expanding their trade in response to their previous economic hardships in a general sense, perhaps inspired by the growth of the South Sea Company. Rather than dismissing the stock activity as unrelated to Knight's expedition, we should consider both schemes as representative of the same mood that defined Company activity at the time; clearly, with the HBC's financial future still unsure, the Committee was willing to gamble on schemes that might increase its revenue. And gamble it did on Knight – it is undeniable that in paying for 7/8s of the expedition, the HBC wagered considerable resources on the Northwest Passage when it could ill afford to suffer great losses.

Another concern that likely would have arisen was Knight's health. The prospect of sending a septuagenarian into Arctic waters would have certainly raised eyebrows. In fact, as early as 1698 the HBC had thought it prudent to send private instructions to York Fort about what should be done 'If it should please God Govern[r] James Knight should dye'.[141] When Knight told Henry Kelsey, his successor as Governor in the Bay, that he would inform the Company in person what supplies were needed at Churchill rather than writing an official requisition, Kelsey worried that Knight would not survive the journey to make such a request, complaining to Richard Staunton that 'we must trust to his life which is No Certainty'.[142] The fact that Knight's plans were put into

[139] A. S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1939), 140.
[140] Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 16–17.
[141] HBCA A.6/3, f. 42. Private Instructions in Case of Mortalety of Govern[r] James Knight, 8 June 1698.
[142] HBCA B.239/b/1 f. 13. Coppy of a Letter to Mr. Staunton, 28 March 1719.

motion despite this issue is further testament to the faith the Company put in him, and to the fact that they were excited enough by the possibility of the northern gold that they were willing to take serious risks in order to find it.

While Knight's official instructions have not survived, an extant draft copy has, which reads:

> Upon the Experience wee have had of Y^{r} Ability and Conduct in the Management of our Affairs, wee have Upon your Aplication to us fitted out the Albany Figg^{tt} Cap^{t} Geo Berley Commander, The Discovery Cap^{t} David Vaughan Commander Upon a Discovery to the Northward & to y^{i} End have Given you Power and Authority to act and do all things Relating to the Said Voyage…
>
> You are with the first Opertunity of Wind and Weath^{r} to Depart Gravesend on your Intended Voyages by Gods Permission to find out the Streight of Arrian [sic], in Order to Discover Gold and Other Valuable Comodities to the Northward According to the tenor of y^{r} Articles to us.[143]

These instructions clearly show that the discovery of Northwest Passage was seen simply as a means to an end in this project, presented without reference to any higher aim or cultural fascination. They also demonstrate the faith shown to Knight by the Committee, not only noting the Committee's satisfaction with his prior performance, but also offering him almost complete autonomy regarding the conduct of the voyage. Committee minutes also record that Knight's intended destination was 'A Passage bejond Sr Thos Buttons which is Supposed to Lye to the northwards of 64 degrees', wherein he might 'Englarge & Improve ye Comps Trade with A Discovery of severll mines according to ye Information of Indians to our Govr in the country'.[144] "Sr Thos Buttons" referred to Roe's Welcome Sound, or Ne Ultra, where Thomas Button had in 1613 observed a strong tide suggestive of a Northwest Passage, and Luke Foxe had

[143] HBCA A.6/4, 39v. A Draft of Cap^{t} James Knights Instructions, 4 June 1719; Instructions given to the expedition to be opened in the event of Knight's death have also survived. These concur, reading: 'Proceed on your Intended Voyage to the Latitude 64 Degrees, & Endeavour to find out the Streights of Anian, and to make what Discoveries you Posibly can, and to Obtain in all sorts of Trade & Commerce for Such Comodities as shall be for the Companies Advantage Especially to find out the Gold and Copper Mines if possible According to the Directions which Cap^{t} James Knight will have Left behind him for that Purpose, in Writing, and after you have Obtained the Best Cargoe you Can, then to make the best of your way Directly home for the Port of London', HBCA A.6/4, f. 32v. The Underwritten is to be Sealed up and not to be Opened but in Case of the Death of Cap^{t} James Knight, 1719.

[144] HBCA A.1/117, f. 24v. Foul copies of Governor and Committee minutes, 4 June 1719.

in 1631 written '[this is] where the passage I hope doth lye'.[145] This serves as another indication that Knight and the Committee were aware of the history of Northwest Passage explorers and that they understood their current expedition and all its inherent assumptions and commercial values as being a natural part of that, as it was contemporaneously understood.

The expedition was also ordered to 'not touch at any of our Factories nor come into any Port or trade at any Place to the Southw[d] of 64 Degrees, North Latitude nor to Come to Churchill River Port Nelson River or Hayes River, but in Case of the Utmost Extremity'.[146] Similarly, Knight was told not to 'Neither Molest or hinder' the business of Henry Kelsey, to whom he was commanded to show 'all Possible Respect'.[147] While this injunction may suggest a hostility towards the Northwest Passage's effect on the trade of the Bay, reminiscent of the dire warnings the HBC made about Dobbs' expeditions in the mid-century, the strongest clue towards its true intention is the plea for respect. The Committee were trying keep apart two men who were both important to business but unfortunately held each other in contempt. Relations had become so strained between Knight and Kelsey that Knight deliberately avoided his former deputy on his journey home from Churchill, ordering the *Albany* to dock not at York but instead at the nearby Port Nelson, and communicating with him only through letters carried by George Berley.[148] Even

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[145] Luke Fox, *The Voyages of Captain Luke Foxe of Hull, and Captain Thomas James of Bristol, in Search of a North-West Passage, in 1631-32; with Narratives of the Earlier North-West Voyages of Frobisher, Davis, Weymouth, Hall, Knight, Hudson, Button, Gibbons, Bylot, Baffin, Hawkridge, and Others*, ed. Miller Christy, vol. 2 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1894), 370.

[146] HBCA A.6/4, f. 32v. The Underwritten is to be Sealed up and not to be Opened but in Case of the Death of Cap[t] James Knight, 1719.

[147] HBCA A.6/4, 39v. A Draft of Cap[t] James Knights Instructions, 4 June 1719.

[148] HBCA B.239/a/5, f. 32v. York Factory post journal, 14 September 1718.

It is unclear whether Kelsey had any inclination of Knight's plans for a maritime expedition. It is commonly assumed that he did not know, e.g., in Knight, *The Founding of Churchill*, 81, due to Kelsey's decision to launch his own seafaring expedition northwards in 1719, but the Committee did write in their annual letter to Kelsey that year that 'Wee Observe in your Letter to Gov[r] Knight Dated the 20[th] Sep[br] last From York Fort to Port Nelson River, You Write Concerning a Discourse you formerly had to him Concerning the Gold. Pray Explain yourself in a particular Letter what that Discourse was That past between you', HBCA A.6/4, f. 29. [Committee to] Cap[t] Henry Kelsey & Councell at York Fort, 1719. Kelsey's response has not survived, so we do not know whether this referred merely to a

though Knight's expedition ultimately did not visit York, Kelsey still complained that the 'Gold finders' had 'Spoiled our Trade' after they traded on the coast to the north.[149] It was vital that potential squabbling be avoided, due to its capacity to damagingly upset the precarious morale of the fort, as James Isham and William Moor would unfortunately prove three decades later. The Committee was certainly worried about fort discipline during the transition of governorship, ordering Kelsey:

> as soon as Govern^{r} Knight is departed from the Country, you are to call all your men together… & in hearing of y^{m} all Cause your Comission to be openly & distinctly Read… You are also to Inform them the Disasters that have happen'd to y^{e} Comp^{a} during your Memory through Cowardice & Neglect & that they should behave themselves like faithful Subjects.[150]

The arrival of a rambunctious Knight to undermine Kelsey would have been the last thing they wanted.

Knight set sail from Gravesend on 4 June 1716. He was outfitted as well as could be expected, with nine months of provisions, large quantities of preservatives with which to add to these, ample trading goods, and plenty of building materials in case he had to winter, including 3,500 bricks.[151] What he was aiming to achieve was clear to all. In response to his departure, for example, Thomas McCliesh, factor at Albany Fort, wrote to the Committee: 'We understand that Captain James Knight is gone upon a discovery to the northward. God send them good success, that it may in some part defray the great charge your honours has been at'.[152] This was understood

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conversation about general attempts to access the gold or more specifically to Knight's ultimate plans. It is within reason that Kelsey might have dispatched his own expedition despite foreknowledge of Knight's plans in an effort to compete with the older man, but there is not enough evidence to confidently support such an argument.

[149] HBCA B.239/a/5, f. 80v. York Factory post journal, 10 August 1720.

[150] HBCA A.6/4, f. 27. Instructions to Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey, Govern^{r} of y^{e} Bay & Streights of Hudson, 30 May 1718.

[151] Michael Payne, *Prince of Wales' Fort: A Social History, 1717-1782* (Parks Canada, 1979), 111; Robson claimed that he also sailed with large iron bound chests ready to be filled with gold, but this was probably literary flourish on his behalf. Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, Appendix I, 37.

[152] General Letter from Thomas McCliesh, 31 August 1719, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 77.

even outside of Company circles.[153] In reporting his departure, *Saturday's Post* wrote that 'Captain Knight imbarked on board a Ship in the River for the North Pole, in order to make a Discovery of a Gold Mine in Terra Borealis'.[154] That issue also portentously carried a satirical poem about the 'Strange magick Power of Gold'.[155] This magic would ultimately seal his fate. He would never again be seen by white men, and it would be another half-century before his shipwrecks were even found.[156]

SOME POINTS OF COMPARISON

In comparison to the ways in which later explorers engaged with the Northwest Passage and the Arctic world at large, Knight was obviously much more single-mindedly focused on its commercial possibilities. It is worth, however, discussing the presence of certain understandings that would later define the Northwest Passage in Knight's worldview as demonstrations of how much they would grow in importance.

While Arthur J. Ray describes Knight with reference to science as 'a keen and highly systematic observer of his physical surroundings', this is an exaggeration, perhaps an attempt from Ray to make his subject seem more relevant to longer-term trends.[157] Ray points to episodes such as Knight's description of permafrost, the first made by a HBC employee, but these are superficial in content.[158] It is surely beyond reason to claim that Knight was here exercising the spirit of

[153] It should be noted that Knight's expedition received exponentially less public attention than the expeditions of the nineteenth century. He was categorically not a celebrity.
[154] Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 73, quoting from *Saturday's Post*, 6 June 1719.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Coincidentally by Samuel Hearne, another important figure in this dissertation.
[157] Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*, 44.
[158] 'The rest of the Men digging the Moat – it being froze so at Topp & bottom that wee make but hard work of it, but the bottom I believe has been froze So ever Since the Creation of the World, 21 September 1715 ibid., 172–73.See also 10 October 1716, ibid., 321: 'pild part of the Trench up about the NW^{t} flanker, but the Old frost not being out of the Ground where wee had Dugg so deep, & it freezing hard now, I believe wee shall not be able to do any more this Year. Wee found the Ground to be thawd no more then 8 / & ½ [2.6 m] before wee came to the Old Frost. So the

scientific enquiry that would move explorers in the age of Joseph Banks to record "disinterested" measurements in botany, hydrography, and the like. Knight understood permafrost only in relation to how it affected his immediate goals, much in the same way that he viewed his interviews of indigenous people, which one would similarly be erroneous to liken to the geographic and ethnographic pursuits of later centuries. The commercial success of the HBC was always at the forefront of Knight's mind in such activities, and this attitude was reflected in his attitude toward the Northwest Passage.

The orders given to David Vaughan, captain of the *Discovery*, contain instructions not given to the *Albany*, which focus on geography and hydrography in a manner superficially reminiscent of those that would be routinely given to more scientific explorers who pursued "pure" cartographic progress a century later. They specify that while under normal circumstances Vaughan should sail to 'what Place Cap^{t} James Knight shall Order you to Sail to', if the ships were to lose one another, he should

> proceed to the Latitude 64 Degrees North Latitude and from thence Northward to endeavour to find out the Streights of Anian, and as Often as Conveniently you can to send your Boats to the Shoar side in order to find how high the Tide Rises and w^{ht} Point of the Compas the flood Comes from, and to make Such Discoveries and Obtain all such Trade as you Can.[159]

It is important to note, however, that these discoveries are explicitly framed as being the means by which Vaughan might obtain trade, and that his commands are not accompanied by any articulation of the greater purposes of science and discovery that defined the conceptions of these later periods.[160]

Summer never thaws above the Depth of what the following Winter freezes'. The key thing to note in this passage is that these measurements are purely in service of judging whether work could continue that season.

[159] HBCA A.6/4, 38v. Sailing Orders and Instructions to Cap^{t} David Vaughan, 4 June 1719.

[160] See Chapters Four and Five for such articulations.

Knight's treatment of astronomical phenomena in his journals demonstrate not only his lack of scientific engagement, but also the absence of another hallmark of a later age: aesthetic appreciation. Typical passages read: 'This Evening the Petty Dancers were Seen very much. Then men fetch home firewood' and 'Abundance of Petty Dancers Appear'd in thee Sky Last Night & was wonderous bright. I did gett 16 fish in the Six Netts'.[161] While writers in the nineteenth century were often moved to Romantic rhapsody by the Sublime sight of the aurora borealis, Knight mentioned it as offhandedly as he would wind conditions, before abruptly moving on to more practical matters.[162] The concept of natural beauty itself is entirely absent in Knight's writings. Nature instead essentially exists only as the source of weather or mosquitos, both of which are only worthy of elaboration when they bother him by holding back his immediate goals.[163] It is never personified or beholden.

The "glory" of exploration itself, as articulated by men like John Barrow, particularly in the nineteenth century, was also a goal never expressly articulated by Knight or the Company in this period. While Knight occasionally placed himself within a history of exploration, he never stated that he admired the exploratory feats of his predecessors or implied that his efforts should receive equivalent reverence. Such sentiments, however, are hinted at through hearsay courtesy of Henry Kelsey. Kelsey had won admirers within the Company in the 1690s with a spectacular inland trek, and he believed that Knight's animosity towards him was borne of a jealousy regarding

[161] 10 February 1715[6], Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*; 18 July 1717, Knight, *The Founding of Churchill*, 123.
[162] For two specific examples of such florid descriptions in both official reports and popular culture see: SPRI MS 274; BJ OS [Pullen] ff. 8-9, Extract of Notes of Vice Admiral W. J. S. Pullen, 5 January 1882 and Gordon Stables, *Wild Adventures in Wild Places* (London: Cassell, Petter and Galpin, 1881), 40. For a broader discussion see Potter, Russell A. *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).
[163] Knight was particularly bothered by mosquitos at Churchill and made constant reference to them in his journal. See, as examples, Knight, *The Founding of Churchill*, 119, 123–24, 124–25, 147.

this. When, in the lead up to Knight's fateful expedition, the older man accused Kelsey of allowing stores to be stolen, he wrote: 'I looke on this and the rest as the Efects of their [Knight and Berley's] Mallice to turn me out of my Employ for no other reason than their being afraid of being out done but be it as it will it shall not lessen my endeavours'.[164] Kelsey believed that Knight had also departed Hudson Bay deliberately late in the season so as to prevent Kelsey from sailing to Churchill for winter to prepare there for his own expedition northwards.[165] Whether any of this was in fact the case is unknown. Such sentiments were never raised in the writings of Knight or the Committee. Kelsey's understanding of the public's relationship to the explorer in such respects was generally ahead of his time, rather than representative of it, as will be explored in Chapter Two.

CONCLUSION

Knight's ghost would be summoned by both the HBC and its critics during the mid-eighteenth-century arguments over the Company's involvement in the pursuit of the Northwest Passage. A heavily Romanticized image of Knight, lost and alone in the Arctic, noble but unpatriotically abandoned, would also later be mobilized as a tragic predecessor by nineteenth century proponents of rescue missions for John Franklin.[166] His main biographers, Beattie and Geiger, concluded that 'Knight was lured by the recurring dream of the first explorers'.[167] Ultimately, however, it is hard to tie Knight, a figure bound so tightly in the framework of his own circumstances, into such simple, continuous stories of the Passage as these. His closest comparison would instead probably

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[164] A year later, Kelsey was still fuming at his 'great Dolor to be represented so Odiously', writing that he believed 'yt is a mans reputation wch is more Valuable yn Life itselfe', Kelsey, *The Kelsey Papers*, xxix–xxx.
[165] 'Capt Barley [Berley] arrived with you Aug 21st but I can not Imagine how he Spent so much time haveing no Cargo to put out nor take in unless it was purely to hinder me from getting into that River this fall', HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 9. Copy of the Letter Sent to Mr Staunton at Churchill River, 27 January 1718[9].
[166] Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*, 167.
[167] Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 7.

be the Elizabethan Martin Frobisher, who gave up on discovery and the Northwest Passage to dig for gold on Baffin Island. Both men would have been unrecognizable as peers to Arthur Dobbs or John Franklin.

Knight instead represents how much the Passage changed over time. Knight's Northwest Passage – a commercial corridor that he did not even intend to travel entirely through, a tool in a personal mission to save the HBC with no inherent connotations of personal, national, or scientific value – bears very little resemblance to the scientific Passage of Joseph Banks, the prestigious Passage of George Simpson, the Romantic Passage of John Barrow, or the devastating North of Edwin Landseer. The cultural evolutions necessary to generate such figures and such understandings of the Northwest Passage had yet to take place in British culture. Knight also represents the changing manner in which the Company at large perceived the potential effects of the Passage's discovery. They were eager to follow Knight, but, as we shall see, trembled at the prospect of Christopher Middleton's expedition only two decades later. This last discontinuity, however, presents in a deeper sense the chief continuity that we can draw from Knight's story. In his words, 'I know my duty too well to do anything that may be prejudicial to the Company, I would sooner die first'.[168] It would be in this spirit that servants of the HBC continued to act with regards to the Northwest Passage throughout its history.

[168] 'The general letter from Governor Knight at York Fort in Hudsons Bay', 17 September 1716, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 61.

CHAPTER TWO:

SLEEPING AT THE EDGE OF A FROZEN SEA?

'The Company have for eighty years slept at the edge of a frozen sea; they have shewn no curiosity to penetrate farther themselves, and have exerted all their art and power to crush that spirit in others'.

– Joseph Robson, 1752.[1]

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Robson's classic invective, quoted above, did not succeed in its aim – the non-renewal of the HBC's charter – but it did make a lasting impression, becoming the accepted image of the Company's policy in the 1720s and 1730s. While the Gothic aspect of Knight's melancholy fate has earned him some modern scholarly attention, the exploits of his immediate successors, absent of any such dramatic central incident, have largely slipped from mind, allowing Robson's half-truths to assume centre-stage.[2] All too often this period is passed over as if the Company truly did do nothing but sleep. A typical narrative will leap from Knight's expedition to the rude awakening by Arthur Dobbs, ignoring these years entirely.[3] The truth, however, is that Company men continued their fascination with the north in earnest for some time after Knight's departure.

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[1] Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, 6.

[2] There are no equivalent publications, for example, to Knight, *Life and Death by the Frozen Sea*.

[3] A typical passage can be found in Thomson, *The Search for the North-West Passage*, 132: '[The] Hudson's Bay Company, which had lost £7,000 on the venture, wrote off the amount to experience and put firmly behind them the temptation to explore. In the early 1730s, the matter of the North-west Passage came to life again. This time the man responsible was a wealthy Ulster landowner, named Arthur Dobbs'; For other examples see: Delgado, *Across the Top of the World*, 52; Bown, *The Company*, 104–5; Edward J. Cashin, *Governor Henry Ellis and the Transformation of British North America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 16; Brendan Lehane, *The Northwest Passage* (Alexandria: Time-Life Books, 1981), 71. This list does not include the many books that mention neither this period, nor Knight or Dobbs either, their focuses tellingly elsewhere, such as Berton, *The Arctic Grail*.

Furthermore, it is short-sighted to assume that we can learn nothing about the Northwest Passage from those years in which the Company did eventually turn to more insular policies.

It has also been commonly assumed that when the Company's interest in the north did subside it was because the Company had simply taken fright at the expensive disappearance of Knight and his ships. Brendan Lehane, as one example from many, wrote that 'despair over Knight's fate brought on a recurrence of the Hudson's Bay Company's old lethargy'.[4] However, while there would have presumably been some shock within the Company at Knight's demise, there is actually startlingly little documentary evidence of this. Of the only two extant mentions of his disappearance by the hand of the Committee, one was to plainly write off his expedition as 'castaway to the Northward' and the other was idle speculation held within instructions to current factors, which read: 'Wee cannot but Admire what is become of Cap^{t} Knight, not having heard any thing from him to this time, & hope he had better Luck in finding his Passage than to winter with you'.[5] These instructions, for the 1721 season, far from swearing off the north as too dangerous, commanded at length the dispatching of another voyage to the North.[6] It is also misleading to assume that Knight's expensive method of exploration was the only kind available. As the events of this period prove, one could explore the Northwest Passage at a lower cost by departing from a Company fort instead of London, or by travelling overland – Knight's disappearance would have had few implications for such endeavours. Another fundamental issue

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[4] Lehane, *The Northwest Passage*, 71; Other examples of this belief can be seen in Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 29, 'the reluctance of Company servants in the Bay to venture away from the posts hardened into a dread of the unknown coast north of Lake's Cove... This attitude was matched in London by the disinclination of the Committee to fit out any more costly discovery expeditions'; Payne, *Prince of Wales' Fort*, 111, 'when the fate of Knight's expedition became clear, northern voyages were abandoned'; and Cashin, *Governor Henry Ellis and the Transformation of British North America*, 17, 'the unhappy incident confirmed the company's determination to confine its operations to the land-based fur trade'.

[5] K. G. Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay, 1703-40* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1965), 409; HBCA A.6/4, f. 50. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721. Thomas Macklish, then of Albany Fort, was sent the same remark, f. 53v. [Committee to] M^{r} Tho^{s} Macklish & Council at Albany Fort, 26 May 1721.

[6] HBCA A.6/4, f. 50. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721.

is that this erroneous historiographical assumption rests upon a highly contextual source. The claim originated from the mouth of Samuel Jones, when he, as representative of the HBC committee, batted away Dobbs' in-person proposal for a Northwest Passage expedition in 1733.[7] As the Company, at that stage, saw no reason to conduct such an expedition, Jones' claim is better understood as a phony excuse to dissuade a fanatic, or an exaggeration designed to disguise the more complicated truth from him. It certainly should not be taken entirely at face value. Given all this, it is hard to imagine that the Company swore exploration off entirely and exclusively in reaction to the cost of Knight's unfortunate demise.

To follow such an assumption is to misunderstand the level of northern activity that occurred in Hudson's Bay after the Knight expedition, why this activity subsided when it did, and why the Northwest Passage returned to the forefront of the fur trading ecosystem in the 1730s and 1740s. When Michael Payne, for example, ascribed the Company's eventual turn back to the north in those decades to the idea that 'the spectre of Knight's failure had not been completely exorcised, but it no longer seemed so vivid or so daunting', he sold short the complexities of not one but three eras.[8] More importantly, this reductive understanding has long prevented an investigation of what the HBC's changing policy as regards exploration and the Northwest Passage in the 1720s and 1730s can tell us about the ways in which such concepts were culturally understood during that period.

E. E. Rich noted the irony that in the Company's first half-century, 'the years of purpose and enthusiasm were years of great financial difficulty while those of inactivity and reaction were years controlled by a London Committee which was distributing a steady annual dividend for the

[7] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:557.
[8] Payne, *Prince of Wales' Fort*, 117.

first time in the history of the Company'.[9] I take this further and propose that the Company's increasingly positive financial situation was the vital determining factor behind its growing disinterest in northern exploration during the post-Knight years. Other issues of course formed part of the picture, such as the realisation that the northern copper deposits were simply too far away to access, but the basic economics of the situation were the key. Just as James Knight took a gamble on the Northwest Passage to try and ease the economic woes the HBC faced in the 1710s, similar concerns defined the continuing efforts of Henry Kelsey, until the improved economic outlook of the late 1720s and 1730s took away the need for his successor Thomas Macklish to take such risks on the Company's behalf. In an era when the Passage was viewed primarily as a commercial entity, it makes perfect sense that economic factors would determine when people chose to pursue it.

This chapter will rely upon traditional documentation preserved in the Hudson Bay Company Archive, particularly fort journals and the correspondence of its Committee and men in the Bay, principally Henry Kelsey, Richard Staunton, and Thomas Macklish.[10] Kelsey and Macklish were much less verbose journalists than Knight, focusing their journals' attentions on internal fort matters rather than faraway obsessions such as gold or the Northwest Passage, and tended to write one-sentence entries during the long winter months instead of ruminating on their personal fears and desires.[11] Their goals are still effectively demonstrated, however, in passages such as those that record their meetings with visiting traders. The most useful journals were those recorded by Staunton at Churchill, as it was to this post that traders from the north with their reports of geography and geology gravitated. Unfortunately, only one letter sent from either York or

[9] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:461.
[10] Macklish also sometimes appears as "McCliesh", but you are far more likely to see "Macklish" in the original documentation, so that is the spelling that I shall use.
[11] Kelsey was also a much more impenetrable writer than Knight. K. G. Davies dryly observed that he 'would often be easier to understand if he had less prejudice against the use of punctuation'. Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, lvii.

Churchill back to London from 1719 to 1723, the period during which all the expeditions discussed in this chapter were launched, has survived. However, by examining the deeds and other writings of Kelsey and Staunton, it is clear that they were firm believers in northern voyages. The two men shared a cordial relationship in which they were not reluctant to voice their concerns to each other by letter, but neither expressed any doubts over the value of the northern expeditions in such a fashion.[12] It is hard to imagine, therefore, that any dramatic evidence contrary to my conclusions was lost with that particular tranche of letters. The most valuable letters for this study of the many others that did survive are those written by Kelsey from York, who in his capacity as Governor in the Bay gave specific form to the vague wishes outlined in the Committee's instructions and delegated his northern priorities to Staunton at Churchill.

Some bookkeeping is also drawn upon when I discuss the changing financial condition of the Company during this period, but it should be noted that the Company were not at this stage the most legible or consistent accountants. Complications include the fact that dedicated annual profit and loss documentation was not kept until 1746, meaning that the figures we have for this period are frustratingly collated together into inconsistent multi-year blocks.[13] Dedicated fur sale books were also only kept from 1736 onwards, making it difficult to ascertain the exact financial impact of matters such as the expansion of the fur hat making industry during the second half of the period. Due to these limitations, I rely upon emblematic figures, such as the value of the annual dividend

[12] Examples of their friendship can be seen in HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 34. M[r] Staunton, 9 September 1720, in which Kelsey apologized for having accidentally opened one of Staunton's letters, and in HBCA B.239/b/3, f. 15. Coppy of a Letter sent to M[r] Staunton, 24 June 1722, in which Kelsey wrote 'hope to See you in good time we desire all to be rememberd to you and Remain Your Loveing Frind' as Staunton approached the end of his contract. Indeed, Staunton's abilities were one of the few things that Kelsey and Knight could agree upon. To the Committee, Knight stated 'You write word that you have recalled Mr Richard Staunton from Albany Fort, I do not know any other servant that you have at home but him that is fit to come in any such post', 'From James Knight', 17 September 1716, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 66.

[13] These blocks are 1714-16, 1716-19, 1719, 1720-22, 1722-25, 1726-27, and 1731-36. HBCA A.14/7, ff. 52, 93-93v, 143-143v, 157-157v. Grand Ledger, 1713-1722; HBCA A.14/8, ff. 32-32v. Grand Ledger, 1722-1725; HBCA A.14/9, ff. 58, 112. Grand Ledger, 1725-1736.

paid out to shareholders and some figures already collected by other historians, most notably E. E. Rich.[14]

As the Northwest Passage was not at this point a national obsession and the Hudson's Bay Company was still jealously guarding its secrecy, the expeditions overseen by Kelsey and the details of Knight's fate made none of the cultural impact that John Franklin's disappearance would generate a century and a half later. This means that, for this period, the historian is shorn of worthwhile artefacts from wider society akin to the art and fiction discussed in later chapters. However, thirty years prior to the events discussed, one of this chapter's primary protagonists, Henry Kelsey, did record an extraordinary document that provides us with an invaluable insight into his personal understanding of the north. His actions as governor indicate that his values remained largely consistent with those expressed in its pages. It is therefore with that document that this chapter begins.

THE FOOTSTEPS OF BRAVE KELSO

Henry Kelsey was no stranger to sensational journeys aimed at expanding the Company's trade. Indeed, he is most famous for the two-year trek into the Prairies that he took as a young man in order to coax the remote Naywatame people into the Company's sphere of influence. He did so during the Nine Years' War, a time when the Committee were actively encouraging 'the searching out & discovery of all maner of drugs, Dying Commodities whether in Roote or floure Likewise all minerals hopeing at last in that vast tract of ground… [and anything] that may turne to accompt' in order to relieve the dire state of their finances.[15] When the Committee heard of Kelsey's return

[14] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960.
[15] 'A Letter to Governor Geyer, & the Rest of the Councell at Port Nelson', 21 May 1691, Rich and Johnson, *Copy Booke of Letters*, 115.

from the plains in 1692, they expressed their pleasure to the then Governor in the Bay George Geyer: 'we doe not doubt but Henery Kellsey hath done us good Service in going up the remote Indians, &… we desire you Likewise to continew your diligence in *promoting & finding out other trades*'.[16] Kelsey would find himself in a similarly ominous financial situation in 1719 and would again reach for the same manner of solution. While historiographic attention regarding Kelsey has tended to focus on his first expedition at the almost total expense of his later career as Governor in the Bay, I believe that it is possible to make connections between the two in such a manner.[17] We can read Kelsey's youthful exploits with his later years of authority in mind.

Kelsey chose to present an account of his travels in three parts: an introductory verse section, a more conventional prose journal, and an ethnographic study of the peoples he encountered. It is a unique artefact, one that contains arguably the earliest first-hand account in Canadian poetry.[18] He opens thusly:

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[16] 'A Letter to Governor Geyer & the Rest of the Councell at Yorke Forte in Hayes River in Hudsons Bay', 17 June 1692 ibid., 138.
The question of whether or not the HBC had ordered Kelsey to undertake such a journey in the first place was raised by Arthur Dobbs after the Company pointed to Kelsey's exploits as evidence of their involvement in exploration during the debates over the renewal of the HBC charter in the mid-eighteenth century. Dobbs, attempting to discredit their evidence, claimed that 'Geyer did not send him up, but that upon some Boyish misbehaviour he had been severely corrected by the Governrs. orders and being very great and Intimate with the Indians he took an opportunity of running away with them; so that Geyer finding the Company desirous of sending up upon Discoveries made a Merit of his going up and said he sent him up'; Arthur Dobbs, quoted in Kelsey, *The Kelsey Papers*, x. Joseph Robson went further and claimed that Kelsey's journals were fabrications: 'from many circumstances mentioned in this journal, I no more believe that it is Kelsey's than it is mine'; Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, Appendix I, 22. The Company's case was not helped by the fact it had not claimed publicity at the time of Kelsey's travels due to its policy of secrecy and could only produce a garbled account of events before the inquiry. Evidence provided in *The Kelsey Papers* makes it seem likely that Dobbs and Robson were in actuality wrong, but ultimately this is a moot point. Kelsey's choices were clearly aligned with the Company policy of the time, whether or not they had specifically commanded he make them.

[17] For examples of works that discuss Kelsey's youthful overland expedition but not his later endeavours, see: Bown, *The Company*, 87–89, 159–60; Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*, 172–79, 182, 188–90; Greenfield, 'Now Reader Read'; Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 120–22; All but a few pages of Kelsey, *The Kelsey Papers*; Leacock, *Adventurers of the Far North*, 37.

[18] Whether or not it is a good example of Canadian poetry is another matter. D. M. R. Bentley refers to it as 'a work of some poetic skill which amply repays close attention to its rhetorical and formalistic features', D. M. R. Bentley, '"Set Forth as Plainly May Appear": The Verse Journal of Henry Kelsey', *Ariel* 21, no. 4 (1990): 9–10; but I am inclined to agree with Germaine Warkentin, who considers Kelsey's prose to be doggerel whose interest lies not in the text itself but in the author's decision to deploy it, Germaine Warkentin, ''The Boy Henry Kelsey': Generic

> Now Reader Read for I am well assur'd
> Thou dost not know the hardships I endur'd
> In this same desert where Ever y^{t} I have been
> Nor wilt thou me believe without y^{t} thou had seen
> The Emynent Dangers that did often me attend
> But still I lived in hopes y^{t} once it would amend
> And makes me free from hunger and from Cold
> Likewise many other things w^{ch} I cannot here unfold.[19]

In deploying the flamboyance of heroic couplets to address the issue of the reader's incredulity, Kelsey took an opposite solution to that which would be taken by explorers in the late eighteenth century, when attempts at literary effect outside of an accepted "plain, unvarnished" style came to be equated with artifice.[20] Adriana Craciun has suggested that Kelsey's use of verse may have also been an attempt to associate his image with that of the Elizabethan explorer Thomas James, who also used verse.[21] Such attempts to draw comparisons between himself and one of the Northwest Passage's most famous devotees might indicate that Kelsey harboured similar passions for the possibilities of the Passage.

Bruce Greenfield proposes that the 'precocious claims for recognition' inherent to such verse – the heroic couplet was the staple medium of poets addressing public concerns and audiences – demonstrate that Kelsey 'may have had readers other than his HBC superiors in mind, or that he wanted to appeal to the HBC directors in ways that went beyond their strictly commercial interests'.[22] One such way might have been an appeal to scientific interest, embodied by the

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Disjunction in Henry Kelsey's Verse Journal', in *Literary Genres/Les Genres Littéraires. Proceedings of Conference 5: Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada, 3–5 November 1988*, ed. I. S. MacLaren and C. Potvin (Edmonton: University of Alberta Research Institute for Comparative Literature, 1991), 104.

[19] Kelsey, *The Kelsey Papers*, 1.

[20] For more information on this plain style, see Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*; I. S. MacLaren, 'In Consideration of the Evolution of Explorers and Travellers into Authors: A Model', *Studies in Travel Writing* 15, no. 3 (2011): 221–41; Tim Fulford, Debbie Lee, and Peter J. Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era: Bodies of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: 'From an Antique Land'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[21] Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*, 182.

[22] Greenfield, 'Now Reader Read', 34, 40. For more on the heroic couplet's public uses see William Bowman Piper, *The Heroic Couplet* (Cleveland: University Press of Case Western Reserve, 1969).

ethnographic portions of his text, which Greenfield identifies as part of the transatlantic correspondence networks upon which seventeenth century science relied, as outlined by Susan Scott Parish.[23] Kelsey's ethnographic work was certainly ahead of its time in fur trading circles, and demonstrates that there were scientific influences acting upon at least some parts of the fur trading ecosystem long before the Company embraced the Royal Society in the late eighteenth century.[24] Kelsey therefore serves as precursor to meanings that the Northwest Passage would later develop, both in terms of acting as a publicly-minded explorer-author and by travelling through the Arctic landscape with an interest in what it could provide to the world of science.

Kelsey was, however, still a product of his context, and duly perceived the landscapes through which he traversed principally in economic terms. He declared that he departed 'for my masters interest', named his climactic location after the Deputy Governor and signed off his report as 'your most obedient & fauthfull Serv^{t} at Command'.[25] 'To judge what he is by what he sees', concluded D. M. R. Bentley, 'Kelsey is *homo mercantile*: a man whose vision cannot but relate the periphery to the centre… As the very existence of his verse journal indicates, Kelsey conceived of himself as a minor hero of the commercial world in which he operated'.[26] This economic footing defined Kelsey's goals, but his unorthodox choice of means – both in terms of how he pursued his goals and how he chose to record that pursuit – was clearly also defined by an emotional connection with the north. This combination would spur him to repeatedly command exploratory endeavours during his premiership at York in a way that his successor, Macklish, who demonstrated no equivalent Arctic attraction in his texts, would not.

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[23] Ibid., 40; Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
[24] This embrace is the subject of Chapter Four.
[25] Kelsey, *The Kelsey Papers*, 2, 4.
[26] Bentley, '"Set Forth as Plainly May Appear"', 22, 26.

EXPEDITIONS FROM CHURCHILL

While the Hudson's Bay Company faced a more positive economic outlook in 1719 than it had during the preceding decades of warfare, its finances remained unreliable. After paying its first dividend for decades to shareholders in 1718, the Company had to decrease the value of this payout in 1719, and then failed to make one in 1720.[27] In 1719 the Company turned a loss.[28] In August 1720 the Company resolved that 'the stock of this Company [is] too small to inlarge the trade', estimating that it needed to raise £378,000 by selling new stock and £283,500 from current members, but was forced to shelve these plans by December 'by reason of the scarcity of money and deadness of credit'.[29] In 1722 Governor Bibye Lake had to inform an HBC General Court of 'the inconvenices the Committee lay under as to the disposing of the Company's goods by publick sale'.[30]

Trade was tough on the Bay as well as in the markets of London. Writing in Summer 1720, Kelsey expressed to Staunton his hope that 'we may have better Comodities enough to fill a Ship this year', implying the meagreness of 1719's returns, and was driven to admonish his friend for trading with other parties than the Chipewyan and therefore 'only lessening y^{e} Trade of [York] w^{ch} is wholy forbit by our Masters and will no ways lessen y^{e} Intrinsick Charge'.[31] Their troubles had been exacerbated by the shipwreck of the supply ship *Hudson's Bay* in 1719, which took with it all incoming provisions and robbed 24 men of their means to return to Britain, thereby forcing a

[27] HBCA A.42/1, ff. 1-2v. Governor and Committee Dividend Payment Book.
[28] £27,381.17.5 in debit was outpaced by £36,398.7.9 in credit. HBCA A.14/7, f. 143. Grand Ledger, 1719.
[29] HBCA A.2/1, ff. 36-36v. A General Court held for the Hudsons Bay Company, 23 August 1720; HBCA A.2/1, f. 39, A General Court held for the Hudsons Bay Company, 23 December 1720.
[30] HBCA A.2/1, f. 40v. A General Court held for the Hudsons Bay Company, 3 April 1722.
[31] HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 30. Coppy of a Letter to M^{r} Staunton, 20 June 1720.

bloated burden upon Churchill's limited resources.[32] Upon the arrival of his new charges, Staunton wrote 'God knows I am but Indiferently provided with provisions and Other necessarys for them, and our own men'.[33] Kelsey was also by this point beginning to fear that Knight's expedition might end with poor financial news for the Company.[34] Kelsey intended to pursue a number of alternative sources of revenue in order to alleviate this situation, such as the opening of new whaling grounds and trading relationships with the Inuit, but these ultimately existed within the orbit of his central gambit: northern exploration aimed at accessing the mineral riches of the Arctic.[35] As he phrased it in a letter to Staunton, 'wee must send to y^{e} Norward… to helpe make restitution for this great Loss y^{e} Company hath Sustained'.[36] Kelsey, like Knight before him, believed that tough times necessitated bold activity.

Kelsey had come to the same conclusion as Knight: that 'there must be some other River or place found farther to the norward that lyes nearer to those Mines', and that this must be found 'before we can make any Great hand of them by reason of the Long Carraige it is to Churchill'.[37] His first instructions to Staunton outlined his plan:

> We recommend to You to Improve the trade… in all manner of Commerce that you may think will prove advantagious or of proffitt to the Compe^{y} especialy to gett what information you can of Mines or Mineralls which you may beleive will turne to some acc^{t} and Inquire of all those Indians you See weither any Rivers comes from the Copper Mines into this Bay or any other.[38]

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[32] HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 25. A Coppy of a Letter By y^{e} forementiond Councell Sent to M^{r} Staunton, 22 September 1719; HBCA B.239/b/1, f, 25v. Coppy of a Letter to M^{r} Macklish Cheif at Albany Fort, 18 January 1719[20].
[33] HBCA B.42/a/1, ff. 62-62v. Churchill Post Journal, 4 October 1719.
[34] 'this great Loss y^{e} Company hath Sustained and wish heartily they may not have a greater by y^{e} Discoverers', HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 26, Coppy of a Letter to M^{r} Staunton, 1 February 1719[20]. There is no indication that Kelsey yet suspected that Knight's misfortune might prove to be of the mortal rather than financial kind.
[35] After informing Staunton that the copper must be accessed by sea, Kelsey concluded: 'therefore we must Use all means to gett out Oyl or any thing that will by Money to Ballance the Charge' of such expeditions. HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 12. Coppy of a Letter to M^{r} Rich^{d} Staunton, 28 March 1719.
[36] HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 26. Coppy of a Letter to M^{r} Staunton [Kelsey], 1 February 1719[20].
[37] HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 12. Coppy of a Letter to M^{r} Rich^{d} Staunton, 28 March 1719.
[38] HBCA B.239/b/1, f.8. Coppy of Instructions to M^{r} Rich^{d} Staunton, Command^{r} in Cheif at Churchill River, Hudsons Bay [written by Henry Kelsey], 27 January 1718[9]. Another letter, sent the following January, reiterated the command to 'Inform your self by inquiring of all the Northern Indians that shall come to you of what their Countrey produces

If such a river did lead from mineral deposits to the coast, Kelsey stipulated that indigenous traders should be told to wait at its mouth, where he would then arrive to meet them by sea in the summer.[39] In Knight's vision traversing a Northwest Passage was inherent to the task of accessing such a river mouth. Kelsey never mentioned the Passage by name, but if he was working from the information that Knight had gathered while Kelsey was his deputy, as their shared conclusions suggest, then he must have also had the Passage in mind as his means of reaching the northern minerals.[40]

Staunton shared Kelsey's belief that the best way to access the northern minerals was by sea. When 130 Chipewyan traders arrived at Churchill in company of 'one that was agoing to the Golde Mines on yellow mettle' in June 1719, he asked them why they had no copper with them.[41] After receiving reports of their failed attempts to bring some, he concluded that:

> I am of a Opinion there is a Considerable quantity of Copper towards those parts; (it being a prodicious way up in the Country) & not Capable to be brought down by land; yet if wee Can find a Communication by Navigation nothing Can hinder us from such a purchass, the old and Sage men does report, that it lyes on the main, near the Sea Side, under great hills, undoubtly there must be richer mettles.[42]

& what Rivers that are Large or Deep waters in them that drains into this Bay', HBCA, B. 239/b/1, f. 9. Coppy of the Letter Sent to Mr Staunton, at Churchill River, 27 January 1719[20].

[39] HBCA B.239/b/1, f.8. Coppy of Instructions to M^{r} Rich^{d} Staunton, Command^{r} in Cheif at Churchill River, Hudsons Bay [written by Henry Kelsey], 27 January 1718[9].

[40] Kelsey also desired to know whether any northern river had wood growing at its mouth, which might put one in mind of Knight's calculations regarding the Northwest Passage, but as Kelsey lacked his predecessor's penchant for rationalizing each thought and decision in his journal, it is difficult to tell if Kelsey was thinking along similar lines to Knight on this issue or if he was just interested in timber acquisition. HBCA, B. 239/b/1, f. 9. Coppy of the Letter Sent to Mr Staunton, at Churchill River, 27 January 1718[9].

[41] HBCA B.42/a/1, f. 49v. Churchill Post Journal, 12 June 1719.

[42] The traders reported that they 'had travill'd on purpose to bring Some [copper], but by the way meeting with a great many Copper Indians, Strove to perswaide them, to Come along with them here to ye factory, they would not Condesend to it by any means, neither give them any of their Copper, though they had a great quantity with em', HBCA B.42/a/1, ff. 49v-50. Churchill Post Journal, 12 June 1719. Exasperated at the failure, Staunton wrote 'I admire at the Stupidity of these Northern Indians, to promise very fair, yet Come Empty handed. now they report it will be two years before they Can bring any quantity, yett I Expect em yearly' in reaction to this disappointment. HBCA B.42/a/1, f. 50. Churchill Post Journal, 12 June 1719.

When these traders returned in June 1720, they informed Staunton that 'the Golden Indian was not gone according to his promis, but would be here with the rest in the winter', and, as regards the copper, the factor reported that 'they brought non, but tell me thye was agoeing last Summer for Some, being a hungry forced 'em to the Sea Side for provisions, on a Sudden advanced near the Equimoues who fell on them & kill'd Severall, which I may believe in part fiction'.[43] He received 'a promis to be more Circumspect in getting greater quantity of goods for trade, Likewise Copper', and once again dispatched them.[44] In June 1721, after another year in which copper or 'any other Mettle' failed to arrive at Churchill by traditional trade, Staunton again recorded in his journal his belief that a distant northern region 'hath great hills of Copper, but it is so farr y^{t} [traders] Cannot bring any Quantity by Land'.[45] That he continued to believe in the existence of the metals, despite their constant failure to materialise, is testament to both his faith in them and the Company's burning need to supplement its income at this time. It is also interesting to note that Staunton believed in both the copper mines that Kelsey prioritized in his instructions and the gold that had consumed Knight's thoughts. It is notable however that Staunton seemed to have a clearer image in his head of where the copper might be found than the gold, and it is perhaps for this reason that the latter would soon slip away from the HBC's thoughts, but the former would occasionally reemerge, as it did for example in the conception of Samuel Hearne's expeditions half a century later.[46]

Kelsey intended to waste no time in launching an expedition in search of a river entrance to the copper mines. He had planned to begin his tenure as governor by immediately getting up to

[43] HBCA B.42/a/1, f. 80v. Churchill Post Journal, 8 June 1720.
[44] HBCA B.42/a/1, f. 80v. Churchill Post Journal, 8 June 1720.
[45] HBCA, B.42/a/1, f. 131v. Churchill Post Journal, 4 June 1721. Staunton believed that the copper country was nonetheless reachable because, he reasoned, it must border the lands of the Chipewyan due to the similarity between their language and the Copper Indian tongue.
[46] See Chapter Four for a discussion of Hearne's expeditions.

Churchill early enough in the season to conduct such an expedition to the northward, but Knight took too long preparing for his departure for this to be possible.[47] David Vaughan instead made the journey, sailing the *Success* hoy up the coast and brokering a trade with the Inuit before returning to London.[48] Kelsey was determined that it would be he making such an Arctic journey in 1719. His first instructions to Staunton, sent in the depth of winter, had ordered that the *Success* be made 'in a Readiness for the Sea again' by 10 June.[49] In the event he would not 'goe on discovery to y^{e} Norward' until the 18th, having stayed long enough to receive the Committee's instructions for the following year, which reiterated the Company's interest in the discovery of new minerals, and to receive one more promising indigenous report regarding the rivers of the north.[50] Kelsey collected the *Success* from Churchill and headed as far north as 62° 40' N, a distance of 253 miles.[51]. Although he failed to discover any mineral deposits, Kelsey did trade with the Inuit for whalebone, oil, and "sea horse teeth".[52] He also exchanged two slave boys 'in

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[47] Kelsey's belief that this was done 'purely to hinder me' is suggestive of a competitive undertone to the two's exploratory endeavours, as discussed in Chapter One, HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 9. Copy of the Letter Sent to Mr Staunton at Churchill River, 27 January 1718[9].

[48] Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 391.; HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 9. Coppy of the Letter Sent to M^{r} Staunton, at Churchill River, 27 January 1718[9]. No particulars of Vaughan's voyage or trade are known.

[49] HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 8v. Coppy of Instructions to M^{r} Rich^{d} Staunton, Command^{r} in Cheif at Churchill River, Hudsons Bay [written by Henry Kelsey], 27 January 1718[9].

[50] HBCA A.6/4, ff. 30v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councell at York Fort, 4 June 1719. The instructions commanded that new minerals should be sent to London for testing, with underlining for emphasis. They also asked Kelsey to report on the discourses he had held with Knight concerning the gold. Unfortunately, Kelsey's response to this request is now lost, so we are robbed of direct testimony to Kelsey's opinion on the gold mines, but it is notable that he never referred to gold in his plans, only in references to Knight's schemes, such as in HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 9. Coppy of the Letter Sent to M^{r} Staunton, at Churchill River, 27 January 1718[9]. Staunton's instructions for the same year gave him exact places to search for copper ore and commanded him to dig up tonnes of the 'Red Earth' that lay close to his fort. HBCA A.6/4, f. 31, [Committee to] M^{r} Rich^{d} Stanton or Chief att Churchill River, 4 June 1719. The Red Earth turned out to be a disappointment, HBCA B.42/a/1, f. 80. Churchill Post Journal, 7 June 1720.
The promising report came from an interpreter who had wintered with traders far to the north 'att the River whose Streams run to the Westward & they tell him it is not a great way to the Sea', HBCA B.239/b/5, f. 52. York Fort Journal, 12 June 1719.

[51] HBCA B.42/a/1, f. 53. Churchill Post Journal, 2 July 1719; HBCA B.239/b/3, f. 9. A Coppy of a Letter Sent to M^{r} Scroggs, 31 January 1721[2]. No attempts were made to rendezvous with Knight's expedition, even though Kelsey travelled a considerable distance along the coast that Knight intended to investigate for a Northwest Passage, presumably due to the animosity between the two men.

[52] 'I wrote to you last Summer of my going to y^{e} Northward where I saw many Esquemoes and gott some Whalebone Oyle and some Sea Horse teeth and changed Two of y^{e} Comp^{ies} Slaves for Two of those Countrey Ladds and they are

order to get interpeters of their Language & to know w^{t} their Cuntry afforded', clearly signalling his intention to return with geography and inland mineral wealth, not further petty trade exchanges, at the forefront of his mind.[53]

The ways in which Kelsey justified this expedition to his men clearly demonstrate his belief that such actions were demanded by the Company's misfortunes. He commanded that Staunton 'informe all those under your Command how many Disasters the Comp^{y} hath sufferd Since you have known the Countrey through Cowardice & neglect' and made a similar speech at York on the eve of his departure.[54] By contrasting his expedition with the kind of cowardice and neglect that had brought disasters upon the Company, Kelsey was framing exploration as a brave answer to the Company's troubles, just as Knight had done before him. Both men, reflecting their era's understanding of the Northwest Passage as a commercial entity, were drawn to the north as the venue for such courageous financial gambles. That the expedition was seen as a risk is certain – Kelsey even expressed doubts to the Committee regarding whether he would survive the ordeal.[55] In a stable financial situation, such as the one that Thomas Macklish would later operate within, there would be no need to take such drastic measures.

The follow-up expedition of 1720 would be commanded by John Hancock in Kelsey's stead. He carried orders to sail north to 61º N, where he was 'to gett w^{ht} Oyle Whalebone Copper

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very agreeable and Learn English a pace by w^{ch} I hope to know w^{t} y^{e} Countrey will afford', HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 25v. Coppy of a Letter to M^{r} Macklish Cheif at Albany Fort [Kelsey], 18 January 1719[20].

[53] Kelsey, *The Kelsey Papers*, 114. Returning to upkeep this trading partnership demanded northern maritime exploration, as the hostilities between the Inuit and the Cree and Chipewyan precluded their coming south to the forts.

[54] HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 8. Coppy of Instructions to M^{r} Rich^{d} Staunton, Command^{r} in Cheif at Churchill River, Hudsons Bay, 27 January 1718[9]; on the speech given to York, Kelsey wrote in his journal: 'gave the men 5 q^{ts} Brandy, Strong beer & Sugar tod rink to the Comp^{y} Good health att the same time I made a Speech to them to Encourage them in their Business & Defending the Comp^{y} Rights I open'd the matter to them how the Comp^{y} has ben great Sufferers tho Neglect & Cowardice & they all do promise fidelity & Courage to their utmost power', HBCA B.239/a/5, f. 53. York Fort Journal, 18 June 1719.

[55] 'Not knowing how it might please God to deal wth me in my undertaking have thought fitt to leave this to Informe your Hon^{rs} in what manner I have left y^{e} affaires', HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 1v. Henry Kelsey to Committee, 19 June 1719.

or any other Comodities you shall think will be of Proffit to the Hudsons Bay Company'.[56] This expedition, however, would prove to be the least noteworthy of those discussed in this chapter. Contrary winds and an accident to his sister ship prevented Hancock and the *Prosperous* from reaching the desired latitude and therefore from expanding the Company's knowledge of northern geography.[57] Furthermore, the slaves that Kelsey had left in the north, which he had hoped would now be collected so as to pass on the new northern knowledge they had gathered, had all perished.[58] No trade of any value was made. For this, Kelsey blamed Knight – 'M^{r} Handcock [sic] tells me the Goldfinders winter'd where wee had been last Summer and had treaded with those Indians and Spoil'd our Trade'.[59] He did so perhaps in an attempt to sully Knight's name in the eyes of the Company, just as the older man had previously done to him. Exploration was a double-edged sword. While it was excellent to be seen as the man making daring plans to solve the Company's financial woes, it was equally as dangerous to be seen as the one bungling those efforts and putting the Company under even more stress.

The official instructions sent to York by the Committee for the 1720-21 season indicated that they shared Kelsey's zeal for northern exploration. They commanded that Kelsey send home 'Coppies of all those Journals, that have been kept by your self & other & what <u>discoveries have been made in y^{e} voyages to y^{e} Northward</u>'.[60] They also requested reports on what sort of people had been encountered, what quantity of whales seen, and crucially – with underlining for emphasis – '<u>from whence y^{e} flood Comes</u>, & from what point of y^{e} Compass, & how <u>Much y^{e} Tides have</u>

[56] HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 29. Sailing orders & Instructions Given to Cap^{t} Jn^{o} Hancock, 20 June 1720.
[57] Payne, *Prince of Wales' Fort*, 113.
[58] HBCA B.42/a/1, f. 86. Churchill Post Journal, 3 August 1720.
[59] HBCA B.239/a/5, f. 80v. York Fort Journal, 10 August 1720. Kelsey perhaps recorded this in his journal in an attempt to sully Knight's name in the eyes of the Company as the older man had done to him.
[60] HBCA A.6/4, 43v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at York Fort, 1 June 1720.

flowd up & downe'.[61] This is direct evidence that the HBC were officially interested in the hydrography of the far north at this time. Given the context, I can see no interpretation of this request that does not at least include reference to the Northwest Passage, specifically the Passage as pictured as a gateway to the northern mineral riches envisioned by Knight, Kelsey, and Staunton as a salve for the Company's financial woes.

Kelsey himself led the expedition northwards in 1721, an act which he saw as 'Proper for the Intrest of the Comp$^{y'}$.[62] In preparation, he ordered Staunton to refrain from cutting new whaling lines as York had no rope fit 'to Carry w^{t} me to the Norward', demonstrating that other Bayside economic ventures were subordinate to his primary northern gamble.[63] Kelsey took a Chipewyan interpreter and the multi-lingual Richard Norton with him on board the *Prosperous* 'to show me y^{e} copper', but was forced to turn back from his 'Intentions of going farther to y^{e} N^{o}ward' by contrary winds 28 days into his journey.[64] Whilst Kelsey had some success in trading for oil and whalebone, his disconsolate remark to Staunton upon returning to Churchill that 'he had not an opportunity for to goe y^{e} Lenght of y^{e} Compass So y^{t} theire is no farther Discovery Made then formerly' indicates clearly that he had more in mind than minor trade.[65] His mind was set further to the north: the realm of copper and the Northwest Passage that he would have to take to get to it.

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[61] Ibid, f. 44.
[62] HBCA B.239/b/2, f. 3. Att a Councell Held att York Fort, 24 June 1721. Hancock was dismissed from service 'for his Misdemeanors Viz^{t} for his fireing his Gun att the Eskemoes last year when I was to the Norward and I did not know itt till lately and going to Knock an Eskemoe down with a hand Spike this Year and is always for beating and Useing all Indians Morosly', HBCA B.239/a/5, f. 82. York Fort Journal, 26 August 1720.
[63] HBCA B.239/b/2, f. 2v. A Coppy of a Letter to M^{r} Stanton [Kelsey], 20 March 1720[1].
[64] Kelsey, *The Kelsey Papers*, 115.
[65] HBCA B.42/a/1, f. 142. Churchill Post Journal, 16 August 1721

THE FATE OF JAMES KNIGHT

On the 1721 voyage Kelsey learned from the Inuit of the disaster that had befallen the *Albany* and *Discovery* and encountered 'things belonging to those vessels' as evidence.[66] This was the first indication that the Company received of Knight's macabre fate. While many have criticized the HBC for not having mounted some kind of search party for Knight by or at this point,[67] in reality there had been little reason for the Company to be alarmed up until this point.[68] They had quite naturally been assuming that Knight was still alive. In 1720, for instance, Hancock and Staunton had both been given orders as to what they should do if they encountered the *Albany* and *Discovery*, and Hancock had returned to York with news that Knight had successfully carried out trade to the north.[69] In 1721, while Kelsey was away on expedition, the supply ship had arrived carrying a letter from the Committee that read 'Wee cannot but Admire [wonder] what is become of Cap^{t} Knight, not having heard any thing from him to this time & hope he had better Luck in finding his Passage than to winter with you', indicating that they assumed he was still alive.[70] For all the HBC

[66] Kelsey, *The Kelsey Papers*, 115.

[67] Examples of such criticism can be seen in: Unwin, 'Searching for James Knight', in which Unwin criticizes the casualness of Kelsey's reference to his discovery of the relics and derides his invocation of the contrary winds as a trivial excuse; Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth*, 92, in which Williams writes that '[Kelsey, in 1720] gave no further details, and seems to have made no attempt to search for survivors. Old rivalries obviously ran deep'. Williams even seems to imply that Kelsey and Scroggs' retirements in 1722 and 1723 were induced so as to remove from the scene the men most connected to the discovery of the Knight relics. This is wholly unsupported by evidence. Such criticism can also be found in Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, 15, App. 1, 32 in which Robson stated that 'it was possible these unhappy sufferers might have got safely to land, where they could have supported themselves with the ship's provisions, the sending a sloop directly in search of them might have saved their lives', and that searching for Knight 'was the least part of [Kelsey and the HBC's] care'.

[68] Geiger and Beattie wrote of 'unspoken fears that something had gone horribly wrong', but there is no evidence that such fears existed, nor really any reason why they should have, Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 75.

[69] 'If it happen you see y^{e} Albany Frigg^{tt} or Discovery Sloope or both & finde they have given over their discovery y^{n} and In such Case you are ordered to give him or them an order to make y^{e} best of there way to Prince of Wales Fort and to take in such Goods and Men as M^{r} Staunton or Cheif there shall order and to dispatch wth all speed for this River for Further orders', HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 29v. Sailing orders & Instructions Given to Cap^{t} Jn^{o} Hancock, 20 June 1720; 'If the Albany Frigg^{tt} happen to come into your River you are to putt on Board him what Oyle you have if hee can take it on', HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 30v. Coppy of a Letter to M^{r} Staunton [Kelsey], 20 June 1720; 'M^{r} Handcock tells me the Goldfinders winter'd where wee had been last Summer and had treaded with those Indians and Spoil'd our Trade', HBCA B.239/a/5, f. 80v. York Fort Journal, 10 August 1720.

[70] HBCA A.6/4, f. 50. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721.

knew, Knight could have been sailing home the long way around after having successfully traversed the Northwest Passage. By the time that the first discoveries of his fate were made, it was too late in the season to send anything north again until summer 1722. True, the Committee's subsequent instructions made no mention of the Knight disaster, but, frankly, by then what was there to command?[71] Kelsey had told them in his report that Knight was dead, and they duly wrote the *Albany* and *Discovery* off as officially 'Castaway to the Northward'.[72] What would have been the point in wasting limited resources searching for the wrecks? There would be no profit in the act, and at a time when the Northwest Passage and its explorers were yet to develop any non-commercial associations, that was all that really mattered.

Ross Gillies and William Barr have commented that over the next half century many traders sailed through northwestern Hudson Bay without investigating Marble Island, where Knight had died, concluding that 'one cannot help but wonder at this apparent indifference'.[73] But such traders had even less reason to investigate as those fifty years ticked by. Any comparison with the long search for Franklin relics is a false equivalence.[74] Most people in Britain sincerely believed that Franklin was still alive when that search began, but the founding moment of any search for Knight would have been the 1721, with the first evidence of his death. This is a vital difference. Another is that Knight disappeared in a completely different culture to that which Franklin departed from. He was situated within a culture of extreme corporate secrecy at the HBC and within a wider culture that did not contain the nineteenth century conception of the explorer

[71] HBCA A.6/4, f. 59. [Committee to] Cap[t] Hen Kelsey & Council at York Fort, 24 May 1722; This absence has been pointed out by Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 408 and Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 76–77, amongst others.
[72] Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 409. Kelsey's annual report letter of 1721 is now lost, but it must have included the pertinent information regarding Knight's fate as the write-off of the Albany and Discovery occurred a month before Kelsey arrived back in London to tell them in person.
[73] Ross and Barr, 'Voyages in Northwestern Hudson Bay (1720-1772) and Discovery of the Knight Relics on Marble Island', 32.
[74] Such a comparison is made in Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 9, 79.

as a thoroughly public figure and national hero. The disappearance of Franklin, a man who had been had rendered the face of British prestige by his cultural context, demanded further investigation and catharsis.[75] The disappearance of Knight demanded no such thing.

The 1722 expedition, commanded by John Scroggs, did in the end go 'where the Albany and Discovery Sloop where both Ship wracked', but this was by no means its priority, no was it explicitly commanded to do so.[76] Its orders instead reflected matters that could open up new sources of income. As ever, accessing the copper mines by sea – implicitly via part of the route of the Northwest Passage – was the foremost of these. Confidence in achieving this was as high as it had ever been. Staunton recorded in his journal that summer that he was 'in great hopes itt will be found this Sumer for Cooper there is Undoubly and not very farr of by Sea'.[77] The Committee were likewise confident that 'there is A River by S^{r} Bibyes Island that Runs by where the Copper is gott'.[78] Reflecting this confidence, Scroggs was given quite specific destinations to head for, the product of years of interviews. He was told: 'you will find the Mynes Between 58^{d} & 60^{d} and that it is a low land and where the Small myne is there is a hill hard by it and where the great Myne is there is a river and Woods growing on the Sides of the Same'.[79] Scroggs' journey can, in fact, be considered to be the culmination of years of speculation regarding the northern copper.

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[75] See Chapter Five.

[76] HBCA B.42/a/2, f. 51. Churchill Post Journal, 25 July 1722. Scroggs had found Inuit on Marble Island in possession of a medicine chest, part of a mast, ice-poles and cabin lining, but did not find where Knight had camped on the south-east side of the island and he therefore erroneously assumed that Knight had run aground on reefs and then been murdered by Inuit. Staunton added in his journal that he was 'heartily sorry for their [Knight and company's] hard fortune'.

[77] HBCA B.42/a/2, f. 45. Churchill Post Journal, 8 June 1722.

[78] HBCA A.6/4, 48v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721.

[79] HBCA B.239/b/3, f. 11. A Coppy of Orders and Instructions to be punctually Observed by Cap^{t} Jn^{o} Scroggs Comm^{dr} of the Whale Bone Sloop, 31 June 1722. Staunton had earlier been commanded to pass a message to the Copper Indians, through the Chipewyan, informing them that they should wait 'till the geese fly plenty in the fall where the Copper Myne is and to hearken for the fireing a great gun' in preparation for Scroggs' arrival. HBCA B.239/b/3, f. 3v. A Coppy of a Letter Sent to M^{r} Staunton, 31 January 1721[2].

THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

The journey was also much more overtly concerned with the Northwest Passage than its predecessors. Scroggs was ordered to first head straight to 66º30'N without stopping.[80] The copper mines were therefore to be ignored until the southward return journey, by which time conditions may have no longer been conducive to exploration or time may have ran out to return to Churchill by the beginning of September.[81] Likewise, Scroggs and his men were 'not to spend Their time amongst the Indians', as the previous expeditions had done in brokering trade.[82] His specific target was 'S^{r} Thomas Rows welcome'.[83] This notable sound was where, in the seventeenth century, Thomas Button had observed a strong tide suggestive of a Northwest Passage and where Luke Foxe had written '[this is] where the passage I hope doth lye'.[84] Knight had likewise sought 'A Passage bejond Sr Thos Buttons'.[85] If there was a Northwest Passage to be found, Roe's Welcome Sound was one of its likeliest hiding spots.[86]

Kelsey had been well equipped for the task. The previous summer, he had been sent Scroggs and his vessel, the *Whalebone* – a 'magnificent little sloop' 'fit to go to any part of the world' – for the express purpose of being 'sent Upon discovery next yeare as soone as the season

[80] HBCA B.239/b/3, f. 11. A Coppy of Orders and Instructions to be punctually Observed by Cap^{t} Jn^{o} Scroggs Comm^{dr} of the Whale Bone Sloop, 31 June 1722.
[81] The order to return to Churchill by September, which necessarily involved staying in the north no later than 15 August, can be found in the Committee's official instructions to Kelsey, which arrived after his expedition of that year in preparation for that of 1722. HBCA A.6/4, 48v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721.
[82] HBCA A.6/4, 49v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721.
[83] HBCA A.6/4, 48v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721.
[84] Fox, *The Voyages of Captain Luke Foxe of Hull, and Captain Thomas James of Bristol, in Search of a North-West Passage, in 1631-32; with Narratives of the Earlier North-West Voyages of Frobisher, Davis, Weymouth, Hall, Knight, Hudson, Button, Gibbons, Bylot, Baffin, Hawkridge, and Others*, 2:370.
[85] Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 71.
[86] Dobbs believed that it remained so in 1744, despite Scroggs' conclusions, Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 12.

of the yeare will permit'.[87] It was an assignment that the all-action Kelsey confessed that he wished he could undertake himself.[88] Kelsey had also been sent Christopher Middleton, who was to accompany Scroggs in order to 'draw the Land and make Observations'.[89] That Middleton did not in actuality sail north, having personally alienated Scroggs, does not change the fact that his presence indicated that concerns of geography were clearly firmly on the expedition's agenda. The Committee further proposed that Kelsey would work on 'Perfecting the Discovery The yeare following'.[90] Here was envisioned a whole programme of exploration in the exact location that the Northwest Passage was most suspected to lie.

What prevented Scroggs from thoroughly undertaking his task and taking a greater place in the history of the Northwest Passage was the Committee's decision to bar him from wintering in the north – 'to the Hazard of y^{r} Life' – believing that departing in June rather than July would remove the need for such action.[91] This temporal restraint meant that Scroggs did not have sufficient time to comprehensively undertake his task.[92] It also been speculated that the presence of men on board the *Whalebone* who were due to return to England on the supply ship at the

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[87] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1:459; 'Letter 19. From Richard Staunton', 21 August 1723, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 96; HBCA A.6/4, 48v. [Committee to] Capt Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721.
Travelling as soon as the season permitted marks a clear difference to the 1719 expedition, when Kelsey only set off once he was assured of 'the Greatest Concourse of Indians & the Trade being over', HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 17, At a Councell held at York Fort, 18 June 1719.

[88] He wrote to Staunton 'I... have wished the Comp^{y} had sent me an order to proceed in the nature they have done M^{r} Scroggs I should have been glad of the oppertunity for I am concernd to have been here Seven years and can give our Mas^{ts} no better acct of those Northen Affairs', HBCA B.239/b/3, f. 13. A Coppy of a Letter Sent to M^{r} Staunton, 8 February 1721[2].

[89] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:459.

[90] HBCA A.6/4, 49v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721.

[91] HBCA A.6/4, 48v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721. In the event, Scroggs would not be able to depart Churchill until the 21 June, perhaps demonstrating a naivete as regards the sailing conditions of the Bay on the part of the Committee. HBCA B.42/a/2, f. 47. Churchill Post Journal, 21 June 1722.

[92] Robson unfairly argued that this concern over the safety of Arctic wintering, shown to Kelsey but not to Knight, demonstrated that the Company did not care about the safety of Knight, who they intended to rid themselves of. Surely a more logical explanation would be that the Company had simply learned its lesson after learning of Knight's fate, Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, App. 1, 38.

conclusion of the voyage gave Scroggs cause to hurry.[93] Unfortunately, Scroggs' original journal of his expedition is now lost, but extracts were communicated through Middleton to Arthur Dobbs in 1739, and a copy was summarised by Theodorus Swaine Drage in 1749.[94] While Dobbs and Drage were writing in efforts to convince the public of the possibility of a Northwest Passage, a task that required besmirching Scroggs' expedition and his navigational skills to reason away his failure to discover it, the basic events of Scroggs' voyage do suggest an undeniable degree of haste.[95] Scroggs arrived at the Welcome Sound on 9 July 1722, sent a boat carrying Norton and Chipewyan interpreters ashore to a headland on the 10th, then departed on the 12th, asserting that there was land bar blocking the bay ahead of the ships.[96] He had spent only three days investigating the Sound.

The waterway that he had encountered was nonetheless one that would have seemed promising to eighteenth century eyes. Scroggs noted that it was, in places, up to 70 fathoms deep, with strong tides, and that it was home to whales that were absent in the waters to the east – all

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[93] Theodorus Swaine Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights, to the Western and Southern Ocean of America.: Performed in the Year 1746 and 1747, in the Ship California, Capt. Francis Smith, Commander.* (London: Mr. Jolliffe, 1749), 176.

[94] 'No XVI, Middleton to Dobbs, October 18, 1739', 'No XX, An Account of Sir Thomas Row's Welcome, or Ut Ultra, extracted from the Journal of John Scroggs, in a Voyage he made from Churchill to the said Welcome, Anno 1722', Arthur Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence* (London: Printed by the Author's appointment, and sold by J. Robinson, 1744), 108–9, 113–17; Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights, to the Western and Southern Ocean of America.*, 174–80;
Middleton, perhaps in an effort to discredit the evidence used by his enemy Dobbs, wrote that Scroggs' journals, which he accessed through the contemporary records of the HBC, were 'so profoundly unintelligible, that one may venture to say, no uninspired Person can make any Thing of them'. Christopher Middleton, *A Vindication of the Conduct of Captain Christopher Middleton, in a Late Voyage on Board His Majesty's Ship the Furnace: For Discovering a North-West Passage to the Western American Ocean. in Answer to Certain Objections and Aspersions of Arthur Dobbs, Esq...* (London: Jacob Robinson, 1743).

[95] Examples of their defamation of Scroggs include: 'Scroggs was no way qualified for such a Discovery' Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 9; 'Mr. Scroggs, who was known to be a very indifferent Navigator', 'Scroggs being a timerous Person no Way fond of the Expedition' Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*, 174, 176–77; Some modern historians have parroted these attacks, such as Payne, who referred to Scroggs as 'neither a bold nor enterprising captain', Payne, *Prince of Wales' Fort*, 113.

[96] This bar was supposedly as tall as the land that adjoined Hudson's Strait and invisible at a distance of ten leagues. However, the land by Hudson's Straits can be seen from 20 leagues away, Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 115.

things suggestive of a water connection to the seas of the west.[97] Furthermore, Richard Norton was reported to have observed from a promontory that the land 'falls off to the Southward of the West', reasoning therefore that 'there must be a clear Passage'.[98] Scroggs' men allegedly stated with frustration back at Churchill that 'they saw an open Sea, and the Land trench'd away to the Southward of the West'.[99] Norton's waterway was probably Wager Bay, a considerable body of water that was certainly worthy of greater investigation, even if we now know that it does not in fact contain the entrance to the Northwest Passage.[100] Furthermore, there is in fact no such land bar as the one described by Scroggs. In reaction to this error, Dobbs painted Scroggs as a Company stooge who deliberately concealed the Passage from the world.[101] But, when all is said and done, Scroggs would not have had to run away from the Passage if he had not been put in front of it in the first place. If the Company had wished to conceal the Passage, why would they have sent Scroggs, and planned to send Middleton, to one of its likeliest locations? It is far more likely that Scroggs, forced into making decisions on scant evidence due to his misguidedly restrictive instructions, had simply made a mistake.

Before a Committee of the House of Commons called when their charter was challenged by Dobbs in the following decade, the HBC framed not only Scroggs' voyage, but also its predecessors as being directly related to the search for the Northwest Passage.[102] In making a case

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[97] Ibid., 116; Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*, 179–80.
[98] Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 109.
[99] 'From this, and all other Accounts', Middleton concluded in his letter to Dobbs, 'it appears there must be a Passage for the Tides from the great Ocean' ibid., 117.
[100] Middleton argued that the water was Wager Bay in Middleton, *A Vindication*, 57, but considered that a close to the matter.
[101] Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 30, 32–33, 'As to Fox and Scroggs, who he [Middleton] says, are profoundly unintelligible; I think Fox is both intelligible and consistent, and Scroggs otherwise, only where he wants to disguise the Discovery, in order to please the Company, his Masters', and 'Neither Scroggs nor the Company's trading Sloops at Whale Cove going to make any Discovery, but rather to conceal it'.
[102] This will be discussed at length in Chapter Three.

that the Company had long been active in that search, they presented "A List of Vessels fitted out by the Hudson's Bay Company on Discovery of a Northwest Passage", which listed the ships of not only Knight's 1719 voyage and James Napper's expedition of 1737, but also those used in 1719, 1721, and 1722.[103] The Company's orders that Kelsey send home his journals of northern discovery for inspection and their delivery of the *Whalebone*, explicitly bound for Roe's Welcome Sound, were both presented as "Copies of Instructions given by the Hudson's Bay Company to their Officers abroad, so far as they relate to the Discovery of a North West Passage".[104] An extract of Scroggs' instructions also appeared in a section titled "Copies of Orders given by the Hudson's Bay Company to sundry Persons, so far as they relate to the Discovery of a North West Passage".[105]

Dobbs and Robson, however, were at pains to challenge this interpretation of events. Robson argued that if Kelsey had gone upon the discovery of a Northwest Passage,

> he doubtless kept a journal of the expedition, and obeyed orders of the Company to send them a copy of his journal: but as the Company have thought proper not to lay any journal before the Committee, the evident conclusion is, either that they have secreted it, or that there never was a journal, nor any attempt made by Kelsey to find a passage.[106]

Kelsey may well have kept such a journal, but one has not survived – which is not uncommon for HBC documents from this period – and the Company's well-documented secretiveness would adequately explain why such a journal was not presented at the time. Even if the journal *was* withheld because it failed to mention the Passage by name – which is entirely speculation – its

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[103] 'No II. A List of Vessels fitted out by the Hudson's Bay Company on Discovery of a North West Passage', *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, 2:249. The omission of Hancock's 1720 journey perhaps reflects that it was more trade-oriented than the other voyages, or that it was not deemed worthy of mention due to its misfortunes.
[104] "N^{o} XVI. Copies of Instructions given by the Hudson's Bay Company to their Officers abroad, so far as they relate to the Discovery of a North West Passage", ibid., 2:254.
[105] "No XX. Copies of Orders given by the Hudson's Bay Company to sundry Persons, so far as they relate to the Discovery of a North West Passage", ibid., 2:258.
[106] Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, App. 1, 31. Technically, Kelsey's orders asked him to pass along 'copies of all those Journals *that have been* kept by yourself and others', not to keep a new one particularly regarding the voyage, as Robson implies, HBCA A.6/4, 43v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at York Fort, 1 June 1720.

interest in copper would have nonetheless implicitly indicated an interest in the Passage. Robson also claimed that Scroggs' target of 66º 30', which is further north than the true location of Roe's Welcome Sound at 65º, proved that Scroggs 'had no notion of going to 65 deg. to the Welcome'.[107] However, his instructions clearly stated that he should head for 'The Latitude of 66 ½ S^{r} Tho Rowes welcome', clearly demonstrating that the HBC identified the two locations as one and the same, a result of the era's cartographic limitations.[108] Evidently, to completely deny that the Company had any interest at all in the Northwest Passage in 1722, one must resort to bad faith arguments.[109] Even Robson himself, in attempting to discredit the "List of Vessels fitted out… on Discovery of a Northwest Passage", wrote that 'of nine vessels… there were only five sent upon that expedition, two with Knight, two with Napper, *and one with Scroggs*'.[110]

While the Company was undoubtedly massaging its history in order to protect its public image at the Committee of the House of Commons, it is hard to deny that at least some interest in the Northwest Passage lay behind its activities from 1719 to 1722. It is difficult to account for the interest in Roe's Welcome Sound for any other reason – trade with the Inuit, for example, could have been pursued at any number of other locations easier to access or less laden with connotations of the Passage. The most honest interpretation of these expeditions is neither the one publicly presented by the Company (that it had always been selflessly pursuing the Passage) or the one put forward by Dobbs and Robson (that the Passage could not have been further from the Company's mind). It is rather that the Company, acting in the same spirit that had animated James Knight, had

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[107] Ibid., App. 1, 33. He also used the happenstance that Scroggs entered the sound while escaping a fog as 'evidence' for this claim.
[108] HBCA A.6/4, 49v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721.
[109] Robson also performed some very selective reading to claim that the Company, in dispatching Scroggs, had 'nothing more in view' than opening new whaling grounds. He drew this from the Whalebone's order to keep 'an account what whales and other extraordinaries they see' – just one of many such orders referring to multiple objectives. Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, App. 1, 32.
[110] Ibid., App. 1, 53. Emphasis added.

been willingly taking risks in order to secure alternative sources of revenue and thereby help alleviate its financial difficulties. The Northwest Passage was either one of these potential alternative sources of income, or the means through which another, the copper mines, could be accessed. That the Passage was turned to in these circumstances is indicative of how it was viewed in Britain in the early eighteenth century.

THOMAS MACKLISH AND THE SLEEP BY THE FROZEN SEA

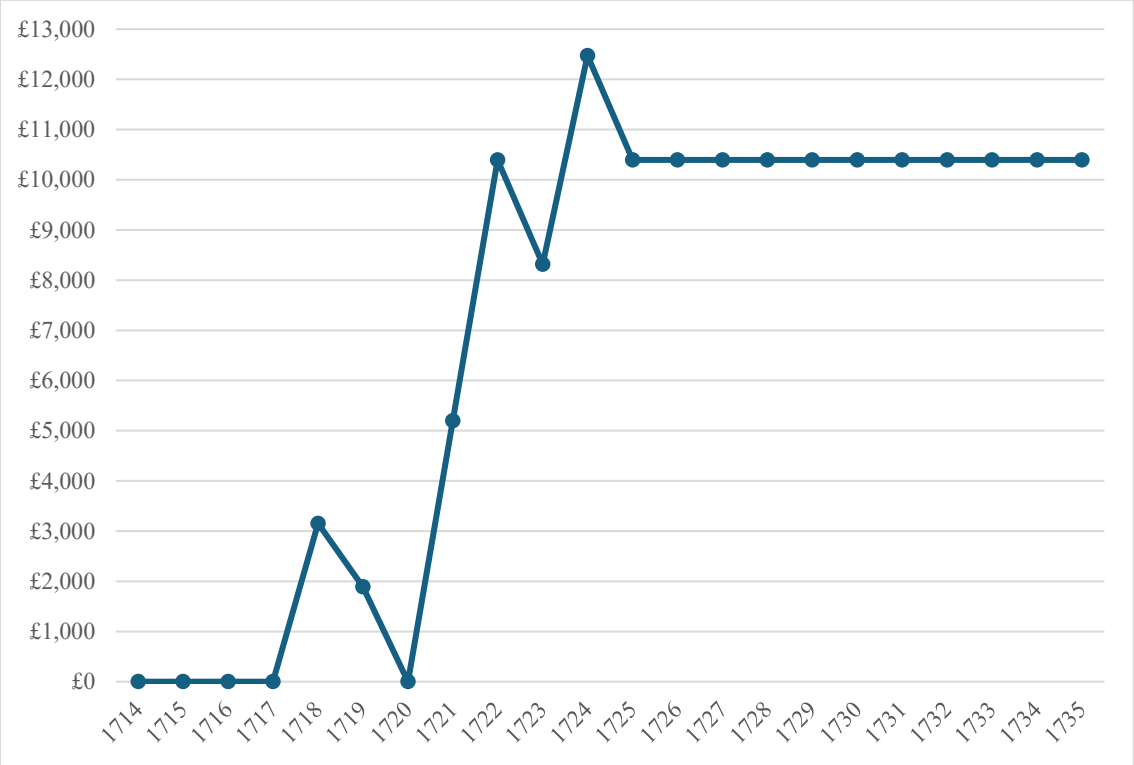
The HBC was by the mid 1720s beginning to finally escape the economic troubles that had plagued it for decades. E. E. Rich has noted the influence that figures like Samuel Jones and Bibye Lake had in slowly changing the Company's course.[111] More important however is the fact that fur had begun to sell in greater volumes.[112] The English hat-making industry had greatly expanded – its export value rose from £40,000 in 1700 to £137,000 by 1725 and £153,000 by 1730 – and the HBC was happy to quench this active and lively market's thirst for beaver pelt.[113] Evidence of this prosperity is represented in various ways within the Company's records. The chaotic profit and loss calculations of preceding years were replaced with balanced books from 1722 onwards.[114] Gratuities began to be regularly given to Company servants and in 1726 annual stipends were established for all senior figures, which were then increased only three years later.[115] After having been unable to pay out dividends to shareholders until 1718, the Company managed to erratically

[111] Jones 'brought with him wisdom and wealth' and Lake 'brought to the Company a close attention to business which it had not hitherto enjoyed'. Together, he proposed they made smart policy choices and restored public confidence in the HBC, Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:469.
[112] Ibid., 1:470; Arthur J. Ray, 'Buying and Selling Hudson's Bay Company Furs in The Eighteenth Century', in *Explorations in Canadian Economic History: Essays in Honour of Irene M. Spry*, ed. D. Cameron (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1985), 99.
[113] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:530–31.
[114] HBCA A.14/7, ff. 52, 93-93v, 143-143v, 157-157v. Grand Ledger, 1713-1722; HBCA A.14/8, ff. 32-32v. Grand Ledger, 1722-1725; HBCA A.14/9, ff. 58, 112. Grand Ledger, 1725-1736.
[115] In 1726 these were £150 for the Governor, £125 to the Deputy Governor, and £75 to each Committee member. In 1729 these figures were increased to £200, £150, and £100, respectively. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:490.

drag the value of this payment upwards until 1725, after which it was able to comfortably meter out a consistent figure of £10,395 a year, 10% of its stock value [*FIGURE 1*]. This was matched by an erratic but consistent increase in the value of trade taken at each of the posts in the Bay [*FIGURE 2*]. The 'chief mark' of the 1720-30 period, concluded Rich, was 'the staid prosperity of the Company's trade'.[116] The need to take dramatic risks dissipated with these developments. While Robson proposed that perfidious new Committee members had taken power in the post-war years and subverted the Company's spirit of adventure, the truth was that the Committee had simply succeeded in the purpose of those adventures – making money – thus rendering further adventure needless.[117] To give a specific example, 1723, the first year in which a vessel was not launched northwards from Churchill, was also a year in which the fort reported a two-thirds increase in its trade and contacted new traders from a region rich in skins.[118] Such developments stand in sharp contrast to the poverty, flood, and disease that preceded and partially motivated Knight's decision to pursue the Northwest Passage. The Company's new financial reality, not the Knight disaster, is what set the tone for the period of "sleep".

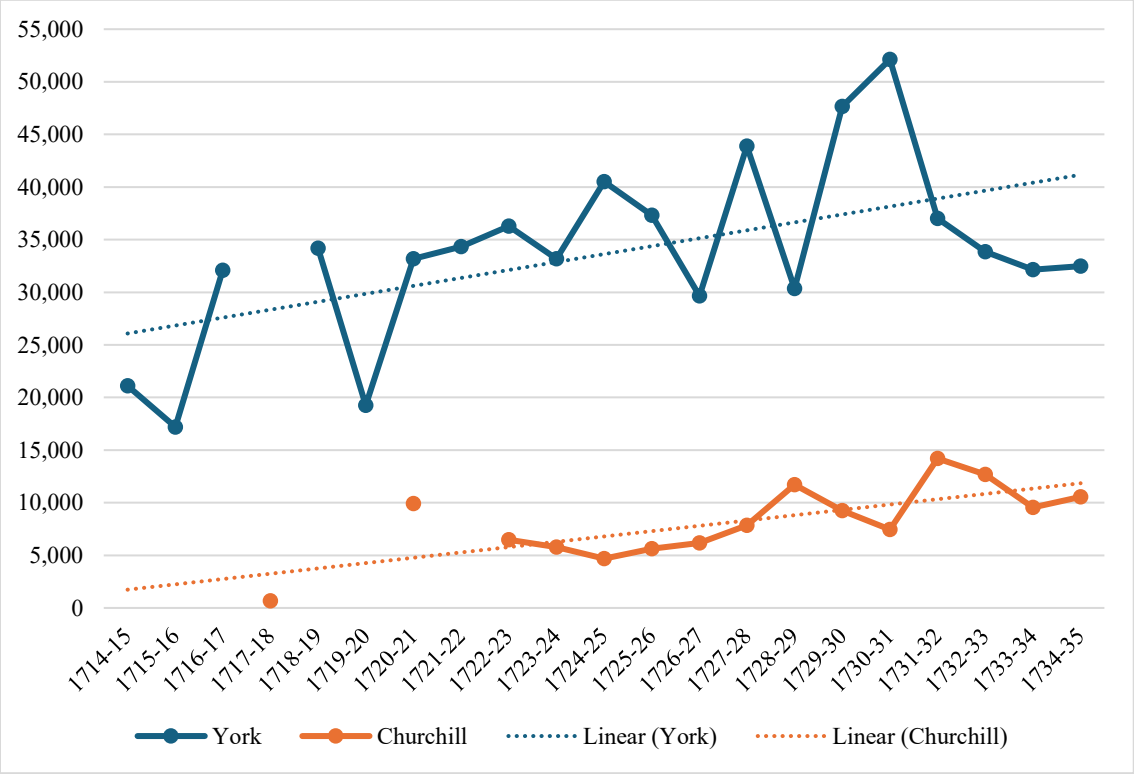
[116] Ibid., 1:486.
[117] Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, App. 1, 22.
[118] 'As Concerning the Trade of this Place it is improv'd two thirds More then Last Year… wee Expect Y^{r} Hon^{rs} Trade in Small furs to Encrease Yearly'; 'his Countrey lying away to the Northw^{d} of the Northern Indians Countrey beyond the Great Lake Called in Indian Me-Sha-Neppe, or in English the Great Water, it being A very Plenty full Countrey of Skins both Beav^{r} & Small furs', HBCA A.11/13, ff. 2-2v. The Generall Letter from Rich Norton & Tho Bird at Churchill River, 3 August 1723

FIGURE 1: Annual Dividend Paid to HBC Shareholders, 1714-1735.[119]



[119] HBCA A.42/1, ff.1-32v. Governor and Committee Dividend Payment Book. A dividend of £10,395 continued to be paid every year until 1738, when £8,316 was paid. £10,395 would then remain the standard figure until 1746, when £8,316 was once more paid.

FIGURE 2: Furs etc. Taken by Season at York and Churchill, 1714-1735, with Trendlines.[120]



Autumn 1722 marked not only the end of the northern expeditions, but also of Kelsey and Staunton's tenures in the Bay. They were replaced by Thomas Macklish as governor at York, and Nathaniel Bishop as chief at Churchill, now renamed Prince of Wales Fort.[121] The new regime had

[120] Data taken from Appendix D, 'The Trade of Hudson Bay 1697-1740' Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 349–50, visualization by me.

[121] HBCA A.6/4, f. 60v. Cap^{t} Hen Kelsey & Council at York Fort, 24 May 1722. The allegations brought against Kelsey by Knight were certainly too far in the past to be the reason for his dismissal. It is possible that the Company removed Kelsey to prevent any further expeditions to the northward, which they no longer desired due to their improved economic situation. He received rejection for his plans to be sent exploring in the Bay in 1724. Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 80.
HBCA B.42/a/3, f. 5v. Churchill Post Journal, 8 September 1722; HBCA B.239/b/3, f. 3. A Coppy of a Letter Sent to M^{r} Staunton, 31 January 1721[2]. Staunton had not been relieved of his command due to any disapproval of his methods. He had intended to voluntarily return home at the end of the 1720-21 season at the end of his contract but had been unable to reach York in time to board the supply ship. He was then re-employed as Governor at Albany in 1723 'Upon y^{e} experience we have had of your ability & conduct in y^{e} Mannagement of our Affairs'. Albany, however, was too far south for Staunton to be involved in any further northern exploration. HBCA A.6/4, f. 52. [Committee to] M^{r} Rich^{d} Stanton, 26 May 1721; HBCA A.6/4, f. 59. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Hen Kelsey & Council at York Fort, 24 May 1722; HBCA A.6/4, f. 75. Instructions for M^{r} Rich^{d} Staunton, now going over Governor at Albany Fort, 17 May 1723.

little reason to continue their predecessors' risky plans to access the copper mines via the Passage. In the only journal entry in which Bishop referred to copper,[122] he told a Chipewyan trader that 'if he wanted Any More of our Goods he must bring either furs or Copper to Purchase to them', despite Staunton having concluded that the likelihood of copper arriving at the fort in the hands of a trader was next to none.[123] Likewise, in 1723, Richard Norton and Thomas Bird, who replaced Bishop after his untimely death, reported 'telling the Copper Indian to be sure to bring some natural copper next year'.[124] If copper was to arrive at Churchill, then the HBC would welcome it. But, with finances recovering, there was no longer any reason to undertake risky northern expeditions or to contemplate using the potential of a Northwest Passage to force the issue.

Norton and Bird soon struck a mortal blow against the Company's continued interest in the copper mines.[125] In 1724 they passed on a trader's report that there was not only 'no Such thing as a Passage to [the copper mines] it being all a frozen Sea where they are', but that the mines were also 'Such a Distance off that he Could not Travill their In less then 3 Winters time'.[126] The instructions that the Committee dispatched to the Bay after they had received this news showed a marked difference. While in 1724 they expressed their 'hopes to know where it is and how to come at it', in 1725 they wrote of the copper mines that 'since they are at so great a distance [we] cannot

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[122] I am referring here Copper as a resource, not "Copper" as a people. The only pertinent reference to the people is when Bishop described his failure to convince a Copper Indian trader to stay at Churchill until the supply ships arrived. He might have meant for the trader to sail to England and report on the geography of his homeland, but no such plans were recorded. HBCA B.42/a/3, f. 27v. Churchill Post Journal, 19 June 1723.

[123] Bishop's lack of interest in copper meant that reflections on the 1722 expedition were not preserved in Churchill's documentary record, in contrast to Staunton's journaling following the 1721 expedition.

[124] 'From Richard Norton and Thomas Bird', 3 August 1723, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 85. Their actions reflected the Committee's instructions for 1722-23, which commanded that 'that you Encourage y^{e} Eskamoor Indians to bring what Copper Oar they Can' and that Bishop be given by the departing Kelsey 'y^{e} best advice you can in prosecuting our Trade at Churchill River, Especially in persuading y^{e} Indians to bring Copper Oar', HBCA A.6/4, f. 59v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Hen Kelsey & Council at York Fort, 24 May 1722.

[125] Interest had already been on the wane under Bishop's stewardship. Norton and Bird reported in 1724 that Bishop had traded with the Copper Indians 'So Slitly' that it had been a 'Disincouragment' to them, and it was therefore unlikely that any would come to the fort that year, HBCA B.239/b/3, f. 29. Churchill Post Journal, 15 June 1724.

[126] HBCA B.42/a/4, f. 30. Churchill Post Journal, 22 June 1724.

expect any advantage from thence'.[127] In 1726 no mention was made at all of copper or discovery.[128] The ease with which copper was dropped as an ambition at this stage, despite the resounding faith it was shown during setbacks from 1719-22, demonstrates the extent to which Company policy changed after the fur trade economy recovered. Economic turmoil and an interest in copper had been the crucial building blocks behind the Company's temporary interest in the Northwest Passage and now both were gone. Interest in the Passage went with them.

The Bay posts subsequently settled into the "sleep" described by Robson. Rich and Williams blame this change in mentality on Macklish's character, depicting him as a 'cautious and conservative' sceptic who brought with him a 'dour competence which contrasted strongly with the imaginative enterprise of Knight, Kelsey, and to a lesser extent of Staunton'.[129] Macklish's negative attitude to northern topics does emerge in the documentary record in moments such as a dismissive comment that the northern nations 'so much talked of by Captain Knight and his hangers-on' actually consisted of nothing more than 200 families, and through his desire to shut down Prince of Wales Fort, or at least get Norton to 'leave off those old methods formerly used in these parts'.[130] His concerns were instead usually limited to things that would effect his ability to conduct a traditional fur trade, such as the quality of trade goods that the HBC had sent him.

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[127] HBCA A.6/4, f. 83. [Committee to] Governor Macklish & Council at York Fort, 20 May 1724; HBCA A.6/4, f. 97v. [Committee to] M^{r} Rich^{d} Norton & Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 19 May 1725. Macklish's instructions of 1725 likewise read: 'As to the Copper Mines, they being placed at so great a distance we fear the Trade in that Comodity will come to little', HBCA A.6/4, f. 95. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Tho^{s} Macklish and Council at York Fort, 19 May 1725.

[128] HBCA A.6/4, f. 112. [Committee] To Cap^{t} Thomas Macklish & Council at York Fort, 25 May 1726.

[129] They also theorized that Macklish 'took command… in no mood to be much of a treasure-seeker' after having 'suffered' Knight's commands that he investigate colourful rocks during his time as factor at Albany, Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:451, 456; Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 29.

[130] 'From Thomas McCliesh', 23 August 1723, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 94; 'From Thomas McCliesh, 26 August 1725, ibid., 108; Furthermore, he refused to allow Richard Norton to send John Butler to travel with the Chipewyan as he had once done in order to learn the language and gather intelligence regarding the north. That nobody was to be absent from duty on 'such pretence' was strongly emphasised. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:457.

However, to conclude that the HBC's quiet policy in this period was *because* of Macklish's quiet manner is to read cause and effect in reverse. Macklish was quiet and steady because there was no longer any need to be bombastic. If he was faced with the economic conditions that Knight or Kelsey worked under, Macklish may well have proved to be just as audacious as his predecessors. In a reliable and highly profitable fur market he had no need to be. Being an effective administrator of the fur trade was more than enough.

The end of the Company's interest in northern exploration in this period can be symbolically represented by the fate of the *Whalebone* sloop. After arriving with much fanfare to enable the biggest of the 1719-1722 expeditions, it remained *in potentia* as long as the copper remained a possibility.[131] For example, the Committee's 1724 instructions, their last to express interest in copper, ordered that Norton keep the *Whalebone* in working order.[132] But, much like the ship's purpose, the *Whalebone* was by now wasting away.[133] When the copper dream died, so did the *Whalebone*. In 1725, the sloop, 'lying in the Country at a great charge to y^{e} Comp^{a}', was ordered home.[134] 'When there is any prospect of her doing us any service in a Discovery or otherways', the Committee promised, '[we] shall send her out again'.[135] By 1728, however, she

[131] Quite apart from its prowess as an exploratory vessel, which has already been discussed, the *Whalebone* also enabled exploration by providing a spare boat in which furs could be carried home to England. Without such a vessel, tasks such as northern exploration posed the risk that one accident could strand men and goods in the Bay for another season. HBCA A.6/4, 49v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Henry Kelsey & Councill at Yorke Fort, 6 May 1721.
[132] HBCA A.6/4, f. 83. [Committee to] Governor Macklish & Council at York Fort, 20 May 1724.
[133] 'We understand she lyes upon a Flatt Shoar where there runs a great Scarfe which will quickly make her look Old', HBCA A.6/4, f. 96v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Tho^{s} Macklish and Council at York Fort, 19 May 1725.
[134] HBCA A.6/4, f. 96v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Tho^{s} Macklish and Council at York Fort, 19 May 1725.
[135] HBCA A.6/4, f. 96v. [Committee to] Cap^{t} Tho^{s} Macklish and Council at York Fort, 19 May 1725. Richard Norton was likewise told '[we] hereby order you to send her accordingly if she be with you, she being of little or no use to y^{e} Comp^{ies} Service there at P^{r}Sent and if you can by any means find out any Discovery or Matter to the Nor'ward or elsewhere, for the Companies Int'rest or Advantage, fail not to let us know every year with your remarks and opinion thereupon and we shall make due improvement thereof', HBCA A.6/4, ff. 97v-98. [Committee to] M^{r} Rich^{d} Norton & Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 19 May 1725.

had been sold, with no replacement forthcoming.[136] Here, in microcosm, was the abandonment of Knight and Kelsey's daring policies by a Company that no longer needed them. With neither the means nor the motivation left for northern voyages, the Northwest Passage slipped from the Company's agenda.

During this period the threat of French encroachment into Bay affairs re-emerged. In 1719 Kelsey had received reports that French traders were becoming established at nearby lakes and delivered the dire prediction that 'they will come here and Drive us into the sea'.[137] Kelsey's reaction to this threat had been to harden his resolve that the Company must take bold action to pursue the minerals of the north.[138] After it become clear that the copper mines were inaccessible, Macklish sought solutions to the French threat within the operations of the fur trade such as by varying the standard of trade between posts to give indigenous traders in different regions more attractive deals. He also requested that Albany Fort be reconstructed in a better location in 1723.[139] Moose Factory was also re-established with new infrastructure in 1730 to help compete for the southern trade and in 1723 construction of defensive stone walls at Prince of Wales Fort began in

[136] The Committee decided on 4 December 1728 to sell the sloop, and within the afternoon it had been sold to John Layton for £192. The Company was evidently by this point hardly reluctant to say goodbye to the vessel. HBCA A.1/121, p. 103. Foul copies of Governor and Committee minutes, 4 December 1728; HBCA A.1/143, f. 57v. Minutes of the Sub-Committee for Trade, 4 December 1728.

[137] HBCA B.239/a/5, ff. 51-52. York Fort Journal, 2 June 1719. His concern can also be seen in HBCA B.239/b/1, f. 19. Coppy of Orders & Instructions to be punctualy Observ^{d} by the foll^{g} Persons in Absence untill further Orders from the Comp^{y} or Me, 19 June 1719.

[138] 'You are to Enquire of all Uplanders that Shall Come here, of the affaires of their Country Especially of the french and their Actions and be sure to keep all men and Armes in readiness to receive them, that we may not here after be branded with Ill Conduct, and Cowardice the Comp^{y} haveing Suffered to Much by those 2 faults already likewise if they bring any Mineralls take the Indian Name and place where he had itt', HBCA B.239/b/2, f. 7. Orders and Instructions to be Observ'd by Cap^{t} Anthony Beal in my Absence Untill further Orders from the Comp^{y} or Mee, 26 July 1721. Kelsey also condoned inter-tribal warfare that would undercut French business, HBCA B.239/a/5, f. 51. York Fort Journal, 2 June 1719. Macklish would later implore the HBC to apply pressure on the French to help resolve these conflicts. 'From Thomas McCliesh', 8 August 1728, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 135.

[139] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:454.

anticipation of a French attack.[140] By 1730 these plans had evolved into the construction of an ambitious large stone fort at a cost of up to £40,000.[141] Construction there was plagued by myriad issues, and would not even be completed by the time that French forces captured the fort in 1782. This, rather than exploration, would be the dramatic financial expense of the period. All of this construction required many hands, leaving very few spare men and resources for ventures such as northern exploration.[142]

CONCLUSION

While Glyndwr Williams concluded that 'The Northwest Passage was in fact the least concern of the four expeditions which sailed north from York or Churchill between 1719 and 1722', this is to look at the period through an anachronistic lens that expects to find evidence of the Passage being pursued for its own end, as it was in the nineteenth century.[143] But this is not how the Company, or indeed British culture as a whole, understood the Passage at the time. Rather, it is the case that the Northwest Passage *was* a concern of the four expeditions, but only as an aspect of a greater concern: the opening up of new revenue streams, most notably by accessing northern copper mines. When the need to buttress Company fur trading profits lessened with the expansion of the hat-making industry, the risk of pursuing the Passage was no longer worthwhile. The Northwest Passage and the dramatic changes its discovery would bring were desired when change was

[140] HBCA A.6/5 f. 37v. [Committee to] M^{r} Jos^{h} Myatt and Council At Albany Fort, 15 May 1730; HBCA A.6/4, f. 73. [Committee to] Governor Macklish & Council at York Fort, 17 May 1723, 'we recomend to you to Build or Face, two of y^{e} Bastions with Stone… y^{e} Chief design of y^{e} Wall is to defend you from Fire arrows'

[141] Michael Payne, '"The Healthiest Part in the Known World": Prince of Wales's Fort As Fur Trade Post and Community in the Eighteenth Century', *MHS Transactions* 35 (1978); The exact cost of the fort is unknown, with £40,000 being the highest given figure and £8,000 the lowest. Whatever the actual cost, it was clearly a considerable financial undertaking, Payne, *Prince of Wales' Fort*, 95.

[142] One such hand was Richard Norton, unable to continue his travels in the north due to his new role in charge of the construction at Churchill. Examples of how much time and energy were being used up by construction can be seen in his letters home to the Committee: Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 174–75, 186, 202–3, 212.

[143] Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 20.

needed, but when change was no longer needed, neither was the Passage. Robson called this a 'selfish principle', and to give him his due, he was right.[144] But in an era when the Passage had yet to garner its "selfless" connotations of "nationalized" commerce, science or prestige, there was no reason or expectation for the HBC to act otherwise. This period, therefore, serves as complimentary evidence to that presented by James Knight's story in proving that the Northwest Passage was viewed simply as a commercial tool at the start of the eighteenth century.[145]

The results of the explorations undertaken by the HBC and the reports it received from indigenous traders during this period seemed to indicate that a commercially viable Northwest Passage within reach of the Bay posts was an unlikely prospect. If there was a Passage between Churchill and Scroggs' furthest north – Whalebone Point – it would have been found by Knight, Kelsey, Hancock, or Scroggs, or indeed by Button, Fox, and Munk before them. Furthermore, if there was a Passage further north than the frigid Whalebone Point, its uses would be so limited as to be a completely unworthwhile pursuit when viewed through commercial eyes. It would take a re-orientation of Company priorities and cultural values to make such a Passage something worth pursuing. Arthur Dobbs would both provide and reflect these changes in the late 1730s and 1740s.

[144] Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, 77.
[145] James Knight is the focus of Chapter One.

CHAPTER THREE:

ARTHUR DOBBS AND THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE AS NATIONAL UTILITY

'Ye too rejoice, ye swains;
Increasing commerce shall reward you cares.
A day will come…
When, through new channels sailing, we shall clothe
The Californian coast, and all the realms
That stretch from Anian's streights to proud Japan;
And the green isles, which on the left arise
Upon the glassy brine, whose various capes
Not yet figur'd on the sailors chart'.

– John Dyer, *The Fleece*, 1757.[1]

INTRODUCTION

Arthur Dobbs – Member of Parliament for Carrickfergus and later governor of North Carolina – was a man for *his* season. 'I claim', wrote his biographer Desmond Clarke in 1957, 'that he epitomises many of the finest qualities of his age, and that his personality and ideas, his many-sides interests and activities, illuminate his age and society in many of its most dynamic aspects'.[2] Dobbs, like many of his contemporaries, firmly believed that imperial expansion was in the public interest, and that trade both drove this expansion and symbolized the enterprising character necessary for the task. Through commerce, he believed, 'Britain would contribute to the happyness of Mankind, by Civilizing, Converting and Improving Nations… and all the Globe would in return,

[1] John Dyer, *The Fleece: A Poem. In Four Books* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757), 155.
[2] Desmond Clarke, *Arthur Dobbs, Esquire, 1689-1765; Surveyor-General of Ireland, Prospector and Governor of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), 5. I of course contest the use of 'finest'.

contribute to the Wealth, Power and Fame, of his Majesty of Great Britain'.[3] It was on these terms and for these reasons that Dobbs brought the Northwest Passage back into the popular national conversation for the first time since Foxe and James expeditions a century earlier, and it was on these terms and for these reasons that he succeeded in doing so.

The Northwest Passage had long been of commercial interest and would later be of national interest for a number of reasons unrelated to commercial matters.[4] The mid-eighteenth century represented a middle ground between these conceptions. In a time when trade was viewed as the vehicle through which national prosperity and glory would be attained, the commercial aspects of the Northwest Passage became themselves issues of the national interest and the public good. Here was the Passage both as a commercial entity, but in broader and more abstract terms than in earlier times (prizing righteous zeal and the happiness of mankind more than Oriental wealth or Arctic gold) and the Passage as a nationalist concern, but in more specific and concrete terms than in later periods (as a destination for British manufactures and employment rather than the making of intangible international prestige).

This evolution in the meaning of the Northwest Passage is best demonstrated by the Hudson Bay Company's struggles with Dobbs. At first it awkwardly integrated Dobbs' requests into its regular policy, viewing the Northwest Passage as a potential extra prize within the bounds and safety of its regular operations, while ignoring his wider beliefs. Then, when Dobbs launched his own expeditions into Hudson Bay and successfully petitioned Parliament for a law that would financially reward the discoverers of the Passage, the Company were forced to realise that the cultural meanings of the Passage had become intrinsically linked with Dobbs' beliefs. The most

[3] LAC, MG18-D4, Vol. 2. Draft Letter [Arthur Dobbs] to Sir Robert Walpole, 1730.
[4] See Chapters One and Two for the Passage as a commercial entity, and Chapters Four, Five, and Six for the Passage as a continued national concern, for varying reasons.

worrying of these for the Company was his promotion of free trade, and so it, represented both by the actions of the Committee in London and James Isham in the Bay, duly began to respond to matters concerning the Passage with patent fear. Dobbs' campaign would culminate in a parliamentary inquiry challenging the validity of the HBC charter, partly on the grounds that the Company had failed to adequately pursue the discovery of the Passage. Demonstrating that the Passage was something that the Company had been interested in after all suddenly became of great importance and the Company was forced to play along with the new cultural cache that the Passage had acquired as an object of national interest. In the decade following the inquiry, which ruled in its favour, the Company pursued a policy which indicated that it had itself come to accept Dobbs and his contemporaries' beliefs in expansion and trade for the national benefit, and the role that the Northwest Passage played in symbolising these. Across three decades, we can see the fur trade attempt to control, then resist, and ultimately buckle under the weight of a new meaning for the Passage, and therefore, in broader terms, we can illustrate certain new cultural beliefs about the purposes of national economy. Marie Peters has proposed that Dobbs' battle in Parliament with the Company 'can sharply illuminate metropolitan attitudes'.[5] I propose that such attitudes can be better illuminated by expanding our coverage to include the whole of Dobbs and the HBC's shared story, and beyond.[6]

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[5] Marie Peters, 'State, Parliament and Empire in the Mid 18th Century: Hudson's Bay and the Parliamentary Enquiry of 1749', *Parliamentary History* 29, no. 2 (2010): 172.

[6] The parliamentary inquiry and expeditions of Middleton and Moor have been frequently studied. The best works are Glyndwr Williams, 'The Hudson's Bay Company and Its Critics in the Eighteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 20 (1970): 149–71; William Barr and Glyndwr Williams, eds., *Voyages to Hudson Bay in Search of a Northwest Passage, 1741–1747, Volume II: The Voyage of William Moor and Francis Smith, 1746–1747* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1999); Peters, 'State, Parliament and Empire in the Mid 18th Century'; Morgan Vanek, 'The Politics of the Weather: The Hudson's Bay Company and the Dobbs Affair', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 3 (2015): 395–411; However, the HBC expeditions of the 1750s have received scant attention. They are analysed only in Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, Chapter VII; Glyndwr Williams, *Voyages of Delusion: The Search for the Northwest Passage in the Age of Reason* (New Haven: Harper Collins, 2003), 210–24; and very briefly in Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:625–28; and Payne, *Prince of Wales' Fort*, 118–19. The story is much the same for James Napper's 1737 expedition.

As much of this story took place deliberately in the public eye, more sources are available when studying this episode in the Company's history than are available for the historian studying James Knight or its policy in the 1720s and 1730s. In addition to using material from the HBC archives – Committee minutes, official instructions, correspondence, and journals – I will draw information from what Diedre Simmons calls 'a spate of publications that make this mid-century period a prolific one for information about the Company, Hudson Bay, and the attitude of the times regarding colonial trade, colonization, and the search for the Northwest Passage'.[7] This era, which produced the first books devoted to the region of Hudson Bay since the inception of the HBC, therefore, marked a watershed moment in Britain's slow move away from its ignorance – previously encouraged by the HBC's policy of secrecy – of life and conditions in Hudson Bay. The most pertinent of these publications for this study include the theories regarding the Company and its geographic domain put before the public by Dobbs and his allies.[8] Dobbs fallout with his unsuccessful explorer Christopher Middleton was likewise played out in print, with the two men printing a wealth of valuable documentation in their attempts to prove their accusations against

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[7] Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, 65.

[8] Arthur Dobbs, *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay, in the North-West Part of America: Containing a Description of Their Lakes and Rivers, the Nature of the Soil and Climates, and Their Methods of Commerce, &c. Shewing the Benefit to Be Made by Settling Colonies, and Opening a Trade in These Parts; Whereby the French Will Be Deprived in a Great Measure of Their Traffick in Furs, and the Communication Between Canada and Mississippi Be Cut Off. with an Abstract of Captain Middleton's Journal, and Observations Upon His Behaviour During His Voyage, and Since His Return ... the Whole Intended to Shew the Great Probability of a North-West Passage, so Long Desired; and Which (If Discovered) Would Be of the Highest Advantage to These Kingdoms* (London: Jacob Robinson, 1744); Arthur Dobbs, *A Short State of the Countries, and Trade of North America: Claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company, Under a Pretence of a Charter for Ever, of Lands Without Bounds or Limits, and an Exclusive Trade to Those Unbounded Seas and Countries, Shewing the Illegality of the Said Grant, and the Abuse They Have Made of It, and the Great Benefit Britain May Obtain by Settling Those Countries, and Extending the Trade Amongst the Natives by Civilizing and Incorporating with Them... and the Necessity There Is of a Parliamentary Enquiry into the Pretended Rights and Exclusive Monopoly Claimed by the Said Company, and Their Abuse of the Grant...* (London: J. Robinson, 1749); Arthur Dobbs, *A Short View of the Countries and Trade Carried on by the Company in Hudson's-Bay; Shewing the Prejudice of That Exclusive Trade, and Benefit Which Will Accrue to Great-Britain, by Opening and Extending That Trade, and Settling Those Countries* (London: s.n., 1749); Henry Ellis, *Considerations on the Great Advantages Which Would Arise from the Discovery of the North West Passage: And a Clear Account of the Most Practicable Method for Attempting That Discovery* (London, 1750); Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*.

each other.[9] Furthermore, Dobbs' second expedition, commanded by William Moor, marks the first time in this study that travel narratives were published by the explorers.[10] These narratives contain valuable representations of both the ideology of the explorers and the receptions that they received at HBC posts. While the Middleton expedition produced no such record, this is more than made up for by the information provided by Middleton in his anti-Dobbs polemics, and by the excellent collection of primary source material related to that expedition published by William Barr and Glyndwr Williams.[11] Finally, the parliamentary processes for both the prize law and the charter inquiry produced an array of documentation such as minutes, reports, petitions, which are invaluable resources for this study.

DOBBS' CAMPAIGN BEGINS

In a 1730 letter to Prime Minister Robert Walpole, Dobbs explained his ideology, which he described as being 'calculated to the Utmost of my Capacity, to Increase in an Eminent Manner, the ffame and Glory of his Majesty, and the Wealth Naval power and Commerce of Britain, by the

[9] The full number of these books, with truncated titles, is as follows: Middleton, *A Vindication*; Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*; Christopher Middleton, *A Reply to the Remarks of Arthur Dobbs, Esq ; on Capt. Middleton's Vindication of His Conduct on Board His Majesty's Ship the Furnace...* (London: George Brett, 1744); Christopher Middleton, *Forgery Detected by Which Is Envinced How Groundless Are All the Calumnies Cast upon the Editor in a Pamphlet Published under the Name of Arthur Dobbs* (London: M. Cooper and G. Brett, 1745); Arthur Dobbs, *A Reply to Capt. Middleton's Answer to the Remarks on His Vindication of His Conduct, in a Late Voyage Made by Him in the Furnace Sloop, by Orders of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, to Find Out a Passage from the North-West of Hudson's Bay, to the Western and Southern Ocean of America...* (Jacob Robinson, 1745); Christopher Middleton, *A Reply to Mr. Dobbs's Answer to a Pamphlet, Entitled, Forgery Detected...* (London: M. Cooper and G. Brett, 1745); Christopher Middleton, *A Rejoinder to Mr. Dobbs Reply to Captain Middleton: In Which Is Expos'd, Both His Wilful and Real Ignorance of Tides ; &c. His Jesuitical Prevarications, Evasions, Falsities, and False Reasoning...* (London: M. Cooper, G. Brett, and R. Amey, 1745).

[10] Henry Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay: By the Dobbs Galley and California, in the Years 1746 and 1747, for Discovering a North West Passage; with an Accurate Survey of the Coast, and a Short Natural History of the Country ; Together with a Fair View of the Facts and Arguments from Which the Future Finding of Such a Passage Is Rendered Probable* (London: H. Whitridge, 1748); Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*.

[11] William Barr and Glyndwr Williams, eds., *Voyages to Hudson Bay in Search of a Northwest Passage, 1741-47, Volume I: The Voyage of Christopher Middleton, 1741–1742* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1999).

Increase of our trade and Colonies'.[12] Investing in the British Empire's American outskirts, he claimed, would ensure the circulation of funds into the metropole, prevent the encroachment of powers 'envious of our glory, Riches and power', enable the dispossession of American territory from France and Spain, and ultimately 'vastly Inlarge our Colonies & Commerce at a trifling expense'.[13] A year earlier, in his *Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland*, he extolled the advantages that free trade held over monopolistic companies.[14] Ultimately, he wished that 'no Seas would remain, but were discovered, and Saild upon by Brittish Ships, no Country or people but would reap the benefit of Brittish commerce'.[15]

His economic vision was typical of the era, when the "gospel of commerce", which preached that the unhindered expansion of trade would bring prosperity and power to Britain and peace to the world, was 'the prism through which most British people were encouraged to view the world beyond Europe'.[16] Daniel Defoe's influential *A Plan of the English Commerce*, for example, depicted England as 'a Nation rais'd as we are by Trade' and promoted the 'pursuit of trade, and pushing on discoveries, planting colonies, and settling commerce, even to all parts of the world'.[17] A veritable 'undiscover'd Ocean of Commerce', he wrote, lay waiting to serve as the foundation for national prosperity.[18] While Defoe praised government-granted monopolies in

[12] LAC, MG18-D4, Vol. 2. Draft Letter [Arthur Dobbs] to Sir Robert Walpole, 1730.
[13] Ibid. He also, in other texts, lobbied for an incorporating union between Britain and Ireland, for similar benefits. PRONI, D162/58. Some thoughts in relation to a Union of Britain and Ireland, [1731].
[14] Dobbs, Arthur, *Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland* (A. Rhames, 1729)
[15] PRONI D162/45. Suggestions for the development of colonial trade, 1729
[16] I take this term from Marie Peters. See Marie Peters, 'Early Hanoverian Consciousness: Empire or Europe?', *The English Historical Review* 122, no. 497 (2007): 654; and Peters, 'State, Parliament and Empire in the Mid 18th Century', 174; See also Jack P. Greene, 'Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 216, which similarly argued that 'during the eighteenth century, a 'cult of commerce became an increasingly important part of being British'.
[17] Daniel Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce: Being a Compleat Prospect of the Trade of This Nation, as Well the Home Trade as the Foreign* (London: Charles Rivington, 1728), i, 35.
[18] Ibid., x.

1728, popular dissatisfaction with them would grow to match that held by Dobbs. Matthew Decker's popular 1744 *Essay on the Causes of the Decline of Foreign Trade*, for example, decried them as 'absurd, inconsistent, and destructive', concluding that 'any Country abounding in Monopolies must decline in Trade' – a mortal sin within such a gospel.[19] John Campbell's *A Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels* reframed travel literature around the economic potential of the colonies and their contribution to British prosperity.[20] At the end of the period under discussion, John Dyer summarized the political and economic culture of the time in his epic four-book poem *The Fleece*, which foresaw 'Britain's happy trade, now spreading wide / Wide as the Atlantic and Pacific seas / Or as air's vital fluid o'er the globe', in order to 'let Britannia pour / The fruits of plenty from her copious horn / … To fold the world with harmony, and spread / Among the habitations of mankind / The various wealth of toil'.[21]

Dobbs added to this ideology a firm belief in contemporary geographic fantasies. Bernard DeVoto pithily described Dobbs as 'the greatest talent the eighteenth century ever knew for misconstruing geography', and the label is not inaccurate.[22] While Defoe talked of exporting woollen manufactures to new colonies, Dobbs referred specifically to the potential of exporting them to the mythical Asian island of Yedso.[23] Similarly, he proposed founding trade settlements

[19] Matthew Decker, *An Essay on the Causes of the Decline of the Foreign Trade: Consequently of the Value of the Lands of Britain, and on the Means to Restore Both* (John Brotherton, 1744), 23.
[20] John Campbell, *Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. 1 (London: T. Woodward, 1744).
[21] Dyer, *The Fleece*, 156, 154.
[22] Bernard DeVoto, *The Course of Empire* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1998), 219.
[23] Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce*, x; Dobbs believed that Yedso, more northerly than Japan or China, would be a perfect market for woollen manufactures because of his assumptions about its climate, HBCA E.18/1, ff. 64-65: Reasons for the probability of a (North-West) Passage, 1731. Yedso derived from imperfect western understandings of the island of Hokkaido, Paul W. Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 108; Dobbs and his followers continued to refer to Yedso throughout their campaign to promote the benefits of the Northwest Passage, Dobbs, *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay*, 167; Ellis, *Considerations on the Great Advantages Which Would Arise from the Discovery of the North West Passage*, 4.

on Terra Australis Incognita.[24] The greatest manifestation of his faith, however, was his fixation on the Northwest Passage despite relatively scant real evidence, upon which he would rest many of his plans for the betterment of British trade.[25] Dobbs – like Knight and the HBC before him – identified the region around Roe's Welcome Sound, from 64º to 65º N, as the likeliest location of the Northwest Passage's eastern entrance.[26] This is what would bring the HBC into his orbit, while other economic thinkers of his time focused their attention on larger operations like the East India Company or South Sea Company. The Passage had received brief mention in Dobbs' earlier work, but it was in his 1731 memorandum *Reasons for the Probability of a (North-West) Passage*, inspired by a reading of James and Foxe's journals, that he first put forward his case for its existence and value.[27]

The discovery of a Northwest Passage, he claimed, would be 'no way difficult' and come at 'little or no Expence to his Majesty or the Publick'.[28] Its benefits would be manifold. Trade was the accepted engine of British glory, and Dobbs promised that the Northwest Passage would enlarge it to a nigh-miraculous extent. Trade could be opened with California, China, Japan, undiscovered Pacific Islands, and Yedso; privateers could intercept Spanish trade; ships could be dispatched in surprise aggression to force Japan to sign beneficial treaties with Britain; settlements

[24] PRONI D162/45. Suggestions for the development of colonial trade, 1729
[25] Dobbs put particular faith in the apocryphal voyages of Juan de Fuca and Bartholemew de Fonte. See, for example, Arthur Dobbs, *Reasons to Shew, That There Is a Great Probability of a Navigable Passage to the Western American Ocean, Through Hudson's Streights, and Chesterfield Inlet: From the Observations Made on Board the Ships Sent Upon the Late Discovery; Supported by Affidavits, Which Coincides with Several Former Accounts: Humbly Offered to the Consideration of Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament.* (London: J. Robinson, 1749), 9, 11–13; For more information regarding De Fuca and De Fonte, see Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800* (New York: Dover Publications, 1980); and Barry M. Gough, *Juan De Fuca's Strait: Voyages in the Waterway of Forgotten Dreams* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Pub., 2012).
[26] He cited tides, temperature, ice, depth of water, whales, the presence of copper relics, and a lack of thorough exploration as his evidence, HBCA E.18/1, ff. 43-54. Reasons for the Probability of a (North-West) Passage, 1731.
[27] Glyndwr Williams has described the paper as 'one of the most coherent and persuasive statements of the case for a Northwest Passage' Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 31.
[28] HBCA E.18/1, ff. 1, 2. Reasons for the Probability of a (North-West) Passage, 1731.

could be made along the Passage and the East Coast of America, providing markets for British manufacture; access to furs would be improved; 'numberless Nations' made happy by the increased spread of British "civilizing" forces; employment could be provided for the British poor, and France would be beaten to the discovery of all of the above.[29] All of this, ultimately, would 'be of service to the Publick'.[30] Much of what he promised had not previously been a feature of the Passage. His promises of Arctic colonies, for example, had previously been dismissed as private enterprises rushed to get through to Asia. John Oldmixon's 1708 *The British Empire in America*, which tied the history of Hudson Bay directly to the search for the Northwest Passage, had remarked that the English had 'never had any Towns or Plantations here, and probably never will'.[31] More fundamentally, the idea that the *raison d'être* of exploration should be the "public benefit" never appeared in the writings of men like James Knight or Henry Kelsey when they conceptualized their expeditions. Ultimately, Dobbs had successfully married accepted contemporary mercantilist doctrine with older – he admitted that the subject had 'been exploded since the Year 1631' – dreams of speculative geography.[32] In doing so he helped reshape Britons' cultural understandings of the Passage's purpose and meaning.

Dobbs directed memoranda making his case to influential figures like Prime Minister Walpole, the Prince of Wales, and Charles Wager of the Admiralty, who all proved sympathetic but told him that the threat of war with France meant that no official resources could be spared. Dobbs was instead encouraged to find private support for the voyage.[33] Dobbs duly suggested that

[29] HBCA E.18/1, ff. 64-65. Reasons for the Probability of a (North-West) Passage, 1731.
[30] HBCA E.18/1, ff. 1-2. Reasons for the Probability of a (North-West) Passage, 1731
[31] John Oldmixon, quoted in, J. B. Tyrrell, ed., *Documents Relating to the Early History of Hudson Bay* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1931), 379; Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:140.
[32] HBCA E.18/1, f. 1. Reasons for the Probability of a (North-West) Passage, 1731.
[33] LAC, MG18-D4, Vol. 2. Arthur Dobbs to Michael Ward, 31 March 1734.

the HBC could perform the discovery at 'but a trifling Expence' by diverting their annual supply ship or by sending out a couple of sloops from one of their posts.[34] To a degree, the HBC had invited this upon themselves, their secrecy having ensured a prevailing ignorance of the difficulties involved in such a task. When Dobbs met with Deputy Governor Samuel Jones in 1734, he was told that the task would be costly, dangerous, and likely fruitless, with the Knight disaster cited as evidence of this.[35] Dobbs was dissatisfied with the experience, remarking that Knight's fate was immaterial to the Passage's existence, and Wager sympathetically remarked that those 'Persons sent in the Sloop were no ways qualified for proper Observations' anyway.[36] Realising that the HBC did not share his beliefs in national commerce and therefore that 'it might be improper to embark the Public in an Attempt to discover a Passage and Trade, which might perhaps redound only to the Advantage of the Hudson's Bay Company', Dobbs sought governmental permission to examine the Company's charter in Spring 1735.[37] Upon finding that the HBC would indeed stand to greatly benefit from the discovery, he secured a second meeting, this time with Governor Bibye Lake. Despite once more being told about Knight's expedition, this time with a remarkably inflated quotation of the money lost, Lake agreed to Dobbs plans.[38] Richard Norton, the factor at Churchill, was promptly ordered to ready his sloop to sail north in company with the annual ship the next summer.[39] 'I', Dobbs triumphantly claimed, 'I have got the Hudson's Bay Company to undertake once more the northwest passage'.[40]

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[34] HBCA E.18/1, f. 66. Reasons for the Probability of a (North-West) Passage, 1731.
[35] Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 4–5.
[36] Ibid., 5.
[37] Ibid., 6.
[38] 'I have laid my observations upon the Journals, before Sr Biby Lake, their Governour, they had made an attempt about 11 years ago which Cost them about £6000 which has frighted them, but yet he is willing a new attempt should be made in the manner I Belive, which will be no Expense to them, and is to Consult the Rest of the Company upon it, and saye he knows they will Come into it', LAC, MG40-R51, Vol. 1. Arthur Dobbs to Michael Ward in Dublin, 1734[5].
[39] HBCA A.6/5, f. 98v. To M^{r} Rich^{d} Norton & Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 2 May 1735.
[40] PRONI D2092/1/5, p. 15. Dobbs to Ward, 29 April 1735.

NORTHWARDS AGAIN FROM CHURCHILL

Norton promised that 'the *Churchill* sloop will be fit for the sea next spring on any occasion'.[41] When his full orders came in summer 1736, they were to 'fitt out the Churchill Sloop James Napper Master and the Musquash Sloop with all Expedition for the Sea… and to Sail Directly as far as S[r] Thomas Rows wellcom', where they would rendezvous with the annual supply ship.[42] However, when the supply ship was crushed by ice in Hudson's Strait at the cost of its entire cargo, Norton wrote to the Committee stating that it was 'absolutely necessary not to proceed to the northward this fall', but confirmed his resolution to try again the following year.[43] The resulting expedition was carried out in Summer 1737, when James Napper sailed two sloops to Whale Cove, at only 62º 15' N. He traded with the Inuit and promised to return the following summer, but promptly died. Norton reported that the expedition had found 'no encouragement to send the sloops there next year, the coast being perilous, no rivers navigable that they could meet with, nor no woods, and the trade trifling and inconsiderable'.[44] Despite his recommendation that detailed notes and observations be made and forwarded to him, Dobbs received nothing.[45] The difficult realities of trying to squeeze a Northwest Passage expedition into the regular operations of the HBC, despite being dismissed as immaterial by Dobbs, were obvious.

The expedition that Dobbs had waited half a decade for had amounted to virtually nothing. He was not pleased. Christopher Middleton, a HBC sailor he had befriended in 1735 over their mutual passion for the Northwest Passage, was in Churchill in 1737 and also took a dim view of

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[41] 'From Richard Norton', 16 August 1735, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 202.
[42] HBCA A.6/5, ff. 108v-9v. Orders and Instructions to M[r] Rich[d] Norton or the Chief and Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 6 May 1736.
[43] 'From Richard Norton and Others', 17 August 1736, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 210–11.
[44] 'From Richard Norton', 23 August 1737, ibid., 241. The sum total of the trade was reported as '100 lbs whalebone, 20 lbs. of ivory, some unicorns' horns, and three barrels of blubber which we have kept for factory use'.
[45] Dobbs to Lake, April 1736, Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 89.

the expedition.[46] Upon his return to London, he wrote to Dobbs that 'the People on board were not duly qualified for such an Undertaking', and had discovered nothing.[47] When Dobbs wrote to the HBC asking for more information, Lake, unaware of Middleton's report, tried to mislead him. Lake claimed that the sloops had left Churchill 'very early in the Spring' and stayed out until 22 August, when Dobbs knew from Middleton that they had departed in July and turned for home on the 15th.[48] Lake expressed his wish that 'the great Care and Charge the Company have been at would have furnished me with an Answer more to your Satisfaction', but concluded that 'I hope you will excuse me from running the Company into any farther Danger or Expence'.[49] Dobbs' angry response accused the Company of having executed a sham expedition to 'prevent any farther Attempt', as 'it might please the Company that no Passage should be found', and announced his intention to find other partners for the endeavour, who would recognize that its discovery 'will be a national Benefit'.[50] This, alongside angry comments he made regarding the HBC's Charter promise to find the Passage, were signs of things to come.[51]

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[46] Middleton had initially joined the Company in 1721 in the hopes of finding the Passage, but had been denied a place on Scroggs' expedition after falling afoul of the captain's temper. Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth*, 99–100; Middleton, *A Vindication*, 6; He told Dobbs that, when the Committee had questioned him about Scroggs' 1722 expedition he had 'incurred the Displeasure of some of those Gentlemen, for declaring my Opinion so freely for a Passage… I offered to undertake it for them, but they cared not to come into the Proposal', Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 116–17.

[47] 'Captain Middleton to Arthur Dobbs', 5 November 1737, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 42–43; Middleton's correspondence with the HBC aroused the suspicion of the Committee and Middleton began to be excluded from information. In 1738 a new HBC veto was introduced barring any external communication of Company letters, writings, or journals. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:563.

[48] Lake to Dobbs, 16 December 1737, Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 93–94; Norton to Committee, 23 August 1737, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 41.

[49] Lake to Dobbs, 16 December 1737, Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 94.

[50] Dobbs to Lake, undated, either December 1737 or January 1737[8], ibid., 95–96. Dobbs also claimed that he had fuller proof of the Passage, but refused to publish it for fear that other nations would intercept the endeavour. This was simply bluster intended to intimidate the Company, but his fears regarding other nations were real.

[51] Dobbs to Lake, undated, either December 1737 or January 1737[8], ibid., 96, 'they were not inclinable that a Discovery should be made, tho' the whole Tenor of their Charter shews, that the great Powers and Royalties granted to them was in order to their making that Discovery'.

Why had the Company entertained Dobbs for so long? A popular explanation has been that the Company simply viewed Napper's expedition as an exercise in getting Dobbs off their back.[52] But the Company could have simply told him no, instead of enacting policy, as Jones had done in 1733. The Committee clearly believed by 1735 that something could be gained in sailing north especially considering that they did so at a time when resources at Churchill were needed for the construction of the new fort. That the expedition was viewed entirely as a small-scale trading exercise, with a sideline interest in mineral deposits, does seem like the easiest answer and has duly become another common explanation.[53] These issues certainly took up the most space in the 1736 instructions.[54] However, Napper's trading returns were of little value, as the Company would have surely anticipated given its experiences in the early 1720s. Also, the HBC had given up on northern copper mines as an active target partway through the previous decade, and when Dobbs later promised that the Passage would offer access to gold, silver, and precious stones, the Committee dismissively responded 'when the Sky falls a great Number of Larks may be catched', casting doubt on the veracity of such a notion.[55] Furthermore, why would such schemes have been prompted by discussions with Dobbs, who had made no mention of short-term trade in the

[52] Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, 16; George Bryce, *The Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company: Including That of the French Traders of North-Western Canada and of the North-West, Xy, and Astor Fur Companies* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1900), 64; Gordon Speck, *Samuel Hearne and the Northwest Passage* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1963), 57–58; Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 81.

[53] Payne, *Prince of Wales' Fort*, 117; Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 42–43; Williams, *Voyages of Delusion*, 53.

[54] 'Sail Directly as far as Sr Thomas Rows welcome to find out a proper bay or harbour to lye secure in and… Endeavour to promote a Trade by perswading the Indians to Kill Whales, Sea Horses & Seals, for whale Fins, Ivory, Seal Skins, and Bile… early the next Spring… Sail Close along the western shore trading with y^{e} Indians as farr as the Bay or Harbour near S^{ir} Tho^{s} Rowes Wellcome and pitch a Tent on said Land and Stay there trading with the Indians, making, Observations and diging in several places in the Earth, in search of Mines', HBCA A.6/5, ff. 108v-109v. Orders and Instructions to M^{r} Rich^{d} Norton or the Chief and Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 6 May 1736.

[55] Williams, *Voyages of Delusion*, 201; These comments were made as annotations on a copy of Dobbs, *A Short State of the Countries and Trade* owned by the Committee.

suggested instructions that he had offered Lake? [56] Such an explanation, clearly, cannot entirely account for the Company's conduct in this situation.[57]

It is worth asking, then, if the HBC was actually interested in finding the Northwest Passage after all. When Lake believed in 1722 that discovering the Passage was in the Company's best interest, Scroggs had been dispatched towards Roe's Welcome. Increasingly stable finances had removed the need for further investigation, but perhaps Dobbs' theories or growing pressure from French traders had convinced Lake that the discovery was once again worthwhile. The Company certainly claimed during the 1749 parliamentary inquiry that the Passage had been their target.[58] The expedition's instructions do suggest at least some interest in navigational discoveries:

> Sail as farr to the Norward as possible and Endeavour to make what discoveries you can… the Masters of the said Sloops appointed to go on the said discovery be directed to be very particular and exact in Sounding the depth of the Water, taking acco[tt] of the Current of the Tide, the Rice and fall at Ebb and high Water, and the distance of the time of Flood.[59]

Such investigations go more obviously with thoughts of the Northwest Passage than they do with matters of local trade. The orders of both 1736 and 1737 also identified Roe's Welcome as their

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[56] Dobbs to Lake, April 1736, Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 87–90.

[57] Another explanation is seemingly offered by the fact that the orders for the original aborted expedition actually ordered Norton to 'make a Settlement further to the North' before they made any mention of trade. However, all mention of new settlements disappear* from the instructions concerning northern expeditions after this, and building new posts was alien to the HBC's operating procedure at this point in time. HBCA A.6/5, f. 98v. [Committee] To M[r] Rich[d] Norton & Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 2 May 1735.

* The instructions for 1736 did mention making observations of 'what the Soil is', which could be interpreted as concerning on agriculture for a new settlement, however there is nothing else in these instructions to support such an interpretation, HBCA A.6/5, ff. 108v-9v. Orders and Instructions to M[r] Rich[d] Norton or the Chief and Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 6 May 1736. This is likelier a reference to finding possible mines, akin to the orders to investigate 'Red Earth' in 1719, HBCA A.6/4, f. 31. [Committee to] M[r] Rich[d] Stanton or Chief att Churchill River, 4 June 1719.

[58] They named Napper's 1737 expedition in their "List of Vessels fitted out by the Hudson's Bay Company on Discovery of a Northwest Passage", provided the instructions of 1736 within a section entitled "Copies of Instructions given by the Hudson's-Bay Company to their Officers abroad, so far as they relate to the Discovery of a North-West Passage", and gave Norton's instructions for Napper in 1737 as "Copies of Orders given by the Hudson's Bay Company to sundry Persons, so far as they relate to the Discovery of a North-West Passage". Parliament, *Papers Presented to the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the State and Condition of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay* (London, 1749), 3–4, 12–14, 22–25.

[59] HBCA A.6/5, ff. 108v-9v. Orders and Instructions to Mr Richd Norton or the Chief and Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 6 May 1736; Norton's orders to Napper in 1737 reiterated this interest in tidal observations, 'Orders and Instructions to Mr. James Napper, on his Voyage upon Discovery to the Northward in Hudson's Bay, on board the Churchill Sloop', 4 July 1737, *Papers Presented to the Committee*, 22.

chief destination, long identified as the likely home of the Passage. Moreover, in preparation for writing their instructions, the Committee had interviewed a member of Scroggs' 1722 crew regarding his experiences on that expedition, which had held serious interest in the Passage, and consulted Middleton on the history of Northwest Passage expeditions.[60]

So why had the resulting expedition only reached as far as Whale Cove, 200 miles south of the intended target? It is possible that the expedition was carried out perfectly in the spirit of Lake's promises to Dobbs, to whom he had stated that the Company would 'Send out in the Season, as often as he can a Sloop to Coast along and make the attempt *by degrees*' – with Whale Cove marking the completion of the first degree, perhaps one geographically enforced by Napper's death.[61] While the follow-up voyages in subsequent years continued to reach as far only as Whale Cove, seemingly disproving this notion, it is important to remember that effect does not necessarily equal cause.[62] Just because these voyages ended up operating on reduced ambitions does not mean that they had been originally envisioned as such before Norton's dire report of the barren north or Napper's death, which would have likely re-energised lingering fears about the dangers of such voyages.[63] Lake could well have envisioned coming at the Passage by degrees, but then abandoned the idea on the evidence of the first degree. The Company was certainly less unwavering in their

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[60] Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 42; Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:562 Middleton offered candid criticism of Scroggs' 1722 voyage and declared that he was convinced the passage existed.

[61] Italics added. LAC, MG40-R51, Vol 1. Arthur Dobbs to Michael Ward in Dublin, 1734[5].

[62] 'We do order and Direct that the Churchill Sloop be Launched and fitted out every Year as Early as Possible in the Spring to Sail to Pistol Bay, Whale Cove, along the Western Coast, Trading with the natives that are there… telling the natives that you will come every Year at that time to Trade with them', HBCA A.6/6, f. 45. [Committee to] M^{r} Richard Norton and Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 17 May 1739; See also HBCA A.6/6, f. 3. [Committee] To M^{r} Rich^{d} Norton and Council att Prince of Wales Fort, 18 May 1738.

[63] While the voyages of 1738 and 1739 were clearly of lesser ambition, after Norton cancelled the 1740 expedition the Committee angrily responded 'We cannot approve of our laying that Expedition aside Contrary to our Positive orders to have it carried on from year to year, being desirous of making new discoverys, and Improving our Trade with the Indians', HBCA A.6/6, f. 103v. [Committee to] M^{r} Richard Norton and Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 23 April 1741.

determination to find the Passage than Dobbs, warning their sailors to 'on no account whatsoever to run any hazards with your Ship'.[64] Unlike Dobbs they had business considerations to keep in mind, and their profits were by now in such health that wild gambles were no longer necessary.[65] The results of 1737 had proved to the Committee that while the Northwest Passage might have seemed like a worthwhile prize in Lake's original estimation, the risks in reality were actually too great for a steady Company to run.

Another possibility is that Lake's genuine ambitions for the expedition had been scaled back by Richard Norton in the Bay. It was Norton who changed the suggested rendezvous point of Napper's sloops and William Coats' supply ship from Roe's Welcome to Whale Cove. This made it almost impossible for Coats to cover the necessary ground in company with Napper with time spare to make it out of Hudson's Strait and back to Britain. Robson wrote that this 'effectually defeated the discovery'.[66] While it is true that Norton prioritised construction over northern expeditions, it is highly unlikely that he would deliberately sabotage Company directive.[67] The change was likely made simply because Whale Cove was the northernmost safe harbour Norton knew of. Crucially, Norton had also informed the Committee of the change, and they did not protest, presumably because as they did not want to risk Coats' shipment of furs.[68] This is further

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[64] This command was given to the annual supply ship captain, who was to rendezvous with Napper in the north. HBCA A.6/5, f. 129. Committee to Captain Coats, 23 May 1737.

[65] The HBC was experiencing a period of great prosperity – the original investment had been £10,500 but stock was now held worth £103,950. 'They saw no reason to embark on foolish schemes, even if such schemes eventually enhanced the greatness of Britain, and opened up a new trading route', Clarke, *Arthur Dobbs, Esquire, 1689-1765; Surveyor-General of Ireland, Prospector and Governor of North Carolina*, 47.

[66] Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, App. 1, 42.

[67] Norton complained of being 'obliged to draw off of the building those men which went to the northward', 'From Richard Norton', 26 July 1737, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 227 and then failed to dispatch the sloops in 1740, citing the need to continue building defences, and asked that 1741's voyage also be cancelled. Ibid., 'From Richard Norton and others', 9 August 1740, 318. The Committee disagreed, HBCA A.6/6, [Committee to] Mr Richard Norton and Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 23 April 1741.

[68] Robson claimed that Norton deliberately did this without the Company or Coats' knowledge, Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, App. 1, 42. Norton informed the Company of the change in a letter on 17 August 1736, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 211. The Committee amended Coats' instructions to: 'make ye best of your way to

evidence that while Lake had been enticed by Dobbs' theories regarding the Passage, the Company were not hunting it all costs.[69] It would have been nice to find the Passage, but the preservation of steady business came first and compromised the efforts. The Company was at peace with this. Arthur Dobbs was not.

THE CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON EXPEDITION

Christopher Middleton agreed with Dobbs' assessment of the Napper expedition, telling him that 'the Company think it their Interest rather to prevent than forward new Discoveries' and that 'if the Expedition was undertaken in good earnest, and proper Persons employed, with suitable Encouragement… a Passage would be found'.[70] Middleton, an experienced sailor who had commanded Company ships for 16 years and a published scientist with the Royal Society, quickly became Dobbs choice to lead a "real" attempt for the Passage.[71] Dobbs had hoped that the Admiralty would produce such an expedition as Wager shared his opinions regarding both the HBC and the Northwest Passage, but again he was met with a rebuff because Wager believed that rising European tensions would make it difficult to justify the expense to Parliament.[72] Dobbs

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Whalebone Cove on Pistol Bay Lattd 62:14: or thereabouts to Join the said two Sloops', HBCA A.6/5, f. 129. Committee to Captain Coats, 23 May 1737. Norton's change was in accordance with the Committee's vision that Coats 'on no account whatsoever to run any hazards with your Ship or endanger the looseing your passage to Churchill River & home this season', HBCA A.6/5, f. 129. Committee to Captain Coats, 23 May 1737.

[69] It seems as though the rest of the Committee were less excited by Dobbs' theories than Lake, which presumably tempered his policy-making. See Lake to Dobbs, 16 December 1737, Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 94: 'In this Situation I hope you will excuse me from running the Company into any farther Danger or Expence, for I am already blamed a good deal for that I have already persuaded them to undertake in this matter'.

[70] 'Captain Middleton to Arthur Dobbs', 21 January 1737[8]; 'Captain Middleton to Arthur Dobbs', 5 November 1737 Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 48, 42–43; Unbeknownst to them, Norton was also at this time critical of the men that the HBC were sending north. He described the men who sailed north for trade in 1739 as 'but very indifferent'. 'From Richard Norton and others', 16 August 1739, Davies, *Letters from Hudson Bay*, 293.

[71] Middleton, *A Vindication*, 5; Middleton had also helped draw up the plans for Moose Factory and Prince of Wales Fort, William Barr, 'The Forgotten Explorer', *Beaver* 70, no. 4 (1990): 34; Middleton's paper was titled "New and Exact TABLE Collected from several Observations taken in four Voyages to Hudson's Bay … Shewing the Variation of the Magnetic Needle … from the Years 1721, to 1725", Philosophical Transactions, 34 (1726), 73-76.

[72] Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 49. Wager's sympathy to Dobbs' beliefs can be seen in his letter to him: 'I believe you judge very right that the Hudson's Bay Company do not desire to have any Body interfere with them in the Fur Trade in those Parts; they seem to be content with what they have, and make (I believe)

argued that such tensions made finding the Passage imperative – 'by delaying it, I'm afraid lest France should get the Scent, and anticipate our Discovery' – and the King duly personally intervened to secure the necessary funding.[73] On 9 March 1740[1], just days after he had been reappointed as master of the *Hudson's Bay* supply ship, Middleton informed the Committee that he had 'Accepted a Commission in the Kings Service' and would be resigning his position.[74]

The Company still paid Middleton a gratuity for his previous years' voyage, but such easy reconciliation would not continue between the expedition and the Company.[75] When the Admiralty wrote to the HBC in May 1741 stating that Middleton's success would 'not only be of great Advantage to this Nation but to the particular Interests of the Commerce under your Direction and Management' and therefore requested that the Company 'furnish him with what Provisions, Stores or Necessaries he shall want, & to give him all other assistance that he shall stand in need of', they were met with a decidedly frosty reception.[76] News of the expedition had prompted Governor Lake to summon the first extraordinary meeting of the HBC General Court in 19 years, where he was empowered to 'hinder any Encroachments on the Companys Trade, Property, or Priviledges, and to do all things necessary for preserving the same'.[77] Rather than offering Middleton access to

considerable Profit by it; and if it should be farther extended, which might be the Case if a farther Discovery was made: For tho' they should not find a navigable Passage thro' into the South, they might probably find Indian Nations, from whom Furs might be bought cheaper than they are bought in Hudson's Bay, and that would be a Disadvantage to their Trade', Sir Charles Wager to Arthur Dobbs, 4 March, 1737[8].

[73] Arthur Dobbs to Sir Charles Wager, 30 October 1739, ibid., 55; Arthur Dobbs to Sir Charles Wager, 23 January 1739[40], ibid., 65.

[74] HBCA A.1/35, ff. 140, 145. Governor and Committee Minutes, 4 March 1740[1], 9 March 1740[1]; Middleton took charge of the *Furnace* on the same date, NA, ADM 2/57, f. 2. Lords Letters, Orders, and Instructions, 9 March 1740[1]; She began being made ready for the sea on the 14th, NA, ADM 2/202, f. 180. Lords Personal Letters, 14 March 1740[1].

[75] Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 69n.

[76] NA, ADM 2/473, f. 376. Secretary's Letters, "To the Governor & Compa of the Trade to Hudsons Bay", 6 May 1741; Glyndwr Williams described the Company's stance as 'almost neurotic anxiety about the expedition', Williams, *Voyages of Delusion*, 68.

[77] HBCA A.2/1 f 55v. General Court Minutes, 9 April 1741. By extraordinary I mean a meeting that is not the annual November meeting, which was summoned each year to confirm the continued service of the governor.

whatever resources he desired, the Company ordered only Fort Prince of Wales to assist the explorer, and only in circumstances where he was 'brought into real distress and danger of his Life or loss of his Ship, and by that means force'd to that factory'.[78] The Committee told the Admiralty that Middleton wintering at a HBC post would cause 'the Destruction of their Trade and Factories' and demanded that he be strictly forbidden from coming into any of the Company's harbours unless in the direst distress, and that he be prohibited from sailing at any time below 62º45'N, despite knowing from their experience with Knight that wintering in the far north was very dangerous.[79] While it is true that the annual supply ship to the Bay had already departed the previous month containing barely enough provisions for their own men, let alone any visiting crews of men, the Company's response was dramatic.[80] They even battled – in the end, successfully – to prevent Charles, an Inuit interpreter who had sailed with Middleton for the HBC, from joining again his former captain.[81] Aghast, the Admiralty wrote the following back to Hudson Bay House:

> [The Lords of the Admiralty are surprised to learn] that instead of the thanks they might have expected for setting on foot, by his Maj[ts] Command, an Undertaking at the Expence of the Government, the Success of which must bring a general Advantage to the Nation, and in particular to their Company, they [the HBC] have reason to be dissatisfied with their entertaining a Suspicion of their Lordships being concerned in any design of interfering with, or dispossessing them of any Part of their Trade, or invading their Property and Rights, which is very injuriously suggested in the said letter.
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> The Orders given to Capt Middleton, are not to go on a Trading Voyage, but on an Attempt after new discoveries, for the future Advantage of Trade, An undertaking which the Company cannot but acknowledge to be well intended, as they have themselves endeavourd at it, tho' without Success.
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> … The Conditions prescribed in their [the HBC's] Order are harder than is the practice of any civilized nation towards the Subjects of another in amity with it, & is therefore the less

[78] HBCA A.1/35, f. 190. Governor and Committee Minutes, 13 May 1741. See also NA, ADM 1/2099, Christopher Middleton to Thomas Corbett, Secretary to the Admiralty [13 May 1741]; NA, SP 42/103, HBC Committee to James Isham, 13 May 1741.
[79] 'Hudson's Bay Company Secretary to Admiralty Secretary', 27 May 1741, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 91–92.
[80] 'Hudson's Bay Company Secretary to Admiralty Secretary', 13 May 1741, ibid., 84.
[81] 'The Hudsons Bay Company do all they can to prevent its taking effect they took an Eskimaux Indian away from my Captn who would have made a good interpreter at Ne Ultra and have given the clerk he always had one of their best governmts at Albany to prevent his being an assistant to him', PRONI D2092/1/5, p. 131. Arthur Dobbs to Judge Ward, 23 April 1741.

> Excusable w^th^ Regard to fellow subjects, & employed by the Government on a Work of publick Benefit.
>
> Their Lords^ps^ therefore hope, the Company will recall their present Order, and send out others… to treat them w^th^ more Humanity, if they shou'd resort to them for Assistance, w^ch^ will be a more Effectual Way to prevent their Trading with the Natives, than the driving them to the necessity of doing it, for their own Support and Subsistence.[82]

The HBC reiterated the potential 'Danger and ill Consequences that may attend the Company', but ultimately buckled under the pressure.[83] New orders were drawn up, this time to be sent to every factory, stating that Middleton should be offered the best support that could be offered if he wintered with them.[84] Now that the Northwest Passage, with Dobbs' guidance, had become entangled in broader notions of the national good, the HBC could no longer act with impunity concerning it. Financial arithmetic was no longer the only factor to consider. Arctic exploration, it seemed, was now something that one would not want to be seen opposing, even if you believed that doing so was in the best interests of your business.

The Admiralty promised to punctually repay the total cost of all assistance given by the HBC, but the Company had broader concerns than these.[85] It feared both the short term and long-term effects of Middleton's expedition upon their business.[86] Most obviously, Middleton was due

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[82] NA, ADM 2/473, ff. 473-4. Tho Burrows Esq^r^ Secry to the Hudsons Bay Company, 29 May 1741.

[83] The only concession they had secured from the Admiralty was the following supplementary order to Middleton: 'You are hereby required and directed during the Course of your intended Voyage not to give any disturbance or molestation to any of the Ships or Sloops emply'd in the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company, But to give them all the protection and assistance that lies in your power, whenever any opportunities offer of your being Serviceable to them', NA, ADM 2/57, f. 116. Lords Letters, Orders, and Instructions, 29 May 1741. Middleton's original orders made no mention of the HBC at all, NA, ADM 2/57, ff. 98-100. Lords Letters, Orders, and Instructions, 20 May 1741.

[84] 'Hudson's Bay Company Secretary to Admiralty Secretary', 30 May 1741, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 95–96; See also HBCA A.1/35, f. 197. Governor and Committee Minutes, 30 May 1741. In the words of Glyndwr Williams, 'It was terse and ungracious, but it was enough', Williams, *Voyages of Delusion*, 69.

[85] NA, ADM 2/473, f. 376. Secretary's Letters, "To the Governor & Comp^a^ of the Trade to Hudsons Bay", 6 May 1741.

[86] Williams also proposes that the HBC was acting in worry that Middleton, with his long tenure in the HBC, might betray the secrets of its trade operations. While this could well be true, the cause-and-effect relationships of the issues I have discussed are clearer to see. Williams, *Voyages of Delusion*, 67; Likewise, Agnes C. Laut argued that the Company 'did not behave at all too well' because of their sense of betrayal over Middleton's defection, Agnes C. Laut, *The 'Adventures of England' on Hudson Bay* (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook, 1914), 111; E. E. Rich proposed also that the Company were concerned that their men would make unfavourable comparisons between their wages and standard of food and drink and those of the visitors, leading to crises of discipline, alcoholism, and private trade, Rich,

to sail with £100 in goods designated specifically for trade and held orders stating that 'If you find any Inhabitants on the Coast, or any Populous Nations to the Southward You are to endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a Friendship and Alliance with them, presenting them with Such Trifles as they value'.[87] The HBC also expressed its concern that wintering outsiders might give 'a Distaste or Affront' to local indigenous trading parties, thereby driving them to trade instead with the French for the foreseeable future.[88] Their foremost worry, however – the reason why they now balked at the news of a Northwest Passage expedition mere years after searching for it themselves – was that, with Dobbs as its new face, the Passage had taken on new associations with free trade. Dobbs had already, in his letters to Lake, threatened the continued validity of the HBC charter and promised to bring other interested parties into the search so that '*England* should reap the Benefit of it'.[89] Moreover, Dobbs had also once again approached the Government for a copy of the HBC charter 'to see if we cant open the Trade' – the Company's tight control of this document means they surely would have been aware of this request – and received an opinion from the Attorney General stating that the Company had no right to an exclusive trade.[90] Wager had likewise made more than one veiled threat against the Company's charter in correspondence with influential figures in the King's ear.[91] While the Company may not have been aware of this,

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Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870, 1960, 1:567; For Gordon Speck the problem was even simpler: 'The Company frankly resented this invasion of what they considered their territory', Speck, *Samuel Hearne and the Northwest Passage*, 58.

[87] NA, ADM 2/57, ff. 49, 99. Lords Letters, Orders, and Instructions, 22 April 1741, 20 May 1741.

[88] '...thereby the Company will run the utmost Hazard of loosing their Trade, which if once lost… will be with great Difficulty, if ever regained', Hudson's Bay Company Secretary to Admiralty Secretary, 27 May 1741, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 91–92 The French reference, while certainly a genuine concern, was also an attempt to appeal to the Admiralty on the same terms of the national interest that its proposals had been made in, as were their mentions of the HBC's role in employing poor Britons and supporting the national hatting trade.

[89] Dobbs to Lake, undated, either December 1737 or January 1737[8], Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 96.

[90] Arthur Dobbs to Judge Ward, 23 April 1741, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 81; Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 60.

[91] 'I believe your Grace will think that this way of treating one of his Majestys Ships, is very unbecoming a Company who subsist by his Majestys favour, having only an old Charter which no doubt they have made several Breaches in, and which does not exclude any of his Majestys Subjects from Trading that way, in the opinion of the Attorney

the Admiralty's correspondence to the Committee had parroted enough of Dobbs' lines regarding 'the future Advantage of Trade' and the 'publick Benefit' for Wager's position to be clear.[92] Middleton's instructions likewise bore the unmistakable influence of Dobbs; Middleton later went as far as claiming that they had been 'left entirely to Mr. D—'s modelling'.[93] The threat was very clear to the Company. If Middleton's expedition was being conducted along the lines of the economic sentiments embodied by Dobbs, then the danger of free trade surely followed behind it.[94] Wager grumbled that the HBC 'do not desire any further discovery in those parts', but perhaps he did not realise that this was because *discovery* – its meaning and consequences – had changed, not the HBC.[95]

After a difficult passage Hudson Strait, Middleton and his crew [96] unanimously agreed to repair to Churchill for winter rather than attempting to acquire the materials with which to fashion

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General', Sir Charles Wager to Duke of Newcastle, 17 May 1741, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 85; Admiralty Secretary to Andrew Stone, Secretary to the Regency Council, 25 May 1741, ibid., 89–90.

[92] NA, ADM 2/473, ff. 473-4. Tho Burrows Esqr Secry to the Hudsons Bay Company, 29 May 1741.

[93] Middleton, *A Vindication*, 6. Middleton set sail with orders to head for Roe's Welcome, at 65° N and there measure the tides, soundings, and variations of the magnetic needle. He was then sail to Whalebone Point, where HBC ships had visited in the early 1720s, and seek the best passage beyond it. If he discovered the Passage and found a wintering harbour below 42° N on the Pacific coast, then he was to make thorough record of it as a potential place for future settlement, presumably with purposes matching those outlined in Dobbs memoranda. NA, ADM 2/57, ff. 98-100. Lords Letters, Orders, and Instructions, 20 May 1741.

[94] Dobbs, expressing the fears of his enemies, wrote that 'The Company avoid all they can making Discoveries to Northward of Churchill, or extending their Trade that Way, for fear they should discover a Passage to the Western Ocean of America, and tempt, by that Means, the rest of the English Merchants to lay open their Trade, which they know they have no legal Right to, which, if the Passage was found, would not only animate the rest of the Merchants to pursue the Trade through that Passage, but also to find out the great Advantages that might be made of the Trade of the Rivers and Countries adjoining to the Bay, by which Means they would lose their beloved Monopoly', Dobbs, *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay*, 48; The Admiralty also understood the basis of the HBC's actions. See: 'This proceeding makes it seem as if they apprehended, if any further discovery should be made in those Parts, it may bring Others of His Majsts Subjects to trade that way to their prejudice', Admiralty Secretary to Andrew Stone, Secretary to the Regency Council, 25 May 1741, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 90.

[95] Sir Charles Wager to Duke of Newcastle, 17 May 1741, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 85.

[96] Ironically, considering that Dobbs and Middleton had proposed the enterprise as an alternative to the ramshackle efforts of the HBC, the Furnace and Discovery were staffed by a motley crew of unskilled and unhealthy men gathered by the press gang. Middleton's verdict of the crew was damning: 'for certainly no ship was ever pestered with such a set of rogues, most of them deserving hanging before they entered with me, and not three seamen among the whole number of private men; so that, had it not been for the officers, who, every one of them, worked like common men, I should have found no little difficulty to get the ships to England', Barr, 'The Forgotten Explorer', 34–42.

their own winter lodgings by trading with the indigenous groups in the Bay.[97] They arrived at Fort Prince of Wales on 8 August, two days before the Committee's orders and factor James Isham did, leading to an unfortunate incident in which the temporary commander, Robert Pilgrim, fired warning shots at the approaching vessels.[98] While much could be made of this incident, Pilgrim was simply following his orders for meeting strange vessels who had not made the appropriate signals during a time of war.[99] Middleton's Englishness was soon apprehended, Isham arrived, and the crews set down to winter. Middleton and his officers would stay with in the new fort with his old acquaintance Isham, while the crewmen would stay in the old Churchill factory, which had been abandoned the previous summer and largely dismantled.[100] Middleton described it as 'nothing but a Heap of Rubbish'.[101]

Despite this inauspicious beginning, Isham worked hard to accommodate the crews, reporting back to the Committee that he had 'assisted them to ye best of my Knowledge, without any Determent to your Hon^{rs} Interest'.[102] His bricklayer and carpenter helped the ships' crews restore the old factory, his smith helped the ships' armorer make bolts for the ships, and the fort's men and horses were used to haul the ships' supplies.[103] Isham also authorised £146-3-6 worth of 'Goods, Stores, and other necessarys' to be given to the expedition, and engaged hunters for the

[97] NA, ADM 51/379, f. 25. Furnace Log, 31 July 1741.
[98] NA, ADM 51/379, f. 28. Furnace Log, 8 August 1741; HBCA B.42/a/23, f. 4v. Churchill Post Journal, 8 August 1741.
[99] These orders were: 'You will take Especial Care to be always upon your guard and not to suffer any ship, or vessel, to approach our Factory without the proper Signal, for as the War Still Continues with Spain and that we are in an uncertainty in regard to France', HBCA A.6/6, f. 104v. [Committee to] M^{r} Richard Norton and Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 23 April 1741.
[100] Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 102.
[101] 9 August 1741, ibid., 119.
[102] HBCA A 11/13, f. 75v. General Letter from Fort Prince of Wales, July 1742.
[103] Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 101–2, 122, 122n, 123n, 126, 127n, 176n, 177n; See also James Isham, *James Isham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1743, and Notes and Observations on a Book Entitled a Voyage to Hudson's Bay in the Dobbs Galley, 1749*, ed. E. E. Rich (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1949), lviii–lx.

ships, who killed over 5,000 geese for the men.[104] Middleton reciprocated. His men helped haul the Company's dry goods, his cooper helped the fort make pails, his sawyers sawed planks for the fort's ramparts, his smith mended leaking coppers, his carpenter caulked Churchill's sloops, and 'very serviceabl[y] to Your Honours interest' his armorer repaired the fort's guns.[105] The two leaders even worked together on scientific observations.[106] Most importantly, Middleton refused to conduct his own trade or allow any of his men to do so, despite Dobbs' wishes, writing that it 'would have been a mean and base Return for their Hospitality, as well as the highest Ingratitude, to rob and plunder them'.[107] He allegedly told Isham that he would 'be a better Friend to the Company than ever' in this regard.[108] This comment, and his general behavior towards Isham, would lead him into hot water back in England.[109] Isham, too, found himself under fire for his genial attitude towards Middleton, and faced questioning over his conduct in 1745.[110] One member of the Committee even took it upon himself to bitterly scrawl 'Why did not the Capt. make the sailors draw or carry this & other things?' aside Isham's journal entry describing the fort's horses being used to haul the ships' beer stores to the old factory.[111]

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[104] HBCA A.1/35, f. 344. Governor and Committee Minutes, 2 December 17; Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 169n.
[105] Ibid., 123n, 124n, 126n, 129n, 154n, 159n, 174n; HBCA A 11/13, f. 76, General Letter from Fort Prince of Wales, July 1742; See also Isham, *Isham's Observations*, lviii–lx.
[106] As evidence of their collaboration, their observations share several identical passages, Williams, *Voyages of Delusion*, 90; Isham, *Isham's Observations*, lx.
[107] Middleton, *A Vindication*, 47.
[108] Parliament, *Report from the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the State and Condition of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay, and of the Trade Carried on There* (London, 1749), 27.
[109] Although it did earn Middleton Isham's support during his row with Dobbs, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 243.
[110] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:577.
[111] Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 123n; Rich also writes that Isham's council at Churchill disavowed his conduct, referring to a letter sent after his departure in which they wrote 'As Mr Isham has been Resolved to Act wholly & Soly of him Self & in himself, we humbly hope you will Excuse Our Answer to another Man's failing', with the implication being that the other men at Fort Prince of Wales disagreed with his generous treatment of Middleton, Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:543. However, this letter was actually referring to Isham's decision to spend an excessive amount of time ensuring that the fort's magazine was 'Bomb Proof'. Their opinion of his treatment of Middleton is unrecorded. HBCA A.11/13, f. 88. To y^{e} Hon^{rble} Gov^{r} Dep^{ty} Gov^{r} & Committe of y^{e} Hudsons Bay Comp^{a}, 25 May 1745.

Fractious issues, however, also arose between the wintering companions, especially as winter became spring. Thirteen of Middleton's crew died had during the winter, leading Middleton to, in Isham's words, 'Continually [Induce] Our men wth Liquor, fine Words & Preferments, to Enter on board his Majestys Ships'.[112] He succeeded in recruiting five men, much to Isham's chagrin. A sixth attempted to join them but vacillated. Isham, in anger, sent him home, decrying him as 'not being fitt for the Service being an indolent Person & knows nothing'.[113] Middleton, knowing that this was a flashpoint between the two of them, supposedly threatened that 'he would make Such a Seizure of my men w^{ch} wou'd be Very Unpleasing to me' during a minor dispute during his departure.[114] Middleton's generous provision of alcohol to both his men and Isham's also routinely caused disturbances, including the death of the fort tailor.[115] Drunkenness, which had caused a disastrous fire at Moose Fort in 1737, was in Company circles 'accepted as a worse enemy than the climate'.[116] Despite Middleton's restraint from trading, the expedition's disruptive presence on fort operations was clear: the value of goods remaining and exported from Churchill dropped precipitously from £3,510.2 for 1740-41 to £2,281.5.1 in 1741-42, before recovering to £3,272.9.2 in the year after his departure.[117] By the time of Middleton's departure for the north, Isham's patience had worn out. He stationed men aboard the departing ships for weeks 'to take particular care there is no clandestine dealing between His Majesty's subjects & the Natives'.[118] Isham concluded in his general letter to the Committee that 'the Cap^{tn} &cm has been a very

[112] HBCA A.11/13, f. 75v. General Letter from Fort Prince of Wales, July 1742.
[113] 13 June 1742, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 173n.
[114] HBCA A.11/13, f. 76. General Letter from Fort Prince of Wales, July 1742.
[115] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 1:569; See Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 143n for other examples of disruption caused by drunkenness during the winter.
[116] Isham, *Isham's Observations*, xiv.
[117] HBCA A.14/10, ff. 78, 87, 102, 113, 123. Grand Ledger. This value would remain around the £3,000 mark until 1747, HBCA A.18/1, ff. 1-2. Balances of HBC Books. Comparisons to years earlier than 1741 would be misleading, as in that year the HBC moved to direct certain "safe" trade away from York towards Churchill.
[118] Isham, *Isham's Observations*, 170n, 172n, 175n, 183. It should be noted, however, that such an act would have been impossible without Middleton's consent, something Moor would not provide in 1747.

Troublesome Guess, & I Humbly Desire if any Ships Comes again to winter, your Hon[rs] will please to send a More fuller Order in What manner to Act'.[119]

Middleton returned to Britain with the news that the promising opening at Roe's Welcome Sound led only into Wager Inlet, concluding that 'Undoubtedly there is no Hope of a Passage to encourage any further Trial between Churchill and so far as we have gone; and if there be any further to the northward, it must be impossible for the Ice'.[120] Dobbs was understandably disappointed, but accepted Middleton's report. 'All the fine Hopes', he lamented to his returned captain, 'are quite vanished'.[121] He had a few lingering questions about tides and whales, but Middleton answered these and all that was left was for Dobbs to conclude: 'I am fully convinced there can be no Passage N.W. by Sea, as we seemed to have had Reason to expect; and therefore it would be very wrong to think of attempting it for the future'.[122]

PUBLIC DEBATES

Except that was not all. In his first letter to Middleton after his return, despite conceding the Passage, Dobbs told Middleton 'I am still of the Opinion, that the Publick may have great Advantage by the Hudson's Bay Trade; if it be laid open, and the Country settled higher upon these great Rivers'.[123] Middleton confirmed that he still believed in the public benefit of such action, but, suffering from poor health, declined to be drawn into any action himself and warned Dobbs of the difficulties of such a task.[124] But Dobbs was not to be deterred. After months of study,

[119] HBCA A.11/13, f. 76. General Letter from Fort Prince of Wales, July 1742.
[120] Middleton, *A Vindication*, 125.
[121] Arthur Dobbs to Captain Middleton, 20 October 1742, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 251.
[122] Arthur Dobbs to Captain Middleton, 14 December 1742, ibid., 257.
[123] Arthur Dobbs to Captain Middleton, 20 October 1742, ibid., 251.
[124] Captain Middleton to Arthur Dobbs, 18 January 1742, ibid., 262; Captain Middleton to Arthur Dobbs, 5 February 1742, ibid., 268.

he wrote to Middleton to tell him 'You have made a much greater Progress in the Discovery, than you imagined when there… I realy think that you have prov'd the Passage, tho' you were not once able to perfect it', but again Middleton demurred.[125] In February or March, Middleton alleged, Dobbs' agent Samuel Smith urged the captain to write to Dobbs expressing that there might be hopes of a Passage after all, despite his convictions to the contrary, 'for that would be a means of facilitating Mr. D—'s Scheme'.[126] Dobbs then claimed to have received letters from members of Middleton's crew claiming that the *Furnace* had actually discovered the Passage, but that Middleton had concealed his findings.[127] Defamatory accusations soon followed that Middleton had done so under the inducement of bribes from the HBC.[128] A messy [129] public fallout between the two ensued, in which numerous books with such wonderful titles as

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[125] Arthur Dobbs to Captain Middleton, 22 January 1742[3], Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 263–66. Dobbs theorized that the Wager was a strait not a river, and that Middleton had only found its narrow and icy northern entrance, when there was also surely a larger ice-free entrance further south. Middleton, he proposed, would have found a flood tide from the west if he had sailed further into the strait.

[126] Middleton, *A Vindication*, 10.

[127] Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*, 142–44; Dobbs further claimed that Middleton had avoided even making certain discoveries in the first place, by deliberately sailing past them at night, or in hazy weather, or at a great distance, Dobbs, *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay*, 71.

[128] Middleton readily granted that he had been approached by the Company and agreed to not damage their trade, as he believed it to be a perfectly reasonable request, Middleton, *A Vindication of the Conduct of Captain Christopher Middleton*, 47–48, but there is no evidence that any money changed hands. Such a bribe seems even more unlikely when one considers that Middleton had such a hard time getting the Company to pay the men who joined his ships at Churchill their wages that he declared that he 'should be heartily glad you could dissolve the Company'. They were not in the habit of paying exploratory crews who threatened their trade. Captain Middleton to Arthur Dobbs, 5 February 1742[3], Middleton, *Voyages to Hudson Bay in Search of a Northwest Passage, 1741-47, Volume I: The Voyage of Christopher Middleton, 1741–1742*, 268;
Dobbs also relied partly on evidence given by men, such as William Moor and John Rankin, who had earlier praised Middleton's conduct, but seemingly abruptly changed their minds. Ibid., 242; Middleton believed that these men had themselves been bribed by Dobbs, Barr, 'The Forgotten Explorer', 41–42, but it is just as likely that they acted of their own volition, for the sakes of their careers, knowing that Dobbs would soon seek to man another expedition.

[129] In the charming phrasing of Agnes Laut: 'Baseless charges were hurled about with the freedom of bombs in a battle' Laut, *The 'Adventures of England' on Hudson Bay*, 111; The geography under discussion was just as messy as the rows. In the words of HBC captain William Coats, 'what has past between Mr. Dobbs and C. Middleton is so full of argument and dispute, that the real geography is neglected... Notwithstanding there are in that abundance of rubbage and impertinence, some litle matters to our purpose, what remains of the former worthys, has been so curtailed and mutilated, that very little can bee drawn from thence. What Mr. Dobbs has thought fitt to call a discription of Hudson's Bay, is so erronius, so superficial, and so trifling, in almost every circumstance'. John Barrow, ed., *The Geography of Hudson's Bay: Being the Remarks of Captain W. Coats, in Many Voyages to That Locality Between the Years 1727 and 1751* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1852), 1–2.

> *A rejoinder to Mr. Dobbs' reply to Captain Middleton In which is expos'd, Both his wilful and real Ignorance of Tides; &c. his Jesuitical Prevarications, Evasions, Falsities, and false Reasoning; his avoiding taking Notice of Facts, formerly detected and charged upon him as Inventions of his or his Witnesses; the Character of the latter, and the present Views of the former, which gave rise to the present Dispute. In a Word, An unparalelled Disingenuity, and (to make use of a Verodobbsical Flower of Rhetoric) a Glaring Impudence, are set in a fair Light. By Christopher Middleton, Esq.*

were published.[130] The Admiralty exonerated Middleton after an internal investigation, but Dobbs had succeeded in keeping the Passage in the national conversation and protecting himself from the connotations of failure that might have deterred future investors in his continued attempts to discover the Northwest Passage.

Deflecting blame on to Middleton also undoubtedly benefited Dobbs in his efforts to break apart the HBC's monopoly. As he himself had said to Middleton, if a Passage could be found 'the Presumption will be a great Inducement to open the Trade to the Bay'.[131] Dobbs' advocacy for the Passage had been so wound up in rhetoric of open trade and the national good that it had become an almost indispensable tool in in his long-running battle against the HBC monopoly. It would be a mistake, however, to argue, as many historians do, that Dobbs' continued advocacy for the Passage was phony, only existing to protect his attacks on the HBC.[132] Why should we treat his

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[130] The full number of these books, with truncated titles, is as follows: Middleton, *A Vindication*; Dobbs, *Remarks Upon Capt. Middleton's Defence*; Middleton, *A Reply to the Remarks of Arthur Dobbs*; Middleton, *Forgery Detected by Which Is Envinced How Groundless Are All the Calumnies Cast upon the Editor in a Pamphlet Published under the Name of Arthur Dobbs*; Dobbs, *A Reply to Capt. Middleton's Answer*; Middleton, *A Reply to Mr. Dobbs's Answer to a Pamphlet, Entitled, Forgery Detected...*; Middleton, *A Rejoinder to Mr. Dobb's Reply to Captain Middleton*.

[131] Arthur Dobbs to Captain Middleton, 22 January 1742[3], Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 266.

[132] People generally have taken this argument from Middleton's assertion that 'the Search of a Passage is but a Cloak to cover other Designs, the Discovery of which are no Way consistent with his interest', but Middleton's situation, his reputation under attack from Dobbs, required that he portray Dobbs in such terms. He was certainly not a disinterested party when making such an assertion. Middleton, *A Rejoinder to Mr. Dobb's Reply to Captain Middleton*, 119; As demonstration, he also claimed that Dobbs had no interest in the public utility of discovery or trade, but rather simply wanted to make a quick profit on his own private trade. The overwhelming weight of Dobbs' writings shows the inaccuracy of such claims made in anger. Middleton, *A Vindication*, 65; For examples of historians making such claims see: 'His enthusiasm for the discovery of a passage was evidently being replaced by interest in another project', Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 69; Williams, *Voyages of Delusion*, 190; Bryce, *The Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 62; Geiger and Beattie, *Dead Silence*, 82; Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 240; Speck, *Samuel Hearne and the Northwest Passage*, 61.

two passions as an exclusionary binary? He did not switch from topic one to the next: both were long-held expressions of his continuous, single, faith in mid-eighteenth-century mercantilist values and the public benefit of expanding the national trade. Dobbs, for example, had presented the memorandum *Reasons for the Great Price and Scarcity of Beaver and other Furs*, attacking the HBC for allowing the French trade to grow at the expense of the British, to Government while Middleton was at sea, before he had received any bad news regarding the Passage.[133] He also continued to advocate for the Passage's discovery long after his most public feuds with the Company had ended.[134] Moreover, it is perfectly plausible that something in Middleton's journal had convinced him that the Passage did exist, despite the explorer's assertions otherwise. After all, perusals of James', Foxes', and Scroggs' journals had convinced Dobbs that the Northwest Passage was a certainty, despite that fact that those three explorers had also failed to discover it. Furthermore, Dobbs did genuinely seem to have convinced himself that Middleton had betrayed him. His private letters matched his public proclamations: to close friend Michael Ward he wrote 'My 2d Book is now publishd ... and I have the satisfaction that all who have looked into them approve of what I am doing, and believe there is a Passage and the Company are faulty and M—n a rogue'.[135] Dobbs' goals and motivations, then, had remained resolutely the same, regardless of

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[133] Clarke, *Arthur Dobbs, Esquire, 1689-1765; Surveyor-General of Ireland, Prospector and Governor of North Carolina*, 50.

[134] After the signing of the 1763 Treaty of Paris, fulfilling his constant wish to repel France from America, Dobbs wrote 'After this glorious acquisition which has answered my most sanguine endeavours to promote I have nothing to wish for but the opening the trade to Hudson's Bay and discovery of the Passage to the Western American Ocean which I have laboured to obtain these thirty years, and then I should die in peace', ibid., 50, 190; Ironically, his advocacy of the Passage had played an indirect part in the removal of France from North America. His expeditions had raised French suspicions about British aims on the continent and contributed to the origins of the Seven Years War, which would result in vast British territorial gains at France's expense. See Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763*, 311.

[135] PRONI D2092/1/6, p. 65. Dobbs to Ward, 21 February 1743[4]. While the accusations were false, there had been enough in Middleton's conduct to convince a sufficiently pertinacious mind of skulduggery. He had talked earnestly with Dobbs about attacking the Company's trade then suddenly refused to conduct any trade at its expense during the expedition. Likewise, he had spent the winter clearly favouring the company of Isham over his own officers. Unfortunate remarks, such as his promise to "be a better Friend to the Company than ever" and his comment that hardly any sailor aboard could even tell where the ships had sailed, could also be pounced on by those looking for

any new tactic he adopted. He was an ideologue, and he continued to act in the interests of his ideology. His attacks on the HBC and his attempts to find the Passage were both entirely sincere, as both were manifestations of the same tightly held political and economic beliefs.[136]

With Britain now at war with France, the Admiralty could no longer spare ships to search for the Northwest Passage. Dobbs, therefore, turned to private interests to fund his second expedition.[137] To induce such support, he spearheaded a parliamentary petition on behalf of "several merchants of the City of London" suggesting that a bill be introduced to award any discovers of the Passage £10,000, as 'the finding out new Countries, in order to increase the Exports of our Manufactures, and improve the Commerce and Navigation of Great Britain, hath always merited the Approbation and Assistance of Parliament'.[138] A parliamentary committee formed to debate this, summoning as its main witnesses William Moor, John Rankin, and Edward Thompson, all of whom had been prime movers in the attacks on Middleton's character and findings.[139] On 12 March 1744[5], it came to two resolutions in Dobbs' favour, one ruling that a Passage 'would be of great Benefit and Advantage to the Trade of this Kingdom', and the other that 'in order to encourage Adventurers to attempt the said Discovery, a public Reward should be

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wrongdoing. Dobbs also had access to men who were more than willing to agree with his conspiracy theory, such as John Wigate, who had quarrelled with Middleton on the voyage, as evidenced by Middleton withholding the necessary paperwork that Wigate needed in order to be paid by the Admiralty. Middleton, *Voyages to Hudson Bay in Search of a Northwest Passage, 1741-47, Volume I: The Voyage of Christopher Middleton, 1741–1742*, 260.

[136] These beliefs also manifested in other advocacy, conducted at the same time as the battles discussed here, such as his proposals for the settlement of Labrador as a bulwark against French encroachment and as a destination for British trade, Clarke, *Arthur Dobbs, Esquire, 1689-1765; Surveyor-General of Ireland, Prospector and Governor of North Carolina*, 51.

[137] 'The French War is like to disconcert all my scheme with the Admiralty for this season, as I foresaw this I petitioned the King in Council for 2 ships or sloops to go the voyage or in case that could not be granted at this time to grant such reward as he thought proper to incourage private undertakers to find the passage ... I shall prepare ships and take in adventurers with me upon the voyage', PRONI D2092/1/6, p. 100. Dobbs to Ward, 31 March 1744; 'we shall open a subscription to fit out ships I beleave at £100 a share', PRONI D2092/1/6, p. 86. Dobbs to Ward, 2 February 1744[5].

[138] 'A Petition to the House of Commons relating to the Discovery of a Northwest Passage', 25 January 1744[5], Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 27.

[139] Parliament, *Report Relating to the Finding a North-West Passage* (London, 1745), 3.

given to such Person or Persons as shall make a perfect Discovery of the said Passage'.[140] Dobbs immediately opened subscriptions for his second expedition. When the Act passed into law, it did so with such enthusiasm that it offered twice the reward Dobbs had proposed – £20,000.[141] The *London Magazine* expressed its satisfaction at the outcome, writing that 'nobody would think the Reward of even 100,000*l* too great for Men who have the Courage to risqué their Fortunes, hazard their Lives, and undergo the Harships, to which they must inevitably be exposed, by the Inclemency of the Winter in those Northern Climates, for the Service of their Country'.[142] The law was a clear demonstration of how the Passage, under Dobbs' guidance, had come to be viewed in British culture.

The HBC reacted fearfully to Parliament's confirmation that the Passage was officially now to be understood on Dobbsian terms. Another extraordinary meeting of the General Court was called as the bill was defended in Parliament, which again concluded that the governor and Committee should 'take the best care to hinder any Encroachments, on the Companys Trade, Property, or Priviledges, and to do all things necessary for Preserving the same'.[143] Their strict policy of secrecy had been unwelcomely punctured by the parliamentary committee's requests for historic HBC northern journals and the consistent disclosure of sensitive information in the Dobbs-Middleton pamphlet war.[144] Much more concerning, though, were the implications of the voyage threatened by the bill. If a Northwest Passage expedition led by the Admiralty rang alarm bells

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[140] 'Decision by the House of Commons on the Merchants' Petition', 12 March 1744[5], Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 32.
[141] 'An act for giving publick reward to such person or persons, his Majesty's subject or subjects, as shall discover a north west passage through Hudson's Streights, to the western and southern ocean of America', May 1745, ibid., 36. This sum represents over £4,000,000 in today's money, as per "Inflation Calculator", Bank of England, 16 June 2023, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator.
[142] 'Of the Disputes about the Discovery of a North-West Passage, with an Account of Those Who Have Attempted It', *The London Magazine* 14 (1745): 134–36.
[143] HBCA A.2/2, f. 3. General Court Minutes, 26 March 1745.
[144] HBCA A.1/36, f. 257. Governor and Committee Minutes, 12 February 1744[5].

because of its association with Dobbs and his known desire to open the Hudson Bay trade, an expedition led by Dobbs and the suite of financial interests who would benefit from ending their monopoly was a veritable crisis. The publication of *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay* by Dobbs during the legal process had laid his ideology bare for all to see: the Northwest Passage likely existed, despite the Company's efforts to hide it, and if its discovery could be married with an open North American trade, the benefits for national prosperity presented by trade and settlement would be bountiful.[145] 'By the unaccountable Behaviour of the Hudson's Bay Company', the *Account* concluded, 'the Government and Parliament have a just and legal Right to lay open the Trade to all the Merchants in Britain'.[146] The bill itself stipulated that 'all persons whatsoever, being subjects of His Majesty, and residing in any place where the said adventurers may come, in the prosecution of the said discovery, shall give the said adventurers all aid and assistance requisite; and… shall no ways obstruct, molest, or refuse the said adventurers reasonable succour' – a clear refutation of the Company's initial attempt to protect its interests from the perceived threats of the Middleton expedition.[147] The Company urgently lobbied for a stipulation that nothing in the Act should 'take away or prejudice any of the estate, rights, or

[145] Dobbs, *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay*, 48, 58, 71, 78, 110–11, 122, 161, 167, 168. The book's verbose full title encompasses its argument almost entirely: *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay, in the North-West Part of America: Containing a Description of Their Lakes and Rivers, the Nature of the Soil and Climates, and Their Methods of Commerce, &c. Shewing the Benefit to Be Made by Settling Colonies, and Opening a Trade in These Parts; Whereby the French Will Be Deprived in a Great Measure of Their Traffick in Furs, and the Communication Between Canada and Mississippi Be Cut Off. with an Abstract of Captain Middleton's Journal, and Observations Upon His Behaviour During His Voyage, and Since His Return ... the Whole Intended to Shew the Great Probability of a North-West Passage, so Long Desired; and Which (if Discovered) Would Be of the Highest Advantage to These Kingdoms*.

[146] Ibid., 158.

[147] 'An act for giving publick reward to such person or persons, his Majesty's subject or subjects, as shall discover a north west passage through Hudson's Streights, to the western and southern ocean of America', May 1745, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 36.

privileges of or belonging to the governor and company of adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay', but knew that worse was to come.[148]

THE WILLIAM MOOR EXPEDITION

In May 1746 William Moor, formerly of both the HBC and Middleton's expedition, set sail for the Northwest Passage in command of the *Dobbs* Galley, with Francis Smith and the *California* in tow, both of them also bitter critics of the HBC. Also on board was Dobbs' personal representative, Henry Ellis.[149] The expedition's orders prioritized exploration over trade, but its eye to an envisioned future of free trade were clear in commands such as the one ordering that if Moor should encounter any Inuit he was to give them 'more for their Furrs &c. than is usually given by the Company, in such Goods as they chuse, so as to fix a Friendship with them for the future', and those which ordered treaties be made and interpreters brought home for use in subsequent expeditions.[150] Likewise, Dobbs' subscribers, who had invested around £6,000 in total,[151] had signed an agreement stating that upon the discovery of the Passage they would meet again to discuss 'opening a Commerce with the Natives of the Countries, which may be discovered adjoining, or near, to the said Passage'.[152] The justification of the expedition's goals which opened Ellis' account of the voyage reiterated Dobbs' beliefs that a Passage 'would be a most valuable Discovery to the British Nation' due to its effects on navigation, shipping, foreign trade, and the

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[148] 'An act for giving publick reward to such person or persons, his Majesty's subject or subjects, as shall discover a north west passage through Hudson's Streights, to the western and southern ocean of America', May 1745, ibid.

[149] He would express his ideology after his return in Ellis, *Considerations on the Great Advantages Which Would Arise from the Discovery of the North West Passage*. Due to frequent disputes between the captains, Ellis was often the deciding voice in the expedition's decision making.

[150] Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay: By the Dobbs Galley and California*, 111–13.

[151] PRONI D2092/1/6, p. 105. Dobbs to Ward, 4 March 1745[6].

[152] 'Articles of Agreement, For Carrying on an Expedition, by Hudson's Streights, for the Discovery of a North-West Passage to the Western and Southern Ocean of America', 30 March 1745, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 35. Their agreement talked of Committee members, preserving documents, secretaries, elections, and other hallmarks of a company. A company that intended to compete with the HBC; For a breakdown of the make-up of these merchant subscribers, see: Peters, 'State, Parliament and Empire in the Mid 18th Century', 178–79.

exportation of goods and manufactures.[153] The implications of a Northwest Passage expedition completely of Dobbs' design, unshackled from the Admiralty, were easy to see.

The HBC certainly saw the implications. In view of their own earlier explorations and Middleton's testimony, they had no reason to think that a Passage was possible, and so therefore could see no reason why Dobbs would be returning if not solely for purposes troublesome to their monopoly. Letters were sent to factors in the Bay which revealed the Committee's panic. After describing Moor's ships – with the worrying but inaccurate claim that they carried 'the Frame of a Factory House' – the Committee wrote that 'We give you this Information that in case they should come to molest you or encroach upon the Companys Rights Propertys or Priviledges'.[154] The entire forthcoming interaction between Moor and the HBC forts was framed in hostile language, with the expectation of conflict. Instructions were even given as to what factors should do if the 'Discoverers or pretended Discoverers' were to 'overpower you'.[155] The official policy was therefore to 'oppose the same as much as possible', with a reminder that the Northwest Passage prize act stipulated that nothing should prejudice the privileges of the Company.[156] While it was accepted that assistance would have to be given to any British ship in distress, doubt was laid upon the validity of the explorers' claims to this privilege:

> such Discoverers as come for relief should imediately give you such proof that they have been or are upon such Discovery, and set forth the Distress they have fallen into… and give you sufficient Security that they will neither trade with the Natives or entice or draw away any of our Servants from the Factory or do any prejudice to the Estate Rights and Priviledges of the Company.[157]

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[153] Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay: By the Dobbs Galley and California*, iii–vii. Ellis also envisioned that 'Copper, Skins, and Furrs it must abound with in Parts nearest the Passage, and in the Countries under a better Climate, better Things maybe expected', v.
[154] HBCA B.135/c/1, f. 5v. [Committee to] M[r] George Howy & Council at Moose Fort, 1 May 1746. Such letters were sent to each of the Bay posts, but only this draft copy has survived.
[155] Ibid., f. 9.
[156] Ibid., f. 9.
[157] Ibid., f. 9.

If these requirements were not met, 'you are to be on your guard & take the utmost care of the Companys Intrestes & Trade & refuse them admittance into your Factory'.[158] It was as strong a negative reaction to the expedition as could be made within the bounds of the prize law.

The letter also stressed the importance of incoming ships making the correct signals due to possibility of French or Spanish ships making 'pretence of coming into your Port as Discoverers having fallen into Distress' and thereby ambushing the fort.[159] 'You cannot be too much on your guard or too vigilant in keeping good look out', the message concluded.[160] This warning complimented the distribution of accounts from the defence of Albany in 1709 to remind HBC men of the benefits of fighting, a promise to pay pensions and gratuities for those who suffered wounds in battle, and, two years earlier, the dispatch of a garrison to defend Hudson Bay against French attacks.[161] When William Moor decided to head to York for winter, he was duly greeted by a warning cannon shot and factory men who came out to cut down the harbour's buoys and beacon, telling him that the governor had ordered such action in case the ships carried French forces.[162] Isham would, however, have surely recognized the ships, having sailed for a time in their company aboard the annual HBC ship and even having been aboard them at the Orkneys.[163] Also, as crewmember Theodorus Swaine Drage reasoned, if he had truly believed the ships were French, he surely would not have had his men calmly sail close enough to the ships to converse with their men on the way to the beacon.[164] Furthermore, when rumours swirled in 1750 that another batch

[158] Ibid., f. 9.
[159] Ibid., f. 9v.
[160] Ibid., f. 9v.
[161] Isham, *Isham's Observations*, lxxxii.
[162] Parliament, *Report from the Committee*, 42; Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*, 115–16; Ellis adds that Isham acted as such because he had seen that the ships were in distress and spitefully wanted to remove the guides that led to safety. Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay: By the Dobbs Galley and California*, 70.
[163] Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 52; Isham dismissed the importance of knowing the ships, stating that French or Spanish forces could have commandeered them, Isham, *Isham's Observations*, 204.
[164] Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*, 70.

of explorers were likely to arrive in the Bay, the Committee ordered that the buoys and beacon be again taken up 'to hinder and Obstruct as much as Possible any Strange Ship', suggesting that such actions were, or at least became, a deliberate strategy for disturbing explorers.[165] Regardless, as Moor had failed to make any signals before approaching,[166] this was a small act of defiance that Isham could justify as being within his instructions, as was his initial refusal to allow the ships to enter his river until they produced written authority from the Government validating their status of explorers.[167] As he would later state to the captains, Isham had done nothing 'but what he could answer to his Masters'.[168]

After tense discussions [169] between the captains and Isham – in which the latter was accused of acting 'in ope'n & avow'd Defiance & contempt of [his Majesty's] Dignity & perogative, contrary to the contents & meaning of your Charter, the Laws of Great Britain Humanity & Hospitality in Endeavouring to Disable, or Destroy people... in an Enterprize of National Concern' – the factor finally resigned himself to another winter with explorers when they promised that ''tis

[165] HBCA A.6/8, f. 44. [Committee to] Mess[rs] John Newton & Council at York Fort, 21 May 1750.
[166] Moor admitted as such at the parliamentary inquiry: Parliament, *Report from the Committee*, 42.
[167] A message was sent to the ships stating: 'We would advise you, for your own Safety, not to proceed any further with your Ships, Boats, or Vessels, any where near or about this Fort, unless you send one Man with a proper Authority from Government, or Company trading into this Bay, for so doing; otherwise I shall do our utmost Endeavours, to hinder any Ship or Boat from entering this River. This is our firm Resolution', To the Commanders of the Two Ships, lying off this River's Mouth, 27 August 1746, Parliament, *Papers Presented to the Committee*, 73.
[168] Parliament, *Report from the Committee*, 43.
[169] How tense these exchanges were varies depending on who was telling the story. Drage claimed that Isham threatened to shoot at the ships to protect his trade if the boats sailed further upriver than the fort, Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*, 120; Ellis wrote that the explorer's were 'received by the Governor in a very haughty and direspectful manner', and that Isham 'used his utmost Endeavours' to encourage them to anchor their ships 'in a Place open to the Sea, where they would have been in all Probability beat to Pieces' Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay: By the Dobbs Galley and California*, 71; Moor's testimony, however, recorded a much more professional discussion of the safest harbour available for the ships Parliament, *Report from the Committee*, 42; As far as Isham was concerned, he had been more than accommodating, writing 'I think they were too well usd, and I believe any honest man that Know's me will say the Same' Isham, *Isham's Observations*, 205; Isham was so incensed by the claims of Ellis that he compiled a lengthy point-by-point rebuttal of Ellis book for the HBC Committee to read, 'Notes and Observations on a Book entitled A Voyage to Hudsons Bay in the Dobbs Galley &c 1746 & 1747 Wrote by Henry Ellis's', ibid., 197–238.

our intent to carry on no illicit traffick'.[170] Suspicion, however remained. Why, Isham asked, were these ships so insistent of staying against his wishes at York, the HBC's centre of trade, rather than at Churchill, which was both a safer harbour and much closer to their destination?[171] When Isham informed Robert Pilgrim, factor at Churchill, of Moor's arrival, his colleague's response articulated the prevailing mood of suspicion:

> I am Very much Surprizd to hear of afb Disocver's being in your River… thier going into your River & not Comming to this (which is without Dispute much more commodious for wintering ships) affords one a good Deal of matter to think of. Neither can I Reconcile itt, I wish their Design may be good, & the Company's Interest not Suffer.[172]

Likewise, when winter thawed and communication renewed between factories, Joseph Ibister at Albany wrote to Isham 'I am very anxious to… know how ye Discovers have behavd & hope they have not been able to make any Infringmnt on ye Companys trade', further demonstrating the prevailing assumption amongst men on the Bay that the explorers were seeking to make such infringements.[173] George Howy, factor at Moose Fort, even went so far as to express his hope that the explorers had shipwrecked.[174] While there would be some cooperation between Isham and the explorers, for example when he gifted them construction materials and winter clothing as they

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[170] 4 September 1746, Isham, *Isham's Observations*, 249.

[171] HBCA B.239/b/4 f. 3. James Isham to Robert Pilgrim at Churchill, 12 September 1746. Drage claimed that York was chosen as it offered the best chance of finding indigenous hunters to help provide for the crews over winter, Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*, 110.

[172] HBCA B.239/b/4 f. 3v. Robert Pilgrim to James Isham, 9 October 1746. 10 Shilling Creek, where the ships wintered, was so bad a harbour that Isham joked that 'as for any part I imagine the Discovery Gentlemen are out of they wills!', HBCA B.239/b/4 f. 3. James Isham to Robert Pilgrim at Churchill, 12 September 1746.

[173] HBCA B.239/b/4 f. 10. Joseph Ibister to James Isham, 14 May 1747. Robert Pilgrim at Churchill likewise cautiously wrote 'I shall be Very glad to hear yt your Neighbours & you have had no Difference'. If there had been no dread of such difference, he would have had no need to express such hope, HBCA B.239/b/4 f. 6. Robert Pilgrim to James Isham, 31 March 1747.

[174] 'I have sent Mr Longland with ye Moose Sloop according to Your desire to Scowre ye Shore all along from this place to Albany, and Secure what ever they can find of any Wrack and Carry to Your Factory, if there is any Wrack found I hope it is some of our Pretended Discoveres that has come out last fall from England in purpose to Winter with us', HBCA B.135/a/16 Moose Factory Journal 1745-1746, f. 20. George Howy to Joseph Ibister, 19 June 1746.

settled in,[175] the prevailing mood of suspicion and hostility would define almost all the interactions between the factory and the explorers.[176]

The winter's first flashpoint came when Isham learned in November 1746 that an indigenous hunter had gone aboard the ships. He angrily wrote to Moor decrying the captain's promises as having been 'on'y to Deceive me' and demanded that from that point on he would require security for any goods or stores he lent to the explorers.[177] When food became tight, Isham organized the feeding of the explorers by the fort's indigenous hunters rather than allowing them to make their own arrangement with the hunters, 'in order that no clandestine Dealings shou'd be carried on'.[178] Henry Ellis was furious that 'Cruelty of Christians towards Christians, prevented that Relief which *Indian* Humanity would otherwise have certainly afforded', concluding that Isham's sole intention had been 'the distressing of us', 'which is the Encouragement that all are to expect who go in Search of a North-West Passage, from such Neighbours'.[179] By Spring, tempers had flared so badly

[175] Parliament, *Report from the Committee*, 42; Isham had also given the crews beaver coats from the stores of his HBC ship at the Orkneys, but this was before they had aroused his suspicion further by wintering at York, Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*, 165.

[176] Moor understood this, telling the parliamentary inquiry in 1749 that the reason behind his poor treatment at York 'was an Apprehension that they designed to trade, Mr. Isham knowing that they had Goods aboard for that Purpose; tho' the Witness never heard it said, that that was the Reason', Parliament, *Report from the Committee*, 42; Isham indignantly responded to Ellis' claims that he had done all he could to distress the crews by listing moments where he helped the explorers, but these seem meagre compared to those things he did for Middleton. He mentions, for example, keeping four of the ships' sailors at the Factory so that they could dig a cellar. This is hardly selfless sacrifice - it was the ships' men, after all, doing the hard work of the digging. It is undeniable that Isham frequently denied the explorer's requests for aid or materials. Isham, *Isham's Observations*, 213–14, 252, 256, 257, 264, 273, 276, 282, 293, 298.

[177] Isham to Moor and Smith, 1 November 1746, Isham, *Isham's Observations*, 260–61 He also demanded that the explorers pay the debt of 30 made-beaver that the hunter owed to the Company.

[178] Isham stationed Augustine Frost and another man in a tent near the wintering house that the explorers had built in order to prevent contact between the expedition crews and the hunters, ibid., 229. At first Isham assigned two hunters to the explorers, James Isham to William Moor, 27 November 1746, 264. Smith convinced Isham to assign a third hunter for the *California* in particular after Moor claimed the entire first batch of 105 partridges for the *Dobbs* galley alone, James Isham to William Moor and Francis Smith, 10 December 1746, 267-8. This was just one episode of many in the violent dislike that formed between Moor, Smith, and Ellis, and often caught Isham up in the crossfire, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 56–57, 174–78, 180, 182–84.

[179] Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay: By the Dobbs Galley and California*, 201–2; As petty as Isham often was throughout the winter, in this case the truth was (despite Moor's claims to the contrary, Parliament, *Report from the Committee*, 43); that the factory was desperately short on meat – so short that Isham himself had to apply to the ships in exchange for the promise of salt beef in the spring. Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*, II, 13 When the venison came, it was far short of what the explorers had expected.

that Moor was threatening to blockade the river unless Isham gave him more provisions.[180] When an indigenous band traded two pairs of snowshoes for alcohol at the explorer's camp, Isham wrote to Moor and Smith again reminding them that 'these proceedings are not in the Least comformable to yr. Instruction's, or answerable to the promise you gave me' and demanded the return of the snowshoes.[181] Moor reiterated that ''Tis our indent to carry on no Ellicdet trade' and told the factor that his men had not even traded to meet the needs of those who wanted for 'the first Necessity's of Life'.[182] Edward Thompson, the ships' surgeon, was moved to make an impassioned plea for support to Isham:

> As we have now allmost seen through Long and tedious winter… all the time Chiefy upon salt provisions; and… badly supply'd with proper Necessary's and as fresh Diet is the only thing we want or Desire during our stay here, and frequent application having been made to you, both personally & by Letter, without the Least notice or regard paid to Either. Now whether such applications has been made in a proper manner or no, (or to your Liking) I cannot say, But I take this opportunity most Humbly to request & desire of you… to make use of your best Endeavour's with the Natives of the Country to Supply… all those men who are imeadiately under my care… upon whom the Grand National affair we are now upon greatly Depends, you may make wt. charge you please in moderation, and I will Draw a Bill upon the Secretary of our Committee, payable upon sight… this I think will be a Suffitient testimony & Justification for you to your masters.[183]

Isham testily replied that he had done all he could, considering that he had received no forewarning that would have allowed him to prepare for a winter in company with explorers.[184] Isham's suspicion of the expedition's intentions informed his actions right up until the ships left York, when he stationed men along the banks of the river it departed through to ensure that they could

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Isham stated that this was because there had been few deer seen over the winter. Drage framed this explanation as 'alledging as an Excuse', II, 192.

[180] 'I think I must ask this Gentleman's pardon for this intimate's more of pyracy & Robber's than of the Design that Brought them here', wrote Isham in his journal, 15 March 1746[7], Isham, *Isham's Observations*, 291.

[181] James Isham to William Moor and Francis Smith, 14 March 1746[7], ibid., 290–91. Isham's actions here also raise the question of whether his giving of winter clothing to the explorers in the Fall had not been an act of collaboration but rather a calculated move to prevent them trading for such items. This episode may have exasperated him to a greater extent than it might have because he was again frustrated by the drunkenness of the explorers. He ascribed the scurvy that blighted them to this vice, 215-16.

[182] William Moor to James Isham, 16 March 1746[7], ibid., 294.

[183] Edward Thompson to James Isham, 20 March 1746[7], ibid.

[184] James Isham to Edward Thompson, 20 March 1746[7], ibid., 294–96.

not conduct any trade away from the eyes of the fort.[185] He was then, finally, free, 'to my Great Satisfaction', of his troublesome guests.[186] Even though the expedition had not actually clandestinely traded at York – much to the chagrin of its subscribers [187] – Isham believed that it had nonetheless undercut his trade, its presence having 'Startled' away potential hunters and traders.[188] Isham's jealous guarding of his local trade, amplified by his cognizance of Dobbs' intentions and the dubious premise of his expedition's geographic concerns, had resulted in an extremely tense winter for all involved.[189] To the Committee, he wrote of his desire that 'if any ships comes upon Discovery[s] next Year, that your Honor's will please to send a proper person to assist me'.[190]

THE PASSAGE IN PARLIAMENT AGAIN

William Moor and Francis Smith, exploring in a ramshackle fashion that saw little cooperation between their ships, did not discover the Northwest Passage. Some hope was raised about Chesterfield Inlet, but ultimately the expedition was a failure.[191] Without the expected £20,000

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[185] Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 58.
[186] HBCA B.239/b/4 f. 12v. James Isham to Joseph Ibister, Factor at Albany, 12 July 1747. He said the same to George Howy at Moose Fort, HBCA B.239/b/4, f. 13v. 12 July 1747.
[187] 'It was a heavy Accusation against the Captains by some concerned in this Undertaking, when they came Home, that they did not trade with the Indians... who were unacquainted with the Case', Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*, II, 59. Isham's successor at York concluded that 'We are not Sensible nor can Learn of any Encroachments on the Companys Trade or any Depredations done by the late Discoverers', HBCA A.11/114, f. 129. John Newton General Letter to the Committee, 27 August 1748.
[188] 'You have mention'd twice concerning Indian hunter's – Really I shall Stand in Need of Such any Self, as I shall not have above 18 & much of them… I am Doubtful if the arrival of these ships has not Startled y[e] Ind[s]… we shall have but few of their Comp', HBCA B 239/b/4 f. 7. James Isham to Robert Pilgrim at Churchill, 7 April 1747. The presence of the expedition had also prevented the commencement of work on a new battery at the post, HBCA A.11/114, f. 125. James Isham General Letter to the Committee, 18 August 1747.
[189] As well as the pressing issue of free trade, Isham was also vexed by Dobbs' plans for new settlements in the Bay area, Isham, *Isham's Observations*, 206–7.
[190] HBCA A.11/114, f. 125. James Isham General Letter to the Committee, 18 August 1747.
[191] Dobbs again laid blame upon his captain for his failure, writing 'the Adventurers finding themselves defeated in their Expectations, by the Timidity, ill Conduct, or bad Inclinations of some of the Commanders and Council', Arthur Dobbs, *A Short Narrative and Justification of the Proceedings: Of the Committee Appointed by the Adventurers, to Prosecute the Discovery of the Passage to the Western Ocean of America* (London: J. Robinson, 1749), 6.

reward money, Dobbs and his subscribers were down on their investment.[192] Dobbs wasted little time in making his next move. Between October and December 1747, Dobbs met with a number of his most influential allies and proposed a new direction for their enterprise.[193] He planned to petition the King and Council for a charter that would grant them possession of and exclusive trade in all the new lands they had discovered for a fixed number of years, which would allow them 'to pursue the Discovery [of the Northwest Passage] as farr as practicable and settle and improve Land &c[a] on the Continent around the Bay and prevent the French Encroachments', arguing that the HBC had proven that they could not be trusted with the task alone.[194] It was an unexpected move, especially as Dobbs admitted that 'the Spirit of the Times', which he shared and encouraged, was 'against all Charters', but he reasoned that the temporariness of his new Company's rights rendered it not as an unlawful monopoly, but simply as a means to nurture 'the Infancy of our own Settlemt and discovery'.[195] He was not yet officially moving for free trade in the Bay, but rather a compromise that he believed would help him discover the Northwest Passage. Far from representing an abandonment of the Passage, the articles of his petition were dominated and framed by it.

It, of course, still represented an obvious challenge to the HBC's own charter rights.[196] At yet another session of the General Court, the new Governor Thomas Knapp declared that, if granted, Dobbs' proposals would 'greatly affect if not Totally Ruin, the Companys Trade and

[192] The *Dobbs* and *California* were sold, but Dobbs was still £1,500 out of pocket. His secretary, Samuel Smith, wrote to his subscribers asking them to cover the charge, 'Samuel Smith, Secretary of the North West Committee, to Judge Ward [and others], 8 February 1747[8], Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 326.
[193] 'Arthur Dobbs to Judge Ward', 26 December 1747, ibid., 322–23.
[194] HBCA E.18/1, ff. 112-113. Before the Attorney & Sollicitor General, 26 January 1747[8]
[195] 'Arthur Dobbs to Judge Ward', 26 December 1747, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 322–23.
[196] Dobbs himself anticipated that the Company would 'be glad to drop their own Charter and come in as sharers in the new Charter', such would be the damage. 'Arthur Dobbs to Judge Ward', 26 December 1747, ibid., 323.

property'.[197] The Committee secured a copy of the petition and prepared a defence that included a line-by-line refutation of Dobbs' claims and demands.[198] They attacked the record of Dobbs' 'pretended discoverers', defended their own exploratory record, claimed that they were the only group capable of repelling French encroachments, and, using the same language as Dobbs' promises, stated that their business had 'been of great Advantage to great Britain, whereby they annually Import Large Quantatites of Beaver Furrs &c[a] to the Encrease of His Majestys Customs Employing the Poor and Exporting Cloth and other English Manufactures'.[199] Knapp, Company solicitor Joshua Sharpe, and two others attended hearings with the Attorney General through May and June 1748 to present their case.[200] August's verdict applauded Dobbs' attempts to find the Passage, but ruled against him, arguing that a charter would not be necessary for the discovery and that such a charter would be liable to objection on the same terms that he had levelled against the HBC charter.[201] The Company also succeeded in dragging out its defence long enough to stave off a feared third expedition.[202] In Dobbs' words:

> As to our Northern Affair it has met with such delays before the Attorney and Solicitor… from the studyd delays of the Hudsons Bay Company… we have yet got nothing done… We find it

[197] HBCA A.2/2, f. 10-11. General Court Minutes, 10 March 1747[8]. The same phrase is used in HBCA A.1/37, f. 289. Governor and Committee Minutes, 10 March 1747[8]. The General Court resolved that the Governor and Committee should 'take the best care therein to prevent any any Encroachments, on the Companys Property, Priviledges, and to do all things necessary for preserving the same'.

[198] The first mention of this process in the Committee minutes comes in February, HBCA A.1/37, f. 256. Governor and Committee Minutes, 23 February 1747[8]. The defence was prepared, under the supervision of solicitor Joshua Sharpe from 1 March to 21 April, ff. 259-86.

[199] HBCA E.18/1, ff. 114-115. Remarks upon the Allegations and Prayers of the Petition.

[200] HBCA A.1/37, ff. 293, 297, 312. Governor and Committee Minutes, 3 May, 11 May, 21 June 1748. The hearings took place on 2 May, 10 May, 17 May, 21 June, 23 June.

[201] 'Report of the Attorney General and Solicitor General on the Petition of Arthur Dobbs and the North West Committee', 10 August 1748, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 328–30.

[202] It had warned its factors of the likelihood of such an expedition in Spring 1748, writing wrote that 'If they have any real Intention to make a discovery' the ships would winter in Wager River far to the north, but if they should head for a factory 'be always on your guard', settle the price of any goods given to them according to the Company's standard with two witnesses who would come home on the next ship, and 'in particular not to suffer any ship or vessel to go up the River above the factory to Intercept the Companys Trade as they did in Hayes River in August 1746', HBCA B.135/c/1, f. 8. [Committee to] John Potts and Council at Moose Fort, 3 May 1748.

> too late to fit out ships this year, and next year we shall be able to do it effectively if we get our Charter an Act of Parliamt.[203]

The HBC, despite these victories, had not exactly been given a resounding seal of approval. They knew that more was to come and, at another extraordinary session of the General Court, resolved to 'continue to oppose any farther attempts that may be made by M[r] Dobbs or any others against the Companys Property or Priviledges and to do all things necessary to preserve the same'.[204]

Dobbs propaganda battle against the Company continued apace in anticipation of his next move. In July 1748 he re-advertised his 1744 polemic *Account of the Countries* in *Gentleman's Magazine*, *London Magazine*, *London Evening Post*, and *Whitehall Evening*.[205] August saw the publication of Henry Ellis' account of the expedition, which reiterated Dobbs' views and acted as apologia to any disgruntled subscribers. It claimed that the expedition's discoveries, 'tho they did not absolutely shew where the Passage lay, yet seem to have firmly established the Certainty, that such a Passage there is', and reiterated Dobbs claims regarding the Passage's implications for 'the Glory of the British Nation'.[206] A rival account, published by Drage, the clerk of the *California*,

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[203] PRONI D2092/1/6, p. 145, Dobbs to Ward, London, 19 April 1748. He repeated this claim in Dobbs, *A Short Narrative and Justification of the Proceedings*, 8; Interestingly a copy held by the HBC contained annotations by members of the Committee stating that 'Mr Dobs had no mind to send out Ships'. Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 336. This presents a puzzling inconsistency, as does the fact that Smith had informed the subscribers of the North West Committee that the Dobbs and California had already been sold by this point, 326.

[204] HBCA A.2/2, f. 12. General Court Minutes, 25 August 1748. This meeting was called for at the first meeting of the Committee after the verdict, HBCA A.1/37, f. 321. Governor and Committee Minutes, 17 August 1748.

[205] Peters, 'State, Parliament and Empire in the Mid 18th Century', 180.

[206] 'the finding a North Weft Passage would be a most valuable Discovery to the British Nation… there is a moral Certainty, that the Exportation of our Commodities and Manufactures may be vastly increased, that several Branches of foreign Trade may be highly improved thereby, that Navigation in general may from thence be greatly extended, and our Shipping increased; then surely it deserves to be considered as a thing of high Consequence to the Public, and an Object worthy of national Attention, Protection, and Encouragement', Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay: By the Dobbs Galley and California*, vii. See also iii, vi-ix, x, 78-79, 125; His statement that 'it seems to be incompatible with our Reputation, as a Maritime Power, as well as inconsistent with our Interests, as a trading Nation, to abandon a Design, that has been prosecuted so far, and wants so little, so very little, of being completed', 151, is reminiscent of the nineteenth century rhetoric of John Barrow, who produced phrases such as; 'To have abandoned any attempt any further attempt to fulfil an object which has never ceased to occupy the attention of the British government since the days of our Elizabeth... to have left it to be completed by a foreign navy, after the doors of the two extremities of the passage had been thrown open by the ships of our own, would have been little short of an act of national suicide' John Barrow, *Voyages of Discovery and Research within the Arctic Regions, from the Year 1818 to the Present Time* (London: John Murray, 1846), 22. See Chapter Five.

was more prosaic, and put more faith in the Pacific coast than Chesterfield Inlet.[207] Crucially, however, both were vehemently critical of the HBC, in passages such as the following:

> By an unaccountable Policy, at least considered in a national Light, the Company discourage their Factories from extending the Trade, and give themselves no Sort of Trouble, to prevent the French, who are making daily Encroachments upon them… The trade is designed to be highly profitable to a few, at the same Time that it is very disadvantageous to a Nation.[208]

The Company's tight policy of secrecy meant that it issued no public response to these claims, and that Isham's articulate responses to Ellis' accusations were destined to languish inside Company walls.[209] The attacks of Dobbs and his allies, therefore, entered the public sphere with a considerable head start, winning many minds by default. Likewise, their fanciful geography became 'in effect truths of their time'.[210] As Malachy Postlethwayt, who followed their geographical lead, wrote in 1751's *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, 'if there are any falsehoods and mis-representations contained therein, only to injure the Company, and no way

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Moor's opinion on the Passage was stated to the forthcoming parliamentary inquiry, rather than in print. He informed them that he did not know whether a Passage would be navigable or not, but insisted that communication between the Atlantic and Pacific must exist, although probably at more northerly latitudes than anticipated, Parliament, *Report from the Committee*, 45; Another, briefer, account, by Edward Thompson, appeared in The British Magazine in November 1747. It was optimistic that a Passage would soon be discovered, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 321–22.

[207] Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*, 94–99.

[208] Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay: By the Dobbs Galley and California*, 98–99. Ellis also criticized Isham specifically, writing that the HBC 'commonly chuse their Factors from amongst the meanest and most illiterate of their Servants', 99.

[209] 'Notes and Observations on a Book entitled A Voyage to Hudsons Bay in the Dobbs Galley &c 1746 & 1747 Wrote by Henry Ellis's', Isham, *Isham's Observations*, 197–238.

[210] 'The imaginings we now call fanciful, like the scientific views we now know to be erroneous, were in effect truths of their time. In any period, reality is little more than consensus which, even in science, is not absolute and can be strikingly ephemeral in nature... The Dobbs-Robson characterization of Rupert's Land derived from a rationale that embraced the most advanced geographical theories of the time. And since it was verified, if only in part, by Robson's first-hand observations of Rupert's Land, it is not surprising that it was readily accepted in England' D. W. Moodie, 'Science and Reality: Arthur Dobbs and the Eighteenth-Century Geography of Rupert's Land', *Journal of Historical Geography* 2, no. 4 (1976): 293, 307; Geography, as perceived by Dobbs and his allies, was articulated in Dobbs, *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay*; Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay: By the Dobbs Galley and California*, 301; Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, 306. A central tenet of their theories was that a temperate climate, ripe for cultivation and settlement, could be found a short distance from the Bay. The Dobbsian conception of North American geography outlived his official campaign. Its legacy can be seen in Malachy Postlethwayt, *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce Translated from the French* (London, 1751), 957–61, which took its descriptions of HBC territories almost entirely from Dobbs and Robson; and even in sources as late as Alexander Cluny, *The American Traveller, or, Observations on the Present State, Culture and Commerce of the British Colonies in America, and the Further Improvements of Which They Are Capable* (London: E. and C. Dilly, and J. Almon, 1769).

serve the public, let the author answer for them, for the public can only depend on the reports of those who have been in these countries'.[211]

On the advice of the influential Duke of Argyll, Dobbs took his battle to Parliament.[212] This time he would omit the stumbling block of requesting his own charter, and instead aim squarely at destroying the HBC's. Removing the stranglehold of the HBC would, he reasoned in his new petition, result in a British expansion westwards across North America that would naturally bring the Passage within grasp.[213] This made free trade the 'speediest, least expensive, and most effectual Method' of bringing about its discovery.[214] The Passage also formed a vital element of his attack on the Company – Dobbs claimed that the HBC had violated its charter's obligation to pursue the Passage and thereby forfeited their right to it. His merchant backers, however, after two failed efforts to discover the Passage, seemed cautious of mentioning it lest it hurt their case. While all 29 of the petitions that they lodged before the Commons against the HBC demanded free trade in Hudson's Bay, usually with Dobbsian references to the national benefit, only five mentioned the Passage.[215] It was perhaps because of this shift that Dobbs withdrew from his leadership role, in favour of 'some more happy Adventurer' and "postponed" his own petition.[216] A parliamentary

[211] Postlethwayt, *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce Translated from the French*, 961.
[212] Arthur Dobbs to Judge Ward, 26 September 1748, Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume II*, 331.
[213] HBCA E.18/1, ff. 232-236. "To the Hon[ble] the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament Assembled", 1748.
[214] Dobbs, *A Short Narrative and Justification of the Proceedings*, 11.
[215] For great detail on the contents of these petitions, and also the makeup of the Commons committee, see Peters, 'State, Parliament and Empire in the Mid 18th Century'. Examples of the kind of language used can be seen in LAC, MG18-D4, Vol. 2. Draft Petitions of Hatters, Wool and Iron Manufacturers and Merchant Adventurers relative to Hudson's Bay, 1748. The Wool and Iron Manufacturers, for instance, contended that 'that a great stop is put to the increase and extension of our Colonies and the Sale of our Coarse Manufactures to the Natives of America by the illegal Monopoly of the [HBC], who cramp and confine our Exports of Coarse goods fit for the Indian Trade, by Confining themselves to a small Capital employd in Trade, and by keeping up the British goods to an exorbitant price in exchange with the Natives Furs and Peltry, in order to make a great gain upon a small Stock, the Chief aim of all Exclusive Companies, and prejudice to the Nation'. The Merchant Adventurers likewise 'humbly hope that in consideration of so great an advantage to the Trade and Navigation of Britain as would accrue by settling those countries and opening the Bay Trade all his Majestys Subjects'. See also HBCA E.18/1, ff. 166-189. Extracts from the journals of the House of Commons, March-May 1748[9].
[216] Dobbs, *A Short Narrative and Justification of the Proceedings*, 12.

committee was nonetheless appointed on 9 March 1748[9] 'to inquire into the State and Condition of the Countries adjoining to Hudson's Bay… and also to inquire into the Right the Company of Adventurers trading into Hudson's Bay pretend to have, by Charter'.[217] Dobbs continued to espouse his beliefs in print, publishing no less than three reiterations of his beliefs during the course of the inquiry, both regarding the benefits of discovering a Passage and the sins of the HBC.[218]

The inquiry called 22 witnesses, many of which were former HBC employees now openly hostile to the Company. Joseph Robson and Richard White, for example, blamed the inaction of the Company for the prosperity of French trade at Britain's expense.[219] Thompson testified that in his time working for the Company he had heard reports of copper mines flanking a strait that connected Hudson Bay to the Pacific which had remained unpursued and unreported, and that during his service under Middleton and Moor he had seen Isham conspire with the former to hide the Passage and then sabotage the efforts of the latter.[220] If the visiting ships had been at liberty to trade, he claimed, they could have subsisted without the interference of the HBC, and likely would have discovered the Passage.[221] Instead of providing its own witnesses, the Company, worried about revealing its secrets under questioning, tasked Joshua Sharpe with mustering their defense in text.[222]

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[217] There is no conclusive evidence as to the origin of this motion, considering Dobbs' postponement. For more details see Peters, 'State, Parliament and Empire in the Mid 18th Century', 181–82.
[218] Dobbs, *A Short Narrative and Justification of the Proceedings*; Dobbs, *A Short State of the Countries and Trade*; Dobbs, *Reasons to Shew, That There Is a Great Probability of a Navigable Passage*.
[219] Parliament, *Report from the Committee*, 4–8, 11.
[220] He accused Middleton of telling Isham 'Gentlemen, You may look upon as us Interlopers, or Enemies; but 'tis to such Thing; for I'll go the Voyage, and no one by myself shall know whether there is a Passage, or not: And I'll be a better Friend to the Company than ever', and then deliberately sailing northeast to avoid the discovery and forcing his indigenous guides to leave the ship when they informed him he was heading the wrong way. Ibid., 27–28.
[221] Ibid., 29.
[222] This fuelled accusations against the Company. If it truly had pursued the Passage, Dobbs reasoned, it would be easy enough to appear before the inquiry and state as such. Dobbs, *A Short State of the Countries and Trade*, 10.

First, Sharpe published *The Case of the Hudson's-Bay Company*, a short pamphlet typical of parliamentary lobbying campaigns.[223] It defended the Company's record both in trade and in exploration and accused Dobbs and his associates of being moved by a spirit of bitterness and embarrassment at having failed twice to discover the Passage themselves.[224] The Company, scrambling in efforts to save face, was accusing Dobbs of doing just the same. The *Case* also stressed the hardships that extreme weather imposed upon Company activities.[225] Morgan Vanek's excellent article "The Politics of the Weather: The Hudson's Bay Company and the Dobbs Affair" explores in depth the ways in which the HBC turned to the science of weather in an attempt to redefine the parliamentary inquiry's lines of debate.[226] She explains how Sharpe drew evidence from Middleton's "The Effects of Cold",[227] written during his stay at Churchill in 1742, which suggested that the Bay's weather was too cold to permit accurate measurement with the technology of the time, to suggest that the claims of any interloper or armchair explorer based upon such measurements could not be trusted.[228] The Company were therefore implicitly left as the best possible authority on the weather of the Bay, bequeathing its weather-based reasons for its relative

[223] This was commissioned on 10 March, one day after the inception of the inquiry, HBCA A.1/38, f. 46. Governor and Committee Minutes, 10 March 1748[9]. Four days later another General Court session was called, in which it was resolved that the Governor and Committee should 'take such Methods as they shall think proper during the present Enquiry relating to the Trade of this Company in Parliament and from time to time produce Papers Minutes Accounts &c. as may be most conducive'. HBCA A.2/2, ff. 14-15. General Court Minutes, 14 March 1748[9]. Note the caution applied to the providing of documents to the inquiry.

[224] The Knight tragedy was leaned on evidence of the Company's commitment to exploration. French expansion was reframed as evidence of the Company's success, rather than failure – if the Company could operate smoothly in such conditions it deserved praise, not approbation. It also contended that breaking open the trade would destroy the trust built up with the indigenous traders of Hudson Bay, collapsing the fur industry. Hudson's Bay Company, *The Case of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 1748, 1–2.

[225] 'to Parts (perhaps the most inhospitable) and where the greatest Extreme of Cold is felt, of any in the known Parts of the Globe, to which any Trade is carried, and through a Sea filled with Ice, of such Bodies, and of such mountainous Height, as... is not to be met with in other Parts, though nearer to the Pole', ibid., 1.

[226] Vanek, 'The Politics of the Weather'.

[227] NA, ADM 1/2099, 'The Effects of Cold; together with Observations of the Longitude, Latitude, Refraction of the Atmosphere, and Declination of the Magnetic Needle, at Prince of Wales's Fort, Churchill River in Hudson's Bay, North America'.

[228] Claims such as those made in Dobbs, *An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay*, 2. Dobbs asserted that the HBC pretended that the climate was worse than it really was: roughly equivalent to Sweden or Livonia.

lack of exploratory endeavour extra veracity. Any critics of the Company would need to undertake the difficult task of disproving the Company's climactic claims if they wanted to make a convincing argument for free trade. Therefore, while in later decades the expansion of science would be seen as positive press for the HBC, often in relation to the Northwest Passage, during the mid-eighteenth century its tactics relied in part on the prevention of further research in the Arctic.[229]

Sharpe also worked hard – sometimes misleadingly – to prove that the Company had taken seriously its obligation to seek out the Passage. The expeditions of Knight, Kelsey, Scroggs, and Napper were presented as "A List of Vessels fitted out by the Hudson's Bay Company on Discovery of a Northwest Passage"; the controversial 1741 instructions to Isham were listed as "relative to assisting Capt. Middleton upon the Discovery of a North-West Passage"; letters to Kelsey and Norton in the 1720s expressing interest in discoveries to the northward were listed as "Copies of Instructions given by the Hudson's-Bay Company to their Officers abroad, so far as they relate to the Discovery of a North-West Passage"; Knight, Scroggs, and Napper's sailing instructions were provided as "Copies of Orders given by the Hudson's Bay Company to sundry Persons, so far as they relate to the Discovery of a North-West Passage"; and Kelsey's 1691 journal was included twice, with only minor variations.[230] The Company also placed an order with cartographer and engraver R. W. Seale for 200 copies of "A Map of North America with Hudson's Bay and Straights", likely intended as an accompaniment for the *Case*, as evidence that they had explored the continent, but scrapped this notion when the map arrived adorned with fanciful

[229] See Chapter Four for more regarding the HBC's engagements with the scientific aspects of late eighteenth century exploration.
[230] Parliament, *Papers Presented to the Committee*, 3, 4, 11, 20, 58, Appendix.

speculative geography that supported rather than refuted Dobbs' claims.[231] Sharpe's final act was to make sure that the Company had the final word before the inquiry, waiting until word that the Commons report was imminent before submitting the thirtieth and final petition.[232] Its readers were informed that the HBC charter was legal and beneficial and that the Company had fulfilled its obligation to pursue the Northwest Passage as diligently as could be expected, especially considering the increasing likeliness of its non-existence.[233] With an eye to the language of his opponents, Sharpe concluded that 'the Trade into the said Bay cannot be carried on or managed so advantageously either to the honor or interest of this Nation as in the Company'.[234]

The parliamentary committee ruled in favour of the HBC and its monopoly, though more through a caution of offering any potential advantage to the French than any love for the HBC.[235] As *The London Magazine* summarized:

> as it appeared to be impossible to preserve this trade without forts and settlements on the coast of Hudson's-Bay, and as such forts and settlements must be supported either by exclusive companies, or at the publick expence, the affair was dropt… tho' it may perhaps be taken up again, when it shall be thought more necessary to apply the publick money towards supporting our trade and settlements in *Asia*, *Africa* and *America*, than towards supporting our allies in *Europe*.[236]

While Dobbs had failed to achieve his commercial goals, he had succeeded in bringing the Northwest Passage back into the public eye. By fusing the Passage with the economic spirit of the time he had given it a new cultural cache. With the Passage now associated with the national

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[231] Glyndwr Williams, 'A Remarkable Map', *Beaver*, Winter 1962, 30–36.
[232] The decision making about when exactly to submit this petition can be seen in HBCA A.1/38, ff. 70-71. Governor and Committee Minutes, 28 April 1749.
[233] In recent years, in fact, it should be praised for having 'not persisted to waste their Capital in looking for a Passage, which they have no reason to think exists', *Journals of the House of Commons* XXV, 852. This is an entirely different matter of course, to the necessity of proving that they had persisted in seeking out the Passage in earlier years.
[234] HBCA E.18/1, ff. 187-187v. Extracts from the journals of the House of Commons, 1 May 1749. Similarly, it contended that 'by means of these Letters Patent this Nation hath not only received great advantages in its Revenues by the Trade carried on by the said Governor and Company but hath the sole Trade into Hudson's Bay'.
[235] HBCA E.18/1, f. 203v. Minutes of Committee of the Whole House, 2 May 1749.
[236] 'A Summary of the Most Important Affairs, That Happen'd Last Session of Parliament', *The London Magazine* 18 (1749): 411. The magazine termed the inquiry the 'most remarkable affair' of the last session of Parliament, 410.

benefit, it had gained abstract as well as material utility – it had become worth having been seen to pursue the Passage even if you had given up on it producing any actual material benefit. It was for this reason that, despite the petitioners at the inquiry having begun to leave the Passage behind, the HBC had continued to turn to it in their defence.

THE KISH-STACK-EWEN

Although the Company, stung by the exposure of the inquiry, welcomed the return of secrecy and would not actively promote any of the following, a concerted internal effort was made to right its exploratory and expansionist wrongs on the Bay.[237] This would manifest itself in the founding of the new posts Richmond and Henley, treks into the interior such as the travels of Anthony Henday and exploratory ventures along the Eastmain coast. It also involved eyes once again turning to the coast north of Churchill, with its attendant questions of the Northwest Passage.

Instructions to Churchill, written only a fortnight after the inquiry's climactic vote, ordered that James Walker should take the fort's sloop northwards and, after trading with the Inuit, investigate the region around Whale Cove for its suitability for settlement, then sail 'as far Northward as he can', taking careful note of the tides in any inlets he discovered.[238] The Committee expressed their displeasure when these orders were not followed and strictly ordered that the sloop

[237] Examples of the Committee's increased encouragement of secrecy immediately following the Dobbs affair can be seen in Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, 67, 75; It is for this reason that the Company took no steps to publicly address Robson's 1752 allegations that the HBC systematically stymied any attempt from within or without the Company to perform exploration, for fear of making discoveries that would invite competition to their business. Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, 1, 4, 6, 7, 18, 21, 38, 40, 79, App. 1: 22, 27, 53–54.

[238] HBCA A.6/8, ff. 17v, 18v. [Committee to] Mess^{r} Joseph Ibister & Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 16 May 1748. Ibister was also commanded that, 'In case M^{r} Dobbs or any other persons do this year send out any ship or Sloop on the Discovery of a Northwest Passage', he was to 'take Effectual Care to prevent any of our Trade from falling into their hands and hinder if possible their going up beyond the Factory to Intercept the Indians'. Ibister replied that he would 'Act with the Gratest Caution wth respect to those Pretended Discoverers or Interlopers', HBCA A.11/13, f. 116. Ibister to Committee, August 28 1750.

'on no pretence whatever be in future detained from going to the Northward'.[239] Factor Joseph Ibister added to Walker's instructions in 1752 that he should 'in perticular to search in and about y^{e} Lattd 64 Where we have an Information from the Natives that there is a large Inlett Leading a great Way in to the Country which if found out may prove of great Advantage to the Company'.[240] This inlet, the Kish-Stack-Ewen, had first come to the Company's attention in 1750, but now Churchill was equipped with a new, stronger sloop that the Committee had delivered for the purpose of northern voyages.[241] The 'diligent search' for this river, 'which runs from the Bay a Considerable way into the Country', and subsequent sailing up it 'as high as she can go' was added as explicit instruction from 1753 onwards.[242] Ferdinand Jacobs, Ibister's successor, was convinced that the Kish-Stack-Ewen existed, and told the Committee that he 'heartily wished a full discovery may be made thereof'.[243] Only slow progress was made, first because of the aversion of Walker and his successor James Wood to instructions that interfered with their trading duties and then because of the bad luck of John Bean, who missed the entrance in poor weather in 1756 and concluded that 'if there was such a River it Resembells old Brazill viz not to be seen but by some chimerical persons'.[244] William Christopher finally found its entrance in 1761 and sailed up it 100 miles before being pushed back by strong winds. The Committee were delighted and urged further

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[239] 'We blame you much for detaining the Sloop so long before you sent her to Moose River last year whereby One Voyage to the Northward is entirely Lost', HBCA A.6/8, ff. 47v-48. [Committee to] Mess^{r} Joseph Ibister & Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 21 May 1750.

[240] HBCA B.42/a/39, f. 11. "Sailing Orders and Instructions to be Observd on board the Sloop", Joseph Ibister, A Journal of the most material Transactions & observations on board the Sloop Churchill…, 21 June 1752

[241] HBCA, B.42/a/35, f. 9v. A Journal of proceedings on board the Churchill Sloop…, 7 July 1750; HBCA A.6/8, f. 71. [Committee to] Mess^{r} Joseph Ibister & Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 11 May 1751.

[242] HBCA A.6/8, f. 120v. [Committee to] Mess^{rs} Ferdinand Jacobs & Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 24 May 1753. The search parameters were widened to 61-64ºN; See HBCA A.6/8 f. 141v and HBCA A.6/9, f. 35v for reminders of these instructions from the Committee in 1754 and 1756.

[243] HBCA A.11/13, f. 126v. Ferdinand Jacobs to Committee, 5 September 1753.

[244] Payne, *Prince of Wales' Fort*, 19, 118; Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century*, 126; HBCA B.42/a/47, f. 14v. Journal of the most material Occurances on board the Churchill Sloop, 1 August 1756.

investigation.[245] The 1762 expedition, grandiosely saluted out of the fort with seven guns, however, proved to be a disappointment. 230 miles in, the Kish-Stack-Ewen, now recognized as one and the same as Chesterfield Inlet, terminated at Baker Lake.[246] The Committee subsequently urged the investigations of similar openings near Whale Cove and Marble Island, but these also proved fruitless.[247] From 1765 onwards, the game was up. Upon new factor Moses Norton's request, the Committee ordered that 'as the hoped for Discoveries do not at present furnish Us with Expectations of Success', the sloops would no longer explore, but rather attach a new interest in whaling to their trading voyages.[248]

While this decade of northern exploration was undoubtedly motivated by hopes of expanding the Company's trade in response to the growth of Canadian fur-traders – Jacobs, for instance, wrote that the Kish-Stack-Ewen was 'the Only River we have found or heard of as yet that bids Fair to Extend the Companys Trade into the Heart of the Country' – this, again, does not tell the complete story.[249] The northern trade was, as ever, small.[250] The HBC balance books never registered the value of the 'Esquemay Trade' greater than the paltry sum of £50.17.11 during the entire period.[251] The Committee recognized 'the Extreme Poverty of the Nations' to the north in

[245] HBCA A.6/10, f. 31v. [Committee to] Mess^{rs} Ferd^{d} Jacobs & Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 24 May 1762.
[246] HBCA A.11/13, f. 174. Moses Norton to Committee, 31 August 1762.
[247] HBCA A.6/10, f. 59v. [Committee to] Mess^{rs} Moses Norton & Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 31 May 1763.
[248] HBCA A.6/10, ff. 97-97v. [Committee to] Mess^{rs} Moses Norton & Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 15 May 1765.
[249] HBCA B.42/b/8, f. 4. M^{r} Ferdinand Jacobs to M^{r} Robert Temple 17 June 1762; Jacobs also told the Committee that its discovery was 'a Lucky event' as 'I hope to Increase Your Hon^{rs} Trade', HBCA A.11/13, f. 162v. Ferdinand Jacobs to Committee, 20 August 1761. The Committee's instructions referred constantly to extending the trade when discussing northern possibilities. See for example: HBCA A.6/8, f. 120v. [Committee to] Mess^{rs} Ferdinand Jacobs & Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 24 May 1753.
[250] The sum total of the trade taken in 1750 was '13 Casks of Boile'd Oil & 112 ^{tt} Whalebone Onely', HBCA A.11/13, f. 115, Ibister to Committee, 28 August 1750. In 1751 it was worse, 'only able to Procure 4 Hogsheads of Oil & 82 ^{tt} Whalebone', HBCA A.11/13, f. 115, Ibister to Committee, f. 118v. 21 August 1751.
[251] This high point was in 1758. It represented 0.02% of the entire value of the HBC for that year, which was £284,793.8.2, HBCA A.18/1, ff. 1-20. Balances of HBC Books, 1758. The median sales value produced by the northern voyages was £33, HBCA A.14/11, f. 89. Grand Ledger, 1745-1769.

its instructions, but insisted nonetheless that the voyages not be set aside.[252] Clearly, the trade was too small to sufficiently explain the policy on its own.

What was important here was not the trade, in many ways, but the idea of trade. The attacks of its critics had not only stung the HBC, they had also put its very existence into threat at the inquiry. These attacks continued to come in the 1750s.[253] The British cultural conception of the purposes and methods of trade had clearly evolved and the sleep by the frozen sea would no longer do – the spirit of the times demanded zeal and expansion. This was reflected in the rhetoric that was used within Company. The Committee's instructions to York in 1750 remarked sardonically that 'it is surprising to us that none of our Factors or Servants have had the Curiosity of Informing themselves thereof especially of places not far from York Fort' and ordered the investigation of a number of locales.[254] Ibister demanded that the Company 'must act with more Ardour & diligence then hitherto has be done' if it ever wanted to make a 'great discovery'.[255] The Kish-Stack-Ewen was repeatedly referred to as being for 'the Benefit of the Nation', language which had never been applied to the activities of Knight or Kelsey.[256] A key symbol of those critics who demanded the

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[252] HBCA A.6/8, f. 98. Committee to Mess[rs] Joseph Ibister & Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 12 May 1752.

[253] Printed attacks upon the HBC published during the period of HBC exploration north from Churchill include: Josiah Tucker, *A Brief Essay on the Advantages and Disadvantages Which Respectively Attend France and Great Britain with Regard to Trade* (London, 1750), 41; Postlethwayt, *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce Translated from the French*, 957–61; Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*; Edmund Burke and William Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America*, vol. II (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757), 282; Joseph Robson, *The British Mars. Containing Several Schemes and Inventions To Be Practiced by Land or Sea against the Enemies of Great Britain* (London, 1763); There were also petitions to Parliament inclement to the HBC monopoly in 1752 first from a group of hatters, and then from a group of London merchants hoping for an exclusive grant of land in Labrador, Williams, 'The Hudson's Bay Company and Its Critics in the Eighteenth Century', 163–64.

[254] HBCA A.6/8, f. 46. [Committee to] Mess[rs] John Newton & Council at York Fort, 21 May 1750. These instructions present the interesting juxtaposition of the Company fearing the progeny of Dobbs, but doing so in language that they adopted from him. Factors were asked to be on guard for any incoming expeditions 'for they come Premeditately with a View to Invade the Companys Property and disposess them of their Lands and Trade and in time will be the cause of diminishing if not wholly destroying the Furr trade which has hitherto been carryed on to a National advantage', HBCA A.6/8, f. 37. [Committee to] Mess[rs] George Spence & Council at Albany Fort, 21 May 1750.

[255] HBCA A.11/13, f. 122v. Joseph Ibister to Committee, 8 August 1752.

[256] See for example 'a means of Extending and Enlarging the Companys Trade, for the Benefit of this Nation which we have always had much at Heart', HBCA A.6/10, f. 31v. [Committee to] Mess[rs] Ferd[d] Jacobs & Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 24 May 1762; 'we are much Disappointed at finding that Chesterfield or Bowdens Inlet doth not upon

expansion of British trade for the national good was the Northwest Passage, and it duly also became a symbol once more for the HBC.[257] It is impossible to deny that visions of the Northwest Passage influenced the Company's activity at Churchill during the long 1750s. The search for the Kish-Stack-Ewen took place in exactly the region that Dobbs, Ellis, Robson, and Thompson had all identified as the likely location of the Passage.[258] A decade later, when the Kish-Stack-Ewen was found, the Committee urged Churchill to 'do every thing in their power, effectually to Discover whither the same be a Streight or Passage, or not'.[259] The men in the Bay were also well aware of the implications of their search. Jacobs had a copy of Robson's *Account* with him at Churchill, which he was eager to share with Isham at York in 1754.[260] When Christopher concluded his 1762 expedition, he reported that 'further Progress to the Westward is Impracticable, and Consequently no Passage through this River or Inlet into the South Sea' and recorded in his journal that 'Thus Ends… a late Authors Probability of a NW Passage'.[261] Moses Norton informed the Committee after the disappointments at Whale Cove and Marble Island that he would no longer

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Examination afford the least Shadow of being Beneficial to the Nation and the Companys Interest', HBCA A.6/10, f. 59v. [Committee to] Mess[rs] Moses Norton & Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 31 May 1763. Similar ventures, such as William Grover's inland expedition were promoted as 'we are always ready to do every thing in our power that is any ways Conducive to Extend and Enlarge the Companys Trade for the Benefit of the Nation', HBCA A.6/9, f. 87 [Committee to] Mess[rs] Ferdinand Jacobs & Council at Prince of Wales Fort, 11 May 1758.

[257] Examples of texts that urged the discovery of the Northwest Passage while also criticizing the HBC include: Ellis, *Considerations on the Great Advantages Which Would Arise from the Discovery of the North West Passage*; Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, 6, 8, 16–17, 54–62; 'this more general trade on the bay would naturally, without nay new expence or trouble whatsoever, in a very short space of time discover to us the so much desired North-West Passage', Burke and Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America*, II:282; John Campbell, *Complete Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. 2 (London: T. Woodward, 1748), 399–451, 1039–41; William Coats wrote in favour of the existence of the Passage, but did not publish out of respect for the secrecy of his employers, the HBC. Barrow, *The Geography of Hudson's Bay*, 17–18, 29.

[258] Dobbs, *Reasons to Shew, That There Is a Great Probability of a Navigable Passage*; Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay: By the Dobbs Galley and California*; Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*, 54; Parliament, *Report from the Committee*, 30.

[259] HBCA A.6/10, f. 31v. [Committee to] Mess[rs] Ferd[d] Jacobs & Council at Prince of Wales's Fort, 24 May 1762.

[260] HBCA B.42/b/1a, f. 3v. Ferdinand Jacobs to James Isham, 22 January 1754; HBCA B.42/b/1a, f. 6v. James Isham to Ferdinand Jacobs, 15 April 1754. Isham wrote negatively regarding the book's accusations, but Jacobs' opinion is not recorded, nor is either man's opinions of Robson's geography specifically. Jacobs was known to be critical of the Company's decision making, Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1:626.

[261] HBCA A.11/13, f. 172. Christopher to Committee, 28 August 1762; HBCA B.42/a/57, f, 21v. A Journal of the most remarkable Transactions and Occurrences on Board the Sloop Churchill…, 17 August 1762.

send the sloops any further north than the latter because 'I am Certain and Shure that there is no Pasage into the Western Ocan in this Hudsons Bay'.[262] Evidently, both Christopher and Norton had viewed the most northerly leg of the journeys as directly aimed at the discovery of the Passage.[263] The HBC had adopted the sentiment that trade should actively expand for the benefit of the nation, with the Northwest Passage as a key symbol of this endeavour. Dobbs, therefore, had lost the battle of the inquiry, but won the war of ideas.

CONCLUSION

The story of the Company's battle with, and acquiescence to, the ideas of Arthur Dobbs, marked a clear turning point in both the history of the HBC and the history of the Northwest Passage. The Company, and indeed Hudson Bay itself, had been forced into the limelight and, as much the Company may have hoped for a return to secrecy, there would be no way of returning fully into the dark. From this point onwards its actions would be taken with an eye to the opinions of the outside world, not least with regards to exploration. This importance of the "look" of exploration, clearly seen during the parliamentary inquiry, was a vital evolution in the cultural meaning of the Passage. No longer would pursuers of the Passage concern themselves purely with its material benefits, especially as the scarcity of these was becoming clear. From now on their prize would also include the benefits of simply having been seen have pursued it. This was primarily due to the reinvention of the Northwest Passage as a utility for the national benefit or public good, a development that reflected the broader "gospel of commerce" cultural movement. The times would eventually move away from Dobbs his ilk, and the national advantages of the Passage would

[262] HBCA A.11/14, f. 3v. Norton to Committee, 24 August 1764

[263] HBC sailor William Coats, who explored the Eastmain, also privately urged on the discovery of the Northwest Passage. 'If', he wrote, 'a passage should be found to the South Sea, it would open to us such a scene of treasure and honour, as no nation of the world (save one) ever enjoyed before', Barrow, *The Geography of Hudson's Bay*, 34.

evolve away from economic issues into new territories of scientific endeavour and national prestige, but it was here that the public conception of the Passage began.

There were some hints during this period of the new directions that the pursuit of the Northwest Passage would take in future years. Ellis' role on the 1746 expedition had included the order to 'take Notice of the different Natures of the Soil, and to collect, to the utmost of my Power, Metals, Minerals, and all kinds of natural Curiosities'.[264] Both his and Drage's published accounts of their experiences included discussions of ethnography, ecology, and other assorted scientific concerns.[265] Middleton took observations on the effects of cold while on expedition, which won him applause in the scientific community, but these were not promulgated for widespread public consumption. Arctic explorers, therefore, were beginning to concern themselves with science while on their expeditions, even if they were not yet attempting to define themselves as scientists, or to pursue science as a primary motivation, as they would in later times. Inside the Company itself, Isham recorded a number of observations regarding the nature of the Bay, but there is no evidence that these were ever actually read by the Committee.[266] However, as exploration proceeded to become increasingly more scientific, so too would the Company, as it attempted to stay on top of the optics of Northwest Passage exploration. This will be explored at length in the following chapter.

The idea of the explorer for public consumption, as well as public benefit, was also an innovation of the era that would persist and develop. While Middleton and Moor represented the past, with their reports given only to those directly concerned, Ellis and Drage, were again the

[264] Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay: By the Dobbs Galley and California*, 50.
[265] Ibid., 16–21, 79–84, 84–92, 92–97, 102–6, 106–11, 129–31; Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*, integrated throughout.
[266] Isham, *Isham's Observations*, lxvi.

harbingers of a later era. Their published narratives differed in popularity, style and, to varying degrees, purpose, to those routinely published by explorers of the Northwest Passage in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but they were nonetheless still books designed to make exploration comprehensible and entertaining to the layman. However, while the accounts and characters of these later explorers would become central to the cultural understanding of the Northwest Passage in a post-Cook world, Middleton, Moor, and the rest remained relatively obscure as personalities in their own time. While the inquiry received informed press coverage, Middleton's departure had been marked only by a couple of confused newspaper articles. The *London Magazine* published extracts from on board the *Furnace* in Orkney, but referred to the expedition's target as the 'North East Passage'.[267] Likewise, the *Daily Post* described the ships as 'bound to Russia'.[268] Moor's mention in *London Magazine* report correctly identified his ships and destination, but consisted of only one sentence.[269] Exploratory narratives were beginning to be written, but things were a long way away from the bestsellers of John Franklin or William Edward Parry.

The HBC, in future years, would welcome more explorers into their posts, notably John Franklin, George Back, John Ross, William Pullen, and William Hooper. They would likewise deal with more armchair geographers and exploratory agitators, such as Joseph Banks, Alexander Dalrymple, John Barrow, and Jane Franklin. But it would never again be like this. Arthur Dobbs was one of a kind, the manifestation of a very particular culture and he had played a large role in bending the meaning of the Northwest Passage itself around its values.

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[267] 'A Remarkable Voyage', *The London Magazine* 11 (1742): 555–57.
[268] Barr and Williams, *Voyages to Hudson Bay, Volume I*, 96.
[269] 'The Dobbs Galley and California, passed into Yarmouth Roads the 28th ult. in Company with their Convoy, the Loo, a 40 Gun Ship, on their Expedition to find out the North-West Passage, by Hudson's Straits', 'The Monthly Chronologer', *The London Magazine* 15 (1746): 313.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE AS A SCIENCE

'The public look forward to the result of your future equipments, in expectation that they will determine a question, which has so long engaged the attention of the geographer, as well as the merchant'.

– William Goldson, 'To the Merchants Trading to the North-West Coast of America', 1793.[1]

INTRODUCTION

Science was not an important aspect of the earliest Northwest Passage expeditions. In fact, its influence was often fought against. Thomas James' *The Strange and Dangerous Voyage of Captaine Thomas James* – a 1633 book whose very name stands in clear contrast to the more factual titles that followed it in later eras – abjured the idea of relying on science over faith in passages like the following:

> We haue with confidence relied vpon
> A rustie wyre, toucht with a little Stone,
> Incompast round with paper, and alasse
> To house it harmelesse, nothing but a glasse,
> And thought to shun a thousand dangers, by
> The blind direction of this senselesse flye.
> When the fierce winds shatter'd blacke nights asunder,
> Whose pitchie clouds, spitting forth fire and thunder,
> Hath shooke the earth, and made the Ocean roare;
> And runne to hide it, in the broken shoare:
> Now thou must Steere by faith, a better guide.[2]

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[1] William Goldson, *Observations on the Passage Between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans: In Two Memoirs on the Straits of Anian, and Two Discoveries of De Fonte, Dedicated by a New and Original Map: To Which Is Prefixed an Historical Abridgement of Discoveries in the North of America* (Portsmouth: W. Mowbray, 1793), vi.

[2] Thomas James, *The Strange and Dangerous Voyage of Captaine Thomas James, in His Intended Discovery of the Northwest Passage into the South Sea* (London: John Legatt, 1633), 39.

In a time when images of the North as the realm of Satan still lingered, and its exploration was duly understood in part as a devotional act of testing one's goodness in extreme environs, anything that might pervert one's faith in God was met with suspicion.[3] James' retrospective shame frames his faith in such trifles as "A rustie wyre, toucht with a little Stone" rather than the Almighty as an act akin to idolatry. Furthermore, James likened such scientific equipment to a fly: not only fleeting, wayward, and parasitic, but also a creature frequently associated with the Devil himself.[4] By 1818, however, the scientific method had become some intrinsic to the epistemology of exploration that John Barrow concluded that James' observations, made with primitive equipment or a rejection of equipment outright, 'are at this time of no use whatever'.[5]

As discussed in Chapter Three, while mid-eighteenth century explorers like Christopher Middleton did conduct scientific experiments during their voyages, they subsumed these efforts within commercial concerns and epistemologies. In the Romantic period, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, as the inadequacies of scientific language in comprehending the great white North became clear, the Northwest Passage increasingly became connected with the aesthetic of the Sublime, those things utterly beyond the realm of scientific measurement. In between these points, however, science briefly dominated cultural understandings of exploration and the ways in which explorers responded to the landscapes they encountered.

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[3] For more information, see: I. S. MacLaren, '"Zealous Sayles" and Zealous Sales: Bookings on the Northwest Passage', *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 64, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 253–87; Frédéric Regard, 'Booking a Northwest Passage: Thomas James and the Strange and Dangerous Voyage (1633)', in *The Quest for the Northwest Passage* (Routledge, 2013), 99–112.

[4] As in Beelzebub, or the Lord of the Flies. For a history of the demonization and symbology of flies, see Steven Connor, *Fly* (London: Reaktion, 2006).

[5] Barrow, *A Chronological History of Voyages into the Arctic Regions*, 250.

The role of chartered monopolies such as the HBC in the production of science has been long neglected.[6] It is only recently that historians like Kapil Raj, Ted Binnema, and Adriana Craciun have discussed the role of corporations in "Big Science", in which political, commercial, military, and learned institutions were often brought together in efforts to cumulatively extract scientific knowledge from across the globe in the interests of empire.[7] I aim in this chapter to contribute to that conversation by discussing the search for the Northwest Passage in the late eighteenth century, which I believe clearly demonstrates agents of the fur trade actively engaging in nationally-minded questions of science. Not only did these fur-trading explorers engage with scientific questions such as botany, zoology, and ethnology at a scale not envisioned by their predecessors, they also came to understand their defining activity, geographical discovery, as a scientific one.[8] 'In the language of 18th- and early 19th-century England', wrote Sydney Ross, 'any kind of knowledge acquired by observation or experiment was freely called scientific and admitted to the company of the older sciences'.[9] Explorers thereby inherently became scientists – or, in the parlance of the times, "men of science" – with emphasis on "science" as a characteristic defined by liberal qualities as well as just an activity.[10]

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[6] This discussion has often restricted to discussions of specific issues. For a list of such works, see Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 303.

[7] Kapil Raj, '18th-Century Pacific Voyages of Discovery, "Big Science", and the Shaping of an European Scientific and Technological Culture', *History and Technology* 17, no. 2 (2000): 79–98; Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*; Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*.

[8] Indeed, in the mid-eighteenth century, writes Angela Byrne, 'geography held a central position in education, bolstered by its place in Locke's curriculum as "a framework for the teaching and development of other subjects, from astronomy to history"', Angela Byrne, *Geographies of the Romantic North: Science, Antiquarianism & Travel, 1790-1830* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 17.

[9] Sydney Ross, 'Scientist: The Story of a Word', *Annals of Science* 18, no. 2 (1962): 69.

[10] Ruth Barton, '"Men of Science": Language, Identity and Professionalization in the Mid-Victorian Scientific Community', *History of Science* 41, no. 1 (2003): 81.

The central figure in this discussion is Samuel Wegg, who became Governor of the HBC in 1783.[11] Wegg was an influential member of the Royal Society, the most important – indeed, until 1781 it had been the only – English society dedicated to scientific study and played the defining role in bringing the HBC into the increasingly important world of science it represented. He has been sorely understudied by historians of the fur trade, despite having overseen cultural change in the Company on a level akin only to George Simpson, around whom a veritable cottage industry revolves.[12] It is through Wegg that we can best understand Samuel Hearne and Charles Duncan, my choices of exploratory case studies from within the ranks of the HBC. Other key figures of interest include Joseph Banks and Alexander Dalrymple, the scientists who helped inspire and control this era's search for the Northwest Passage – a marked change from those who fulfilled the same role in earlier periods, commercial planners such as Arthur Dobbs or Humphrey Gilbert – and Richard Cadman Etches, the fur trading magnate responsible for a spate of expeditions that scoured the Pacific coast of America for a Northwest Passage.

SCIENCE IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The cultural meaning of science is, as Jan Golinski argues, wont to change, as scientific activity is almost always carried out with an audience in mind, thus tethering it to wider social and political contexts.[13] Such a change occurred during the second half of the eighteenth century, an overlooked but nonetheless 'distinct historical stage' in the history of science, one that James E. McClellan

[11] Richard Ruggles has helped highlight Wegg's role in transforming the Company. See: Richard Ruggles, 'Governor Samuel Wegg: The "Winds of Change"', *The Beaver*, Autumn 1976, 10–20; Richard Ruggles, 'Governor Samuel Wegg, Intelligent Layman of the Royal Society, 1753-1802', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 32, no. 2 (1978): 181–99.

[12] Recent publications concerning Simpson include James Raffan, *Emperor of the North: Sir George Simpson and the Remarkable Story of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 2010); Dale Lahey, *George Simpson: Blaze of Glory* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2011); Simpson, *Athabasca Journal*.

[13] Jan Golinski, *Science as Public Culture: Chemistry and Enlightenment in Britain, 1760-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

describes as 'crucial to the further development of organized science', stating that 'science in all its aspects was entirely recast'.[14] It was during this period that science increasingly became a concern of the state. Imperial competition with France and the shock of the American Revolution had inspired a consolidation of administration within the British state, and this, via repeated official consultation of the Royal Society, included the assimilation (and therefore professionalization) of science into governmental policy.[15] In this institutional framework, Francis Bacon's vision that scientific experimentation could and should produce beneficial effects for the common good could be belatedly realized.[16] As discussed in Chapter Three, in the imperial context of eighteenth century England, the primary vehicle through which humanity's common good could be improved was considered to be the expansion of the power of the British Empire. "Disinterested" science, like commerce before it, therefore, became both a tool in service of the glory of the British Empire and a symbol of that glory.

The very manner of performing the science had also changed. European scientists, spearheaded by Carl Linnaeus' work in botany, increasingly sought to quantify and measure the world. Thorough taxonomies based on multiple minute measurements, such as those in his 1753 *Species Plantarum*, sought to organize myriad specimens taken from nature into fixed ideal or typical basic forms underlying the world's phenomenal variation.[17] Mary Louise Pratt has argued that such epistemology was an attempt by Europeans to familiarize and thereby impose order and

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[14] James E. McClellan, *Science Reorganized: Scientific Societies in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), xix.
[15] John Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, the British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 21–22; McClellan, *Science Reorganized*, xiv.
[16] Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire*, 21–22; Rose-Mary Sargent, 'From Bacon to Banks: The Vision and the Realities of Pursuing Science for the Common Good', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 43 (2012): 82–90.
[17] Carl Linnaeus, *Species Plantarum* (Stockholm: Laurentius Silvius, 1753); Lorraine Daston, *Objectivity* (Zone Books, 2010).

control upon a world that was becoming increasingly chaotic in its diversity as Empire grew.[18] In such a schema travellers both produced the epistemological problem by encountering those new, chaotic phenomena, and also played a considerable role in responding to it by being unusually well placed to take the specimens and precise field measurements required to formulate taxonomies and natural laws. Explorers in the late eighteenth century therefore came to carry with them new instrumentation with which to conduct botanical, biological, geological, meteorological, magnetic, geodetic, hydrographic, and geographic observations, and these came to define the epistemology of exploration.[19] Science and exploration thereby entered into a symbiotic relationship, where exploration facilitated the new style of science, and the new style of science took over the meaning of exploration.[20] This system was self-perpetuating: more widespread travels led to more discoveries, which increased the appetite and need for more travel, *et cetera*, this process all the while contributing to the sense of "progress" that characterized the Enlightenment. The Northwest Passage was no exception to this. As William Goetzmann explains, 'pseudo-science in the guise of the new learning was almost as persuasive as real science, especially when men wished to believe what would serve them best'.[21]

If science in service of Empire was understood as the pursuit of human betterment, and exploration was understood as the vehicle of such science, then explorers in this period could attain

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[18] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 31.

[19] For discussions of the increasing role played by instrumentation in exploration, see: Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, 'Landscape with Numbers: Natural History, Travel and Instruments in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', in *Instruments, Travel and Science: Itineraries of Precision from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, Christian Licoppe, and H. Otto Sibum (London: Routledge, 2002), 96–125; and Felix Driver, 'Distance and Disturbance: Travel, Exploration and Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 14 (2004): 73–92. It should also be noted that new technologies also improved the safety and effectiveness of navigation, leaving time during voyages which could be set aside for scientific endeavours.

[20] Goetzmann refers to exploration in this period as the 'handmaiden' of the growing culture of science, William H. Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men: America and the Second Great Age of Discovery* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), x; See also Fulford, Lee, and Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era*.

[21] Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men*, 100.

and confer a prestige that their predecessors – brave, but by virtue of their commercial aims, workers like any other – never could have. Explorers could become heroic figures, nobly making sacrifices for a higher cause than their own interests.[22] As James Cook's instructions said, 'the making Discoverys of Countries hitherto unknown… will redound greatly to the Honour of this Nation as a Maritime Power, as well as to the Dignity of the Crown of Great Britain'.[23] Such a man, therefore, was and still is viewed quite differently to explorers like Martin Frobisher or James Knight who understood their task as a commercial one.

Few better symbols of the scientific transition exist than Joseph Banks, the gentleman collector whose fostering of both the institutionalization of science and the creation of specific scientific disciplines conducted in the Linnean method helped end the gentleman collector's primacy in the world of science.[24] As president of the Royal Society for 42 years (1778-1820) and 'Gatekeeper-in-Chief' of its journal *Philosophical Transactions*, Banks had an enormous influence over public science in the period in question.[25] Historians have called him the 'general director of exploration', a 'one-man department of scientific and industrial research', 'autocrat of the philosophers', 'the shadowy impresario of Britain's colonial expansion', and 'a man who once bestrode the wide world of the… British Empire like a colossus'.[26] Gordon Speck even called him

[22] This image would reach a zenith during the nineteenth century, when an understanding of the Northwest Passage's complete impassibility jettisoned any remaining commercial or strategic thoughts, as will be discussed Chapter Five.
[23] Quoted in David Igler, 'The Questions They Asked: Joseph Banks and Naturalists in the Pacific Ocean', *Journal for Maritime Research* 21, no. 1–2 (3 July 2019): 66.
[24] For more information in Banks' central role in these changes, see Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire*; James Taylor has also discussed the ways in which Bank's penchant for neoclassical aesthetics helped transform the art produced during and for the Pacific expeditions of this period and therefore the ways in which the Pacific world was imagined by the British public, James Taylor, *Picturing the Pacific: Joseph Banks and the Shipboard Artists of Cook and Flinders* (London: Adlard Coles, 2018).
[25] The quote comes from Noah Moxham, '"Accoucheur of Literature": Joseph Banks and the Philosophical Transactions, 1778–1820', *Centaurus* 62, no. 1 (2020): 20.
[26] David Mackay, *In the Wake of Cook: Exploration, Science and Empire, 1780-1801* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1985), 20, 23; Hector Charles Cameron, *Sir Joseph Banks; the Autocrat of the Philosophers* (London: Batchworth Press, 1952); John Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture*

'perhaps the most powerful man in London'.[27] Banks was consulted and employed by Government and private concern alike on virtually all matters relating to science and exploration in his time, serving as the British state's de facto minister for science. He even corresponded with the Spanish explorer Alejandro Malaspina, who searched for a Northwest Passage in 1791 and was highly eager to receive Banks' advice despite imperial rivalries.[28] Indeed, the Passage was one of his passions, a passion that he understood as sincerely scientific one. His understanding of the Passage is best expressed in a letter he sent to the Admiralty in 1817, in which he implored them to reopen the search because 'discoveries may now be made… not only interesting to the advancement of science, but also to the future intercourse of mankind'.[29] His influence helped transform the public understanding of the Passage to better reflect the values of his cultural ilk, and likewise helped transform the image of explorers from foppish, Grand Touring aristocrats or cynical agents of business into masculine heroes risking their lives for England and science. 'I may flatter myself', Banks himself once wrote, 'that being the first man of Scientific education who undertook a voyage of discovery and that voyage of discovery & that voyage of discovery being the first which turned out satisfactorily to his enlightened age, I was in some measure the first who gave that turn to such voyages'.[30]

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1; Fulford, Lee, and Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era*, 34.

[27] This claim is clearly a little exaggerated, but stands to demonstrate the scale of Banks' influence. Speck, *Samuel Hearne and the Northwest Passage*, 258.

[28] 'Sir, you whose courage is equalled only by the importance of your voyage, you who have laid the foundations for this important science, and who have subsequently followed its entire progress, please advise us… This is a duty you owe to all who will be undertaking such travels, but it is also a gift which society in general may expect from your zeal for the public good', 'From Alessandro Malaspina di Mulazzo', 17 June 1789, Neil Chambers, ed., *The Indian and Pacific Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks, 1768–1820, Volume 3* (London: Routledge, 2021), 16. See also 24-25.

[29] Banks to Dundas, 20 November 1817, Neil Chambers, ed., *The Letters of Sir Joseph Banks: A Selection, 1768-1820* (London: Imperial College Press, 2000), 335.

[30] To Edward Hasted, February 1782, Neil Chambers, ed., *The Indian and Pacific Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks, 1768-1820. Volume 1* (London: Routledge, 2021), 313.

THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE AS A SCIENCE

The Northwest Passage, having been reinterpreted as an object of national significance by the commercial prophets of the early eighteenth century, was easily adopted as a target for the new, nationally-minded science. It increasingly acquired scientific connotations in print, such in 1768's *The Great Probability of a North West Passage*, which proclaimed:

> though the Attempts made to discover this Passage have not been attended with the desired Success, yet in Consequence of such Attempts great Advantages have been received, not by the Merchant only but by the Men of Science. It must be a Satisfaction to the Adventurer, though disappointed in his principal Design, that his Labours have contributed to the Improvement of Science.[31]

Constantine John Phipps' 1773 search for a Passage via the North Pole was the first expedition to enact these ideals and demonstrate the new epistemology of exploration, wherein highly specialized science and scientific equipment were seen as indispensable tools for comprehending the Arctic. The expedition was launched by the Admiralty at the request of Daines Barrington, a prominent member of the Royal Society, and its commander was defined by and chosen for his learned knowledge above any other attribute: he too was a fellow of the Society, with particular expertise in astronomy and a library of nautical books considered the best in England.[32] In the Arctic, Phipps was armed with the best scientific equipment money could buy – including two rival instruments for discerning longitude to be tested against one another – and devoted considerable space in his published report, *A Voyage Towards the North Pole*, to illustrations of these apparatus and exacting descriptions of the experimental observations performed with them.[33]

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[31] Thomas Jefferys, *The Great Probability of a North West Passage: Deduced from Observations on the Letter of Admiral De Fonte, Who Sailed from the Callao of Lima on the Discovery of a Communication Between the South Sea and the Atlantic Ocean; and to Intercept Some Navigators from Boston in New England, Whom He Met with, Then in Search of a North West Passage: Proving the Authenticity of the Admiral's Letter: With Three Explanatory Maps ...* (London: Printed for Thomas Jeffereys, 1768), vii.

[32] Peter Fjågesund, 'When Science Came to the Arctic: Constantine Phipps's Expedition to Spitsbergen in 1773', *Journal of Northern Studies* 2 (2008): 81.

[33] The report's scientific appendices are considerably longer the journal itself. Constantine John Phipps, *A Voyage Towards the North Pole Undertaken by His Majesty's Command, 1773* (London: J. Nourse, 1774).

'Observations described with this kind of vocabulary and this level of scientific precision', contends Peter Fjågesund, 'would have been unthinkable only a few years earlier'.[34] He points particularly to Phipps self-flagellation concerning a minor error of calculation in his report identified by a critic, as representative of 'a totally new discourse, which makes scientific accuracy a matter of the utmost importance, which has a direct bearing on social relations and prestige, and which it would probably be difficult to find examples of only a few years earlier'.[35]

The most famous heroic scientific-explorer of the Northwest Passage was James Cook, whose expeditions, writes Goetzmann, 'represent the epitome of Baconian or Lockean empirical observation conducted over a huge portion of the globe'.[36] The specimen collections taken by Banks, Cook's botanist during his first expedition, were received rapturously, earning him presentations at court, invitations to the finest clubs, honorary degrees, the de facto directorship of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, and ultimately the presidency of the Royal Society.[37] The printed accounts of Cook's second and third voyages became foundational texts in scientific exploration literature.[38] Cook's great influence over a generation of science-embracing explorers is discussed at length in David Mackay's *In the Wake of Cook*.[39] The expeditions' scientific successes were seen to bestow considerable prestige upon both Cook and his nation. The Royal Society, in delivering a gold medal to his widow, stated that 'his name will live for ever in the

[34] There is also, in stark contrast to earlier expeditions, no indication at all in the logs and journals that divine service was ever held on board the ships, 89. Fjågesund, 'When Science Came to the Arctic: Constantine Phipps's Expedition to Spitsbergen in 1773', 85.
[35] Ibid., 87; The critical response was Samuel Horsley, *Remarks on the Observations Made in the Late Voyage Towards the North Pole, for Determining the Acceleration of the Pendulum in Latitude 79° 50'* (London: B. White, 1774). The very title of this book also represents the new discourse – that Horsley framed the expedition as first and foremost a test of scientific equipment is a significant change.
[36] Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men*, 52.
[37] Ibid., 42–43.
[38] Brian William Richardson, *Longitude and Empire How Captain Cook's Voyages Changed the World* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 7.
[39] Mackay, *In the Wake of Cook*.

remembrance of a people gratefull for the service [his] Labors have afforded to mankind in general & the honor His successes have procurd to his native Countrey'.[40] Barrington's claim that 'the Spaniards should, after our late voyages of discovery (which reflect so much honour upon his Majesty's reign), be convinced that the English Nation is actuated merely by desiring to know as much as possible with regard to the planet which we inhabit', perhaps best demonstrates the delicate balance wherein abstract imperial advantage was obtained precisely by scientific activities that actively denied the imperial nature of their purpose.[41] As Tim Fulford, Debbie Lee, and Peter J. Kitson write: 'Cook, in other words, made Britons feel good about their global power'.[42] Equally importantly, he made Britain's rivals feel bad about theirs.[43]

In contrast to early modern natural philosophers, who had often been hesitant to publish for fear of losing their credibility, now that prestige was understood to be generated by the production of science for the common good, it became vital to actively promulgate the results of that science.[44] A key method of doing so was the production of published expedition narratives, and it was thusly during this period that they became *de rigueur* in the search for the Northwest Passage.[45] These narratives, with their lengthy excursions into scientific observation of zoology,

[40] To Elizabeth Cook, 12 August 1784, Neil Chambers, ed., *The Indian and Pacific Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks, 1768–1820, Volume 2* (London: Routledge, 2021), 65.
[41] Daines Barrington, *Miscellanies by the Honourable Daines Barrington* (London: J. Nichols, 1781), 472.
[42] This was particularly important 'at a time when many were ashamed about the imperial violence their nation was inflicting in America, India and the slave islands of the Caribbean', Fulford, Lee, and Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era*, 10.
[43] As explained by Warren L. Cook, 'The political importance of such undertakings was obvious. The acclaim hailing Cook's accomplishments… made Madrid realize belatedly the importance of publicizing geographical discoveries. Spain's place in the first rank of European powers demanded that such feats be matched or surpassed', Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 117–18.
[44] Adrian Johns, 'The Ambivalence of Authorship in Early Modern Natural Philosophy', in *Scientific Authorship: Credit and Intellectual Property in Science*, ed. Mario Biagioli and Peter Louis Galison (New York: Routledge, 2003), 67–90.
[45] As Adriana Craciun writes, 'as oceanic exploration became ostensibly a matter of statecraft and scientific enquiry, not private commercial interest and imperial aggression, so too did the publication protocols change', Craciun, 'Oceanic Voyages, Maritime Books, and Eccentric Inscriptions', 179.

botany, ethnology, and other subjects, professed that their aim was to contribute to a growing archive of public scientific knowledge and by extension national glory.[46] As Joseph Banks wrote during his time with Cook, 'How necessary then will it be for us to publish an account of our voyage as soon as possible after our arrival if we mean that our own countrey shall have the Honour of our Discoveries!'.[47] Banks himself subsequently played a significant role in the development of the plain, unvarnished style that helped legitimize exploratory accounts as genuine scientific literature and thereby genuine expressions of national greatness.[48] Understood as such, exploration literature reached previously unforeseeable levels of profitability during this period – the Admiralty offered John Hawkesworth, for example, an unprecedented advance of £6,000 [49] for his work compiling the journals of Cook's first expedition – and, as the "High Monopoly" period in British publishing ended, an unprecedented number of readers.[50] Whilst it was the voyages sanctioned by the Royal Navy that produced the majority of these texts, fur traders also made a

[46] For more information on Banks' role in the development of this style, see: Philip Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); For information on the ways in which credibility was constructed within these scientifically-minded narratives, and the use of atechnos in that pursuit, see: Batten, *Pleasurable Instruction*; Amy Elizabeth Smith, 'Travel Narratives and the Familiar Letter Form in the Mid-Eighteenth Century', *Studies in Philology* 95, no. 1 (1998): 77–96; MacLaren, 'In Consideration of the Evolution of Explorers and Travellers into Authors'.

[47] J. C. Beaglehole, ed., *The Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks, 1768-1771*, vol. 2 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1962), 249.

[48] Banks and his collaborator Bryan Edwards crafted a style that was 'empiricist, uncontroversial and polite, intended to persuade readers that the writer was a reliable witness because he was a disinterested gentleman, free from the desire to gain personally from his testimony'. Fulford, Lee, and Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era*, 12, 94; A contemporary critic opined on the values of this style that 'the style of voyages and travels should be plain, simple, perspicuous, and unaffected. I think they seldom appear to great advantage, but when written in the words of the traveller or voyager, at the very time at which the circumstances which he relates occurred', Vicesimus Knox, 'On the Manner of Writing Voyages and Travels', in *Essays, Moral and Literary*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (London: Charles Dilly, 1782), 117; However, as Moxham explains, other influences did nonetheless effect such texts: 'The books to which Banks acted as midwife were typically large, expensive, attractively made, in some sense multi-authorial, and frequently published by or connected with some institution. These included the government, the Admiralty, the East India Company, and the British Museum, as well as the Royal Society', Moxham, '"Accoucheur of Literature"', 22.

[49] Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*, 89. £6,000 in 1773 would be worth £757,493 in 2023. "Inflation Calculator", Bank of England, 31 October 2023, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator].

[50] William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), 54; The way in which Arctic knowledge filtered down from these books into wider society, partly through theatrical performance, is discussed in Byrne, *Geographies of the Romantic North*, 22.

contribution.[51] This was a thoroughly different culture of exploration from the one that prompted the HBC to bury Henry Kelsey's journals buried deep in the archives.

SAMUEL WEGG AND THE HBC AS A PATRON OF SCIENCE

While the HBC had long tolerated limited cooperation with the Society – for example allowing Christopher Middleton to publish a table of compass variations he collected during his years as captain of the Company's annual supply runs in *Philosophical Transactions* [52] – a line was historically drawn at the propagation of details concerning the geographic pattern of rivers and lakes in the Bay or allowing scientists access to its growing archives.[53] Indeed, for most of its first century, the HBC viewed outside research as a threat to its interests. Even when allowing Fort Prince of Wales to play host to the Royal Society astronomers William Wales and Joseph Dymond in 1769, the episode Ted Binnema identifies as the turning point in the HBC's relationship with science,[54] the Committee's orders stated in no uncertain terms:

> We particularly enjoin that They be not permitted to have the least Insight into the conduct of the Companys Trade or any other of Our Concerns, and that all our Servants be especially

[51] The most notable examples are: Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort, in Hudson's Bay, to the Northern Ocean: Undertaken by Order of the Hudson's Bay Company for the Discovery of Copper Mines, a North West Passage, &c. in the Years 1769, 1770, 1771 & 1772* (London: A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1795); George Dixon, *A Voyage Round the World: But More Particularly to the North-West Coast of America: Performed in 1785, 1786, 1787, and 1788, in the King George and Queen Charlotte, Captains Portlock and Dixon.* (London: Printed for John Stockdale and George Goulding, 1789); Nathaniel Portlock, *A Voyage Round the World: But More Particularly to the North-West Coast of America: Performed in 1785, 1786, 1787, and 1788, in the King George and Queen Charlotte, Captains Portlock and Dixon.* (London: Printed for John Stockdale and George Goulding, 1789); John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789, from China to the North West Coast of America* (London: Logographic Press, 1790); Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal Through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in 1789 and 1793: With an Account of the Rise and State of the Fur Trade* (London: R. Noble, 1801).

[52] Christopher Middleton, 'A New and Exact Table, Collected from Several Observations, Taken in Four Voyages to Hudson's Bay in North America from London: Shewing the Variation of the Magnetical Needle, or Sea Compass, in the Path-Way to the Said Bay, According to the Several Latitudes and Longitudes, from the Year 1721, to 1725 By Mr. Christopher Middleton', *Philosophical Transactions* 34 (1726): 73–76.

[53] Although, interestingly Robert Boyle, a founding member of both the Royal Society and HBC, stated that his share in the Company 'gave him access to the information he sought' in HBC documentation. Greenfield, 'Now Reader Read', 39. Boyle, however, is the exception that proves the rule in this regard.

[54] Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 36.

> cautioned to avoid answering any Enquiries that may be made which do not immediately affect the Astronomical Observations.[55]

It was only during the late eighteenth century, under the guidance of Samuel Wegg, that cooperation between the two organisations became organized, as the HBC, having defined itself during the Dobbs controversy as an institution for the public good, found that the best way of perpetuating that image was through the sponsorship of science.[56]

Wegg, described in his time as 'a gentleman well versed in all branches of Natural History', was a member of the HBC's Committee from 1760, and its governor from 1782 to 1799.[57] He had been a fellow of the Royal Society since 1753 and spent the best part of five decades in its membership, including 37 years on its Council and 34 as its Treasurer. He acted as the point of contact between the interests of both institutions, recognizing where each could benefit from interaction with the other. 'Wegg in particular', wrote the authors of *Eighteenth-Century Naturalists of Hudson Bay*, 'afforded the incentive, encouraged the opportunity, and provided the connections' for any budding scientist in the HBC's ranks.[58] The first major collaboration between the Royal Society and HBC – Wales and Dymond's visit to Churchill, designed to observe the transit of Venus across the Sun, an exercise explicitly undertaken to bestow glory upon the British Empire – set the tone of the period by relying on Wegg as the liaison between the two.[59] He ensured

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[55] HBCA A.6/11, f. 37. [Committee to] Mess[rs] Moses Norton & Council At Prince of Wales Fort, 25 May 1768.

[56] Wegg 'led the transformation that moved the Company out of the closed-shop attitude which had plagued the administration for its first century and into the adventurous spirit that epitomized England, and for that matter most of the Western world, by the late 1700s', Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, 79; 'The achievement of Samuel Wegg was that he helped the Company of his day to distinguish between information which because of its commercial importance was properly confidential, and that which was not. Under his guidance the Company built up goodwill instead of needless antagonism; it showed itself to be in the ranks of those seeking to increase both trade and knowledge', Williams, 'The Hudson's Bay Company and Its Critics in the Eighteenth Century', 171.

[57] This quote comes from his certificate of admission to the Royal Society, Ruggles, 'Governor Samuel Wegg, Intelligent Layman of the Royal Society, 1753-1802', 186.

[58] C. Stuart Houston, Tim Ball, and Mary Houston, *Eighteenth-Century Naturalists of Hudson Bay* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 33.

[59] 'The British Nation have been justly celebrated in the learned world for their knowledge of Astronomy, in which they are inferior to no Nation upon Earth, Ancient or Modern; and it would cast dishonour upon them should they

for the Society that the HBC agreed to afford the astronomers 'all possible accommodation of Diet and Lodging together with necessary Convenience and Attendants, as well as assistance for raising their Building and keeping the Same in repair', despite the fact that the posts' men were still busy constructing their own fortifications, so 'that there may not be the least Complaint of Disrespect on Our part to the Royal Societys Deputation'.[60] The Company even declared to the Royal Society that, 'desirous to encourage Science, and other National improvements', they would decline any payment for the transit of the astronomical apparatus across the ocean.[61] This was a far cry from the treatment William Moor received two decades earlier.[62] In a climate where the pursuit of disinterested science conferred honour and prestige, Wegg's Company was aware of the effect that such collaboration could have on its own reputation and therefore sought repeatedly to encourage it.

The Company were sure to appreciate Wales informing the readers of *Philosophical Transactions* that the leadership of Fort Prince of Wales 'behaved to us with great civility, and kindness'.[63] Binnema argues that it was public tributes such as these, far more than direct economic benefit or territorial expansion, that motivated Wegg's encouragement of HBC science:

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neglect to have correct observations made of this important Phenomenon'. 'From the President, Council and Fellows of the Royal Society to George III', February 1768, Chambers, *Indian and Pacific Correspondence 1*, 2.

[60] HBCA A.6/11, f. 37. [Committee to] Mess[rs] Moses Norton & Council At Prince of Wales Fort, 25 May 1768. The astronomers confirmed in a letter home that they had been treated to 'the Best Necessaries of Life that Country Affords', HBCA A.11/14, f. 118. From William Wales and Joseph Dymond, 2 September 1769.

[61] Ruggles, 'Governor Samuel Wegg', 13.

[62] See Chapter Three.

[63] William Wales, 'Journal of a Voyage, Made by Order of the Royal Society, to Churchill River, on the North-West Coast of Hudson's Bay; of Thirteen Months Residence in That Country; and the Voyage Back to England, in the Years 1768 and 1769', *Philosophical Transactions* 60 (1771): 116; In addition to this broader account, which included descriptions of the Bay's flora and fauna and ethnological discussions of its inhabitants, Wales and Dymond also published the results of their experiments for in the Royal Society's journal: William Wales and Joseph Dymond, 'Astronomical Observations Made by Order of the Royal Society, at Prince of Wales's Fort, on the North-West Coast of Hudson's Bay', *Philosophical Transactions* 59 (1769): 467–88; Joseph Dymond and William Wales, 'Observations on the State of the Air, Winds, Weather, &c. Made at Prince of Wales's Fort, on the North-West Coast of Hudson's Bay, in the Years 1768 and 1769', *Philosophical Transactions* 60 (1771): 137–78. Wegg attended the presentation of both papers before the Society.

> Tribute, when paid by the scientific elite – who were supposedly as apolitical and disinterested as their science was – provided the company with promotional material that no advertising or lobbying could ever replicate. Tribute, paid by respected people and institutions who supposedly had no vested interest in the company, that repeatedly described a chartered company as "enlightened", "disinterested", "liberal", and "benevolent" – words not normally associated with chartered monopolies – helped create and maintain a positive image of the company instrumental to the long-term interests of those on Fenchurch Street.[64]

Notable examples of this exchange include the HBC's 1771 presentation to the Society of stuffed animal specimens, stones, fossils, and a manuscript on anthropological artefacts in November 1771, in response to which the Society moved 'that the thanks of the President and Council be given… for this very valuable present, as well as for their readiness upon this and all other occasions to promote science in general'.[65] Thomas Pennant's *Arctic Zoology* offered 'my most particular thanks', to Samuel Hearne, who Wegg had personally introduced to him, 'for his liberal communication of many zoological remarks' and expressed gratitude to the 'utmost liberality' of Andrew Graham and Thomas Hutchins (likewise of the HBC) in communicating their findings.[66] Perhaps the most noteworthy example was the dedication 'To the Honorable Governor and Company of Adventures of England Trading into Hudsons Bay In Testimony of their liberal Communications' that Aaron Arrowsmith emblazoned across the top of each edition of his *A Map Exhibiting all the New Discoveries in the Interior Parts of North America*, in return for the Company allowing him access to their archives.[67] Furthermore, the Company also now encouraged its men to publish their own scientific observations for similar ends. Factor Thomas Hutchins, for example, saw his experiments with a dipping needle and mercury appear in *Philosophical Transactions* accompanied by 95 pages of laudatory comments from the Royal Society and

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[64] Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 11.
[65] Ruggles, 'Governor Samuel Wegg, Intelligent Layman of the Royal Society, 1753-1802', 189.
[66] Thomas Pennant, *Arctic Zoology*, vol. 2 (London: Henry Hughs, 1785), 222.
[67] Aaron Arrowsmith, *A Map Exhibiting All the New Discoveries in the Interior Parts of North America*, January 1795, Map, January 1795, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3300.ct004297.

received a Copley gold medal.[68] This presents a stark contrast to the fate of James Isham's observations, which had, earlier in the century, found themselves doomed to languish in the Company's archives.[69]

The Company's new stance included the newly understood science of exploration. In preparation for Cook's 1776 departure, Wegg loaned the Admiralty copies of the journals and maps made by William Christopher, Moses Norton and Samuel Hearne on his expeditions. John Douglas, the editor of Cook's journals, duly expressed his 'public testimony of gratitude' to the 'unreserved communications' of the HBC, who, he announced, had since the time of Dobbs 'made amends for the narrow prejudices of their predecessors… every thing has been done by them, that could be required by the Public, toward perfecting the search for a North West passage'.[70] Special thanks were given to Wegg for putting Douglas in personal contact with Christopher and Hearne.[71] The book's mapmaker, Henry Roberts, likewise noted his indebtedness to the Company.[72] Wegg also allowed Alexander Dalrymple, one the era's arch prophets of the Northwest Passage and the governor's frequent dining companion at the Royal Society's Thursday Club, repeated access to the Company's archives.[73] In his *Memoir of a Map of the Lands around the North-Pole*, Dalrymple

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[68] Henry Cavendish, 'Observations on Mr. Hutchins's Experiments for Determining the Degree of Cold at Which Quicksilver Freezes', *Philosophical Transactions* 73 (1783): 303–28; Such encouragement was welcomed, as scientific endeavours provided male companionship and correspondence in a world of deep isolation, Suzanne Zeller, 'The Spirit of Bacon: Science and Self-Perception in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1830-1870', *Scientia Canadensis* 13, no. 2 (1989): 79–101; The contributions of these newly enfranchised scientists, wrote Victoria Dickinson, 'changed not only the content, but the direction of natural history at the end of the eighteenth century, leading to a new appreciation for field observation, and to a new kind of science based, not on the cabinet or the herbarium, but on nature observed', Victoria Dickenson, *Drawn from Life: Science and Art in the Portrayal of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 191.

[69] They have since been published for public consumption as Isham, *Isham's Observations*.

[70] James Cook, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean. Undertaken, by the Command of His Majesty, for Making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere, to Determine the Position and Extent of the West Side of North America; Its Distance from Asia; and the Practicability of a Northern Passage to Europe.*, ed. John Douglas, vol. 1 (London: W. and A. Strahan, 1784), xlivi–xlvvii, lxxxiv.

[71] Ibid., 1:lxxxiv.

[72] Ibid., 1:lxxxi.

[73] Wegg and Dalrumple dined together 65 times between 1779 and 1799. Ruggles, 'Governor Samuel Wegg, Intelligent Layman of the Royal Society, 1753-1802', 193.

accordingly paid tribute to 'My Friend Mr. Wegg', who 'assured me that every information, in possession of The *Hudson's-Bay Company* would readily be communicated: and, by this liberal communication, it was with much satisfaction I found, that the Geographical Materials, in their possession, were very copious, and much exceeded my expectations'.[74]

These efforts produced clear results in the press. The *Monthly Review*, who effusively praised the HBC for their contribution of Cook's third narrative,[75] attacked Johann Reinhold Forster's 1787 *History of the Voyages and Discoveries made in the North* for relying on information from Dobbs and Ellis to produce his depiction of the Company, and so having 'retailed all the absurd stories, whimsical reveries, and extravagant opinions, with which these Authors have endeavoured to mislead their readers'.[76] It is notable to see such information, which had recently formed the basis of the popular imagining of the Company so forcefully dismissed.[77] Likewise, *The Gentleman's Magazine* review of Hearne's narrative noted that 'our readers are no strangers to the merits of Mr. Hearne in the line of discovery, or to the exertions of his employers, the Hudson's bay company, in promoting discoveries, or to the misrepresentations of them by travellers and navigators'.[78] In learned society, too, assumptions about the HBC's behaviour changed. When a prospective Arctic explorer approached Rodolph Vall-Travers of the Royal

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[74] Alexander Dalrymple, *Memoir of a Map of the Lands Around the North-Pole* (London: George Bigg, 1789), 1.
[75] 'Formerly great complaints were made against this Company, on account of their neglecting to prosecute voyages of discovery... but it must be acknowledged that the present Governor and Committee have made ample amends for the narrow prejudices of their predecessors: as they have not only done every thing in their power towards obtaining a perfect knowledge of those parts themselves, but have, on the present occasion, most liberally and readily contributed every thing that could be required of them towards making that knowledge public and useful', 'Cook's Voyage to the Pacific Ocean', *The Monthly Review* 70 (1784): 462.
[76] 'Forster's History of the Discoveries Made in the North', *The Monthly Review* 77 (1787): 292.
[77] This image of the Company had once been widespread. See for example Tucker, *A Brief Essay on the Advantages and Disadvantages Which Respectively Attend France and Great Britain with Regard to Trade*, 41; Postlethwayt, *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce Translated from the French*, 957–61; Robson, *Account of Six Years Residence*; Burke and Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America*, II:282; Robson, *The British Mars. Containing Several Schemes and Inventions To Be Practiced by Land or Sea against the Enemies of Great Britain*.
[78] 'Review of New Publications', *The Gentleman's Magazine* 66 (1796): 497.

Society for advice in 1792, he was told that 'the Hudsons Bay Company in England who enjoys by Charter with great profit an exclusive Trade and Navigation to those North Western polar Regions, would hardly refuse their consent to your offers'.[79] Images such as these helped guide the decisions of those in the Colonial Office in the Company's favour for little expense. That being perceived to be a patron of science and exploration was such an easy win for the Company is plainly demonstrative of the era's cultural understanding of those concepts.

SAMUEL HEARNE: SCIENTIST

The most famous HBC explorer of this period is, of course, Samuel Hearne. Hearne was dispatched for undeniably commercial reasons. Moses Norton had sent home reports in 1767 of a river far to the northward, with a deep, wide entrance, flanked by copper mines and plentiful fur country, and reiterated these in person during his stay in London the following year.[80] In the context of the expensive failure of Churchill's whaling operation and a general 'great decrease in Trade'[81] at Churchill in 1769, the Committee seized upon his reports and ordered an inland journey to investigate this 'great probability of a considerable addition to Our Trade'.[82]

Despite this commercial foundation, we can see in Hearne's expedition signs that the meaning of exploration had changed. The veracity of Hearne's results would be asserted in the

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[79] From John Churchman, 7 January 1792, Neil Chambers, ed., *Scientific Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks, 1765-1820*, vol. 4 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), 95. Churchman's plan to conduct magnetic experiments in Baffin Bay did not come to fruition after Banks refused to support the expedition.

[80] HBCA A.11/14, f. 78v. Moses Norton to Committee, 9 September 1767. Norton's visit to London is mentioned in HBCA A.6/11, f. 62v. [Committee to] John Fowler & Council At Prince of Wales Fort, 25 May 1769. The reports of copper are, of course, reminiscent of those discussed in Chapters One and Two.

[81] Over £20,000 had been lost on the whaling operation, E. E. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol. 2 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960), 46. Fort Prince of Wales other misfortunes were attributed to the deaths of key northern indigenous leaders, the loss of southern traders to York Fort, goose and fish seasons 'the worst ever experienced here', and a rotten store of flour, HBCA A.11/14, f. 107. Moses Norton to Committee, 2 September 1769. The Committee replied that they were 'very much concerned to find Our Trade at Prince of Wales Fort so greatly diminished', especially since the meagre trade at York 'hardly compensated' the issue, HBCA A.6/11, f. 95v. [Committee to] Messrs Moses Norton & Council At Prince of Wales Fort, 17 May 1770, f. 95v.

[82] HBCA A.6/11, f. 62v. [Committee to] John Fowler & Council At Prince of Wales Fort, 25 May 1769.

same manner as Cook's or Phipps'; the expeditions' epistemological foundations lay not in verbal report, but in scientific equipment. The Committee delivered to Churchill 'necessary Mathematical Instruments' with which Hearne was make cartographical observations – such equipment had not been deemed "necessary" for Kelsey's similar overland expedition a century earlier.[83] Hearne aborted his second attempt to conduct the expedition when he broke his quadrant, 'after which having no Instrument to determine the Latitude thought it most Prudent to turn for the Forte'.[84] 'I cannot sufficiently lament the loss of my quadrant', Hearne reported in his journal when it broke again north of Great Slave Lake on his third expedition.[85] Exploration without scientific equipment, in the manner desired by James and performed by Kelsey, was now evidently seen as fundamentally flawed or unworthwhile exploration.[86]

Chief Factor Moses Norton's specific instructions to Hearne informed him that 'Another Material point' for his investigation should be determining, by his own travels or by interviewing those he encountered, 'Whether there is a Passage through this continent where its Pointed out in the Draught of the American Traveller… this Point will be very Necessary to clear up if Possible in Order to put an End to any doubts that may arise hereafter'.[87] Alexander Cluny's recently published *American Traveller* had featured a map in which a Northwest Passage was depicted running out of Repulse Bay, but more importantly mentioned its discovery as one of many prizes that could attained by the dissolution of the HBC monopoly.[88] Confirmation of the Passage's non-

[83] HBCA A.6/11, f. 62v. [Committee to] John Fowler & Council At Prince of Wales Fort, 25 May 1769.
[84] HBCA A.11/14, f. 142. Samuel Hearne to Committee, 3 December 1770.
[85] Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*, 280.
[86] Kelsey had no training in surveying or cartography when he performed his inland expedition of 1690-1, Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 104.
[87] HBCA A.11/14, f. 131v. Moses Norton, Orders and Instructions for Mr Samuel Hearne going on an Expedition to the Northward by Land… in Order to gain a knowledge of the Nothern Indians Country &c, 6 November 1769.
[88] Cluny, *The American Traveller, or, Observations on the Present State, Culture and Commerce of the British Colonies in America, and the Further Improvements of Which They Are Capable*, 27, the map folded out from inside the front cover of the book. Cluny's map also depicted a 'River of the West' entering the American continent with an undefined end, but this was much further south than its depiction of the Passage.

existence via scientific exploration would therefore remove part of the ammunition utilized by its critics. Norton's addition of the Northwest Passage to Hearne's agenda, therefore, can be understood as another exercise in using science to manage the public reputation of the Company, although in a more negative manner than that undertaken by Wegg.

As well as the central science of geography, Hearne had also made considerable observations in the fields of botany, zoology, and ethnology. These were valuable coinage in the new currency of scientific collaboration. The HBC shared Hearne's findings with interested scientific parties such as Dalrymple and Pennant and some, as discussed above, began appearing in public.[89] Enough interest had been raised by these fragments that the German publisher Johann Karl Philipp Spener wrote to Joseph Banks in 1784 imploring him to publish the journals in full.[90] The Committee's report that Hearne's journal and charts 'were very acceptable to us', despite his conclusion that his ostensible aim, the Coppermine River, was financially worthless, makes more sense when the expedition is understood in part as an act of "disinterested" science.[91] After all, Norton had justified the expedition "to gain a knowledge of the Nothern Indians Country" in such language: 'it is the Companys Earnest desire to Embrace every Circumstance that may tend to the Benefit of the Nation, and the said Company'.[92]

After his return to England in 1787, Hearne devoted his time to completing a thorough account of his experiences.[93] The HBC agreed 'with the greatest affability and politeness' to let

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[89] Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 103; Cameron, *Far Off Metal River*, 43.
[90] 'From Johann Karl Philipp Spener', 14 October 1784, Chambers, *Indian and Pacific Correspondence 2*, 74.
[91] HBCA A.6/11, f. 172. [Committee to] Messrs Moses Norton & Council At Prince of Wales Fort, 12 May 1773; Hearne wrote in his report to the Committee that 'to open a larger trade to the Northward with the Northern Indians would be of no advantage to Your Honours', HBCA A.11/14, f. 174. Samuel Hearne to Committee, 28 August 1772.
[92] HBCA A.11/14, f. 130. Moses Norton, Orders and Instructions for Mr Samuel Hearne going on an Expedition to the Northward by Land… in Order to gain a knowledge of the Nothern Indians Country &c, 6 November 1769.
[93] William Wales and John Douglas aided Hearne in these efforts, Speck, *Samuel Hearne and the Northwest Passage*, xviii.

him consult his original documents.[94] The rights to publish Hearne's narrative 'in a style that will do credit both to you, and myself' were sold to Andrew Strahan, publisher of Cook and George Anson's narratives.[95] Being amongst such company signified that Hearne should also be considered a canonical hero of scientific exploration, and that the HBC, by extension, should be lauded as his benefactor. Hearne's manuscript became *A Journey from Prince of Wales' Fort…*, published in 1795, three years after his death.[96] Ian MacLaren has discussed at length the processes of editorial involvement that guided Hearne's text into published book, particularly with reference to Hearne's account of the massacre at Bloody Falls.[97] The most important change for the purposes of this study, however, was the foregrounding of Hearne's scientific self. 'I have', he wrote, 'added to the remarks I had before made for the amusement of candid and indulgent readers, who may perhaps feel themselves in some measure gratified, by having the face of a country brought to their view, which has hitherto been entirely unknown to every European'.[98] *Journey* shows a man clearly perceiving himself as, amongst other things, a scientist in the field.[99] His writing makes constant description of wildlife, topography, geology, and climatology throughout, in evaluations that demonstrate an interest clearly beyond a purely mercantile vision.[100] Indeed, his first promise

[94] Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*, viii–ix.
[95] BL Add. MS 48901, ff. 51-54v. Samuel Hearne to Andrew Strahan, 3 October 1792. On 8 October the contract was signed, with a fee of £200 agreed to be paid to Hearne three months after publication, ff. 53-54.
[96] Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*.
[97] MacLaren, 'Samuel Hearne's Accounts of the Massacre at Bloody Fall, 17 July 1771'; MacLaren, 'Samuel Hearne and the Printed Word'; I. S. MacLaren, 'Notes on Samuel Hearne's Journey from a Bibliographical Perspective', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 31, no. 2 (1993): 21–45.
[98] Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*, vi.
[99] William Horne identifies Hearne as embodying 'three roles grounded in Arctic phenomena: as a naturalist, as a traveler across northern terrain, and as a member of a Chipewyan war party', William C. Horne, 'The Phenomenology of Samuel Hearne's Journey to the Coppermine River (1795): Learning the Arctic', *Ethics, Place and Environment* 8, no. 1 (2005): 39.
[100] Horne identifies Hearne's lengthy description of beaver houses as the best example of this: 'The purpose of this description would at first seem providing information for those interested in "taking" beaver. However, Hearne's curiosity goes well beyond the mercantile. We can see he is completely fascinated with beavers and how they live, so much so that he "kept several of them till they became so domesticated as to answer to their name, same manner as a dog would do; and they were as much pleased at being fondled, as any animal I ever saw" (243)' ibid., 43.

to the reader is that he will write 'in a plain and unvarnished style', in keeping with the style dictates of the Royal Society and contemporary scientific exploration narratives.[101] This aspect of Hearne's explorations, while representative of nascent changes at the time of his actual travels, had become politically useful zeitgeist-grasping fare by 1795.

By the time of *Journey*'s final two chapters, Hearne gives up entirely his role as travelling narrator and takes on instead a voice of pure scientific observation.[102] The hundred pages of Chapter 10 are devoted entirely to descriptions of sub-Arctic flora and fauna, split in Linnean fashion into Hearne's own taxonomies.[103] 'But Hearne [was] more than a taxonomist', writes William Horne: 'Hearne's descriptions are sharp-eyed, empirically precise, enlivened by anecdote, and filled with a homespun awe for natural curiosities and superstitions, a quality that links him with Gilbert White and the modern tradition of British nature writing'.[104] His observations include a discussion of sexual dimorphism in Willow Ptarmigan, examinations of migratory patterns in an era when many still believed that birds hibernated through the winter, and a detailed dissection of the windpipe of a Trumpeter Swan.[105] Hearne even made deductions ahead of his time regarding natural proofs of climate change; when told that the tree line was moving southward, he remarked that this was 'proof that the cold has been increasing in those parts for some ages' – an accurate observation in the Little Ice Age.[106] Hearne also intervened where he saw errors in the field, for example by correcting the common assumption that bucks shed their penises and by identifying

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[101] Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*, iii.
[102] In a manner presaging the form of nineteenth century Arctic narratives, with their attached scientific appendixes.
[103] These are quadrupeds, "animals with canine teeth", "animals with cutting teeth", "pinnated quadrupeds with finlike feet", fish, shell-fish, frogs, grubs, insects, birds (themselves discussed under 47 headings), water-fowl, "vegetable productions", and trees. Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*, 358–458.
[104] Horne, 'The Phenomenology of Samuel Hearne', 43.
[105] Houston, Ball, and Houston, *Eighteenth-Century Naturalists of Hudson Bay*, 86–90.
[106] T. F. Ball, 'Historical Evidence and Climatic Implications of a Shift in the Boreal Forest Tundra Transition in Central Canada', *Climatic Change* 8, no. 2 (1986): 125.

mistakes made by Pennant at two separate points, thereby demonstrating that he was both aware of and pictured himself within larger networks of informational transfer.[107] Indeed, Pennant's public gratitude to Hearne's data demonstrated that he was accepted within these networks as a scientist of genuine merit.[108] A century later, Elliot Coues said that the ornithology of 'honest old Hearne' could still be trusted.[109] Hearne even seems to exceeded his peers in picturing his Chipewyan companions as worthy actors within those networks, deferring to their naming practices and praising their leader Matonabbee not for his physical prowess, but as 'a man of extensive observation'.[110]

Hearne also participated in the emerging science of ethnology.[111] Linnean classification had initiated efforts to define and categorize groups of people as species dependent upon their environment, just as flora and fauna were.[112] *Journey*'s ninth chapter consists of Hearne's observations of Chipewyan social organization, marriage, divorce, child-rearing, manners, superstition, diet, pastimes, lodgings, funerial rituals, clothing, and treatment of the aged, and similar comments recur throughout the whole text. While colonial assumptions are present, Hearne presented a more complex portrait than most eighteenth century portraits of the other, perhaps

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[107] Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*, 199, 361, 377.
[108] Pennant, *Arctic Zoology*, 2:222. Hearne's published narrative subsequently cited Pennant nine times.
[109] Elliott Coues, *Birds of the Colorado Valley: A Repository of Scientific and Popular Information Concerning North American Ornithology* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1878), 591; More modern praise for Hearne's prowess in this field can be seen in: Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772... Edited with an Introduction by Richard Glover.* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958), xxix; Houston, Ball, and Houston, *Eighteenth-Century Naturalists of Hudson Bay*, 86; Elsa Guerdrum Allen, 'The History of American Ornithology Before Audubon', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 41, no. 3 (1951): 522–24; Sigfrid Kjeldaas, 'Samuel Hearne, The Denesuline, and The Beaver: Zoology and Its Effect in an Early Canadian Natural-Cultural Contact Zone', *Interventions*, 24 January 2023, 1–26.
[110] Kjeldaas, 'Samuel Hearne, The Denesuline, and The Beaver', 8–9; Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*, 67.
[111] The term itself was not defined until 1783, in Adam Franz Kollár, *Historiae ivrisqve pvblici Regni Vngariae amoenitates* (Vienna: Baumeisterianis, 1783)
[112] Byrne, *Geographies of the Romantic North*, 71. The image of the 'noble savage', deeply connected to his land and environment, partially emerged from this discourse, 65.

because his dependence upon the Chipewyan for survival prevented him from preserving an aloofness from local culture as might be maintained on a maritime expedition.[113] His 1772 *A Map of Part of the Inland Country to the N^{h} W^{t} of Prince of Wales Fort* was one of the first representations of "newly discovered" lands to identify geographies with the peoples who inhabited them, rather than viewing the American continent as "vacant".[114] The results of his ethnological research, Trevor Levere contends, are 'of real anthropological value'.[115] They certainly define the tone of his narrative. As Nathalie Zimpfer notes, 'Hearne's narrative does not present itself as a 'quest', an 'oddyssey' or an 'ordeal'', as its nineteenth century equivalents would, but rather something 'best defined as an ethnographic quest underpinned by… open-minded 'curiosity''.[116]

The book was, by all accounts, a hit. Translations were soon printed in Dublin, Berlin, The Hague, Stockholm, Paris, Copenhagen, Vienna, and St. Petersburg.[117] The majority of reviews, too, were positive.[118] Praise was often particularly reserved for Hearne's scientific work. The

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[113] Kathleen Venema and Nathalie Zimpfer have both discussed the ways in which Hearne's use of the 'ethnographic present' and passive constructions obscured and erased the human agents involved in the customs described and put forward a view of non-European cultures as static and unevolving. Venema, 'Mapping Culture Onto Geography'; Nathalie Zimpfer, 'Anthropology as Curiosity: Samuel Hearne's Journey From Prince of Wales's Fort… to the Northern Ocean in the Years 1769, 1770, 1771 & 1772 (1795)', in *The Quest for the Northwest Passage: Knowledge, Nation and Empire, 1576-1806*, ed. Frédéric Regard (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013), 106.

[114] "Hearne, Samuel. A Map of Part of the Inland Country to the N^{h} W^{t} of Prince of Wales Fort", 1772, in John Warkentin and Richard I. Ruggles, *Manitoba Historical Atlas: A Selection of Facsimile Maps, Plans, and Sketches from 1612 to 1969* (Winnipeg: Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, 1969), 92

[115] Trevor H. Levere, *Science and the Canadian Arctic: A Century of Exploration, 1818-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 102.

[116] Zimpfer, 'Anthropology as Curiosity', 104.

[117] These came respectively in 1796, 1797, 1798, 1798, 1799, 1802, 1803, and 1808, Carole Gerson, 'Literary Legacies and Afterlives of Samuel Hearne', *Studies in Canadian Literature*, no. 1 (2017): 113.

[118] There were a small number of negative reviews, too. One, published in the *British Critic*, stated that 'little accession has resulted either to commerce or to the stores of knowledge' and stated that the book's expensive price 'is not compensated either by the importance of the publication itself, or the discoveries and information it professes to communicate', 'Hearne's Journey', *British Critic* 8 (1796): 54, 62; Emilie Cameron has theorized that because the negative reviews came from the more highbrow, conservative journals, their comments 'were about more than policing the boundaries between learned gentlemen and men of curiosity' than any actual reflection of the quality of Hearne's findings, Cameron, *Far Off Metal River*, 45–46.

Gentleman's Magazine remarked at the length of Hearne's ethnology and concluded that 'we venture to rank this as a valuable addition to the discoveries which the enterprising spirit of our countrymen leads them to make'.[119] The *Critical Review* concluded that 'the manners of the savages are well delineated; the animals and birds which inhabit the high northern latitudes, are well described; a very good account is given of the country' and the *Monthly Review* wrote that the book 'contains, in a plain unadorned style, such a striking picture of the miseries of savage life, accompanied with so many minute incidents copied faithfully from nature, that it is impossible to read it without feeling a deep interest'.[120] The *Analytical Review* wrote that while Hearne's zoology was hindered by his lack of training, it would nonetheless 'not be unacceptable to naturalists'.[121] The *English Review*, more succinctly, called Hearne 'a judicious observer... a candid and faithful reporter of facts; facts new, striking, and highly important'.[122] Hearne's narrative earned him a truly lasting legacy and helped lay foundations for the forthcoming generation of hyper-masculine Romantic Arctic scientist-adventurer-authors.[123]

Positive press for Hearne's *Journey* was also positive press for the HBC. The *Gentleman's Magazine* wrote that 'our readers are no strangers to the merits of Mr. Hearne in the line of discovery, or to the exertions of his employers, the Hudson's bay company, in promoting discoveries, or to the misrepresentations of them by travellers and navigators'.[124] The *Monthly*

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[119] 'Review of New Publications', 499.
[120] 'Hearne's Journey to the Northern Ocean', *Critical Review* 20 (1797): 139; 'Hearne's Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort', *The Monthly Review* 20 (1797): 247. It should be noted that the Monthly Review was partly owned by Andrew Strahan, the publisher of Hearne's Journey.
[121] 'Hearne's Journey to the Northern Ocean', *Analytical Review* 23 (1796): 456–68.
[122] 'Review of a Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort', *English Review* 28 (1796): 1–8.
[123] He would be namechecked in texts by John Franklin, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Charles Darwin, and is said to have influenced work by Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Duncan Campbell Scott, Edgar Allen Poe, and Henry David Thoreau. For a thorough overview of Hearne's literary legacy, see: Gerson, 'Literary Legacies and Afterlives of Samuel Hearne'. When the Champlain Society began publishing its series of significant documents in Canadian history, Hearne's Journey was chosen as only its sixth volume, Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort In Hudson's Bay To The Northern Ocean* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1911).
[124] 'Review of New Publications', 497.

Review declared that Hearne's findings will 'have a tendency to wipe off the ill-grounded aspersions of Dobbs, Ellis, and others, who have unjustly condemned the Hudson's Bay company as averse from discoveries'.[125] The *British Critic*, despite a dislike for *Journey*, nonetheless wrote:

> Many indeed have gone so far as to complain that the Hudson's-Bay Company, indifferent to the views of philosophers, and tenacious only of their own confined branch of commerce, have neglected every opportunity of discovery... The journey, however, of Mr. Hearne (and a most perilous one to himself, as well as expensive one to his employers, it must surely have been) shows these prejudices to have been ill-founded; and though little accession has resulted from this additional experiment, it is certain that there has been no want of zeal on one part, or of liberality on the other, to accomplish what the philosopher may hope, or commercial speculators require.[126]

Even the radical *Analytical Review* conceded that 'against the inconvenience arising to the community from exclusive mercantile companies may be placed, as a consideration of some weight, the advantageous opportunity which they afford for expeditions for the purposes of observation and discovery'.[127] This was, of course, the intention. Hearne's text had both opened and closed with broadsides against 'the unfounded assertion and unjust aspersions of Dobbs, Ellis, Robson, Dragge, and the American Traveller', who, 'advance such notorious absurdities' against the Company's reputation.[128] The fact that *Journey*, by publicizing the HBC's role in scientific enquiry, had successfully blunted a strain of criticism that had once been so widespread as to bring the Company's future into serious jeopardy, was testament to both Wegg's policies and the strength of public support for a scientific understanding of exploration, and by extension one of Hearne's goals, the Northwest Passage.

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[125] 'Hearne's Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort'.
[126] 'Hearne's Journey', 54.
[127] "Hearne's Journey to the Northern Ocean", *Analytical Review*, 23 (1796): 456.
[128] Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*, xxi–xxii, 303.

Fur Traders and a Western Entrance to the Passage

A flurry of expeditions flocked to the Pacific Coast of North America in the second half of the 1780s. Many involved hoped to realize the proposal made by James King in the narrative of Cook's third voyage that trading sea otter furs from those waters to Oriental markets could be highly lucrative. These men, however, also entertained a constant interest in the Northwest Passage, a question that Cook had left tantalisingly open by discovering the mouth of a promisingly large and swift river coming out of the continent, but being forced to draw away for winter before he could investigate it.[129] These fur-trading Northwest Passage explorers, like their contemporaries in the Admiralty and the HBC, endeavoured to conduct at least some scientific research in the region – indeed, their long journeys through the Pacific provided the perfect environment for science, with little else to do but make notes, arrange specimens, and speculate on one's findings – such was the expectation of the time.[130]

George Dixon, who had sailed on Cook's third expedition, approached Joseph Banks in 1784 with a plan to trek three scientists overland from Hudson Bay to the northwest coast of America.[131] Banks, concerned about clashes with the US, nixed the plans, but encouraged Dixon to find a financial backer for a maritime expedition. In stepped Richard Cadman Etches, who proposed to not only open a lucrative Japanese market but also that 'as there are a number of inlets in Prince William's Sound, and Cook's River, that time would not permit Captain Cook to explore, it is very probable, that in prosecuting a trade in those parts, that some very essential discoveries

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[129] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 2:159.
[130] Igler, 'The Questions They Asked', 64.
[131] Dixon to Banks, 27 August 1784; Banks to Dixon, 29 August 1784, Warren R. Dawson, ed., *The Banks Letters: A Calendar of the Manuscript Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks Preserved in the British Museum, the British Museum (Natural History) and Other Collections in Great Britain* (1958: Printed by order of the Trustees of the British Museum, 1958), 270.

may be made and perhaps a communication carried on to Hudson's or Baffin's Bay' – in other words, that his ships might discover the Northwest Passage.[132] Banks was frequently consulted during the formulation of Etches' first voyage.[133] Commanded by Dixon and fellow Cook veteran Nathaniel Portlock in 1785, the expedition had mixed financial results,[134] but promising geographic ones; Dixon's discovery of Queen Charlotte's Islands, he claimed, 'evidently shows' that the unbroken coast described by Cook was actually 'the Archipelago of St Lazarus', as described in Bartholomew de Fonte's apocryphal account of traversing the Northwest Passage in 1640.[135] He also brought home a number of plant specimens for the Royal Society.[136] In 1786, with Portlock and Dixon still at sea, Etches outfitted another expedition, to be commanded by James Colnett, a midshipman on Cook's second voyage. Banks continued to be involved and ensured the enlistment of the botanist Archibald Menzies so that he could investigate the 'new & an extensive field for Botanical researches as well as other branches of Natural History' presented by the northwest coast.[137] Colnett returned not only with enough specimens to earn Menzies a fellowship with the Linnean Society, but also with news that he had found a waterway that 'might not improperly be conjectured to run to Hudson's Bay'.[138] Etches' two expeditions had sailed in vessels named *King George*, *Queen Charlotte*, *Prince of Wales*, and *Princess Royal*, a move

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[132] 'Proposals submitted to the East India Company for opening a new trade in the North Pacific, 1785', Vincent T. Harlow and A. F. Madden, eds., *British Colonial Developments, 1774-1834: Select Documents* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 21–24. The EIC demanded supervision over the conduct and movement of the ships and personnel (with a specific ban on all travel to China) and gave themselves the right to buy the furs or to sell them on commission. 'Recommendations of the Committee of Correspondence of the East India Company 6 May 1785', ibid., 24–27.
[133] Chambers, *Indian and Pacific Correspondence 2*, 88, 135, 316–17, 318, 323.
[134] Portlock blamed the financial shortcomings of the expedition on the EIC's terms, which led to each skin being sold for less than $20, when they could have been sold for $80 or more. Portlock, *A Voyage Round the World*, 382.
[135] Dixon, *A Voyage Round the World*, xiv.
[136] 'From Jonas Dryander', 21 September 1788, Neil Chambers, ed., *Scientific Correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks, 1765-1820*, vol. 3 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), 430. One discovery of note was proof that the Dodecatheon could survive at higher latitudes than expected, 'From Jonas Dryander', 9 October 1788, 437.
[137] 'From Archibald Menzies', 16 November 1786, Chambers, *Indian and Pacific Correspondence 2*, 136–37. Etches agreed to give Menzies 'ample latitude in his pursuits', 'From Richard Cadman Etches', 29 September 1786, 135. Menzies' specimens reached Banks in July 1789, Chambers, *Indian and Pacific Correspondence 3*, 36.
[138] James Colnett, quoted in Williams, *Voyages of Delusion*, 351.

designed to signify the affinity between his activities – both commercial *and* scientific – with the pursuit of the national interest. Reflecting in 1792, Etches wrote to Banks: 'I am fully persuaded that you, Sir, will admit that the Annals of History have not on record, so many important discoveries and stupendous Commercial Advantages being achieved to the Nation by the Enterprize and at the expence of Individual Merchants'.[139]

Another fur trader who saw the potential of King's proposal was James Strange, an EIC man so confident in the sea otter trade that he personally invested £10,000 into an expedition to the Pacific.[140] Despite the commercial origins of the voyage,[141] its instructions subsumed these concerns beneath cartographic demands, framed within scientific terminology and epistemology:

> The Principal purposes for which We mean this Expedition, are in the first Instance Exploring for the benefit of Navigation & Secondly with a View to Establish a new Channel of Commerce… Your object is then to explore along the Coast to the Northward making every discovery you can taking Surveys of every place, and fixing their Latitudes and Longitudes with the greatest precision; as you are Supplied with the best Mathematical Instruments & have so many Gentlemen versed in Astronomy and Surveying our hopes on this point are very Sanguine… Although Discovery is still in our Wishes the Primary object, we however hope you will let no opportunity Escape you, of benefiting by Trade.[142]

The very names of his two ships, staffed with officers described by Strange as 'Men of Science in their profession', reflected this focus: the *Captain Cook* and the *Experiment*.[143] This was again

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[139] Richard Cadman Etches to Joseph Banks, 19 May 1792, F. W. Howay, 'Four Letters from Richard Cadman Etches to Sir Joseph Banks, 1788-1792', *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 6 (April 1942): 125–39.

[140] 'The Perusal of the published Account of the last Voyage of the late Captain Cook first suggested to me an Idea of the advantages which might be derived', 'Public Consultation', 11 February 1786, James Strange, *James Strange's Journal and Narrative of the Commercial Expedition from Bombay to the North-West Coast of America: Together with a Chart Showing the Tract of the Expedition* (Madras: Government Press, 1928), 57; Strange borrowed the £10,000 from David Scott, John Hosie, 'James Charles Strange and the Expedition to the North-West Coast of America in 1786', *British Columbia Historical Association Report and Proceedings* 4 (1929): 45.

[141] Strange referred to commerce in true eighteenth century style as 'that great source of National Strength, Commerce', Strange, *James Strange's Journal and Narrative*, 3.

[142] BL IOR/H/494, ff. 423, 424. "Sailing Instructions To James Strange Esqr, Director of the Exploring Expedition to the N West Coast of America and towards the North Pole", 7 December 1786. See also BL IOR/H/494, ff. 419-419v. Orders for the Strange Expedition. 4 September 1785 [signed by Scott and Strange 1 December 1785].

[143] Strange, *James Strange's Journal and Narrative*, 2; Strange referred to Cook, his ship's namesake, as 'that Pattern to all future Navigators'. 'From James Charles Stuart Strange', 3 December 1785, Chambers, *Indian and Pacific Correspondence 2*, 106.

partly due to the influence of Banks, who Strange had approached at the inception of his plans, having 'wished to avail myself of the Knowledge which in every Branch of Science, so Eminently distinguishes You, in that Station you hold with so much credit to yourself & Advantage to the Publick'.[144] Strange's business partner wrote to Banks requesting additional instructions for the expedition,[145] and Strange himself told Banks that he should think himself 'bound most strictly to attend to them; if they will in the most distant degree gratify either Public or Private Curiosity, in as far as relates to Science'.[146] Banks, it seems, responded in person,[147] so his responses are not known, but Strange's final instructions lean more heavily on discovery than his original proposals put before the EIC.[148] Banks spoke glowingly of the enterprise in the mood of the times, stating that 'so liberal a spirit so much regard for the public & for Science Scarcely Exists… the man who is Capable of Such things is an honor to the Countrey which Claims his birth'.[149]

Strange's commercial operation was a failure, having arrived on the northwest coast after much of the trading season was over. His delays meant that Strange had also been unable to conduct his programme of cartography to much effect.[150] Nonetheless, he did discover Queen Charlotte Sound, north of Vancouver Island, which he believed was the Passage's entrance as described by de Fonte, but did not have time to investigate further.[151] During his stay around the

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[144] 'From James Charles Stuart Strange', 3 December 1785, Chambers, *Indian and Pacific Correspondence 2*, 106.
[145] 'From David Scott', 1785, Chambers, *Indian and Pacific Correspondence 2*. Scott promised that 'No instruction can be forwarded by you Which will not be complied with by Mr. Strange', 'From David Scott', 1785, 86-87.
[146] 'From James Charles Stuart Strange', 3 December 1785, ibid., 106. Strange is referring here to an approach he made to Banks in February 1785.
[147] He refers to in-person conversations held with Scott in 'To David Scott', 28 May 1786, ibid., 116.
[148] These proposals are recorded in 'A Bombay Expedition to North West America', 17 September 1785, Harlow and Madden, *British Colonial Developments*, 28–29.
[149] 'To Sir John Sinclair', 21 June 1786, Chambers, *Indian and Pacific Correspondence 2*, 123–24.
[150] B. M. Gough, 'India-Based Expeditions of Trade and Discovery in the North Pacific in the Late Eighteenth Century', *The Geographical Journal* 155, no. 2 (1989): 219.
[151] 'I can most Confidently affirm… there is an Opening which from the great distance at which we saw it, and its apparent magnitude, could not possibly be less than two or three leagues Wide. I shall not venture to hazard an Opinion, what this Discovery may lead to; but it strikes me that the Inlet in question, is very probably the Strait, said to be Discovered many Years ago, by Admiral DeFonte; The Existence of which, Captain Cook in his Narrative,

supposed waters of the Northwest Passage, Strange also made an effort to pursue the science of ethnology. Despite lamenting his lack of time for research, Strange filled his report to the EIC with graphic accounts of the Nuu-chah-nulth people's religious ceremonies, music, familial dynamics, produced a lengthy dictionary, and even left behind his surgeon John Mackay behind to conduct further investigation.[152] His admission of this work's inadequacy demonstrated the new expectations laid upon the Passage's explorers – in an earlier age he would have had no reason to make such an apology. What he had achieved, he pictured, in the cultural framework of the times, as being within the history of exploration's 'General Benefits', 'not only to be interesting to Individuals, but also to the Public at large'.[153]

Strange's surgeon Mackay was picked up in 1787 by Charles William Barkley, who had also sailed to take advantage of the Pacific sea otter fur trade, but by less than legal means, having falsely registered his ship as Austrian to avoid the trouble of acquiring an EIC license. Barkley was no scientist, but he did discover a large opening entering the continent at 48° that he named the Strait of Juan de Fuca. De Fuca, like de Fonte, claimed to have discovered the Passage, having supposedly sailed in 1592 through a broad inlet between latitudes 47° and 48° that led all the way to the Arctic Ocean.[154] De Fuca's story was publicized in England by Michael Lok, a financier of

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regrets not being able to disprove. I had now seen enough to excite my keenest curiosity, and I confess the circumstance of my being Obliged to leave this part of the Coast unexplored, occasioned me infinite uneasiness... Should a Second Voyage to this part of the World be undertaken, and that time & opportunity favors such a Design, I shall hope that this discovery which Opens a Field for great Surmise, may be further Assertained', Strange, *James Strange's Journal and Narrative*, 31–32.

[152] 'I did hope that my leisure hours while in this part of the World, would have enabled me to make such additional remarks on the disposition, & Government of the Natives of this part of America, as, from the shortness of Captn. Cooks residence amongst them, I conceived might probably have escaped his observation. Such however was my Occupation while here, as to make that wish altogether incompatible with the Duty which I owed to the Service', ibid., 21, 24–26, 46–56, 23.

[153] Ibid., 3.

[154] De Fuca the man was almost certainly real, and the events he described were often real, even if they happened to other people. His journey through the Northwest Passage, however, was fictional, Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800*, 135–36.

Frobisher's Martin Northwest Passage expeditions, and then published in full by Samuel Purchas in 1625's *Hakluytus Posthumus: or, Purchas His Pilgrimes*.[155] After a century of obscurity, John Reinhold Forster's 1786 *History of the Voyages and Discoveries in the North*, reintroduced de Fuca to the English audience.[156] When Barkley discovered a similar strait, he raised hopes of de Fuca's veracity, and subsequent explorers found themselves, like the heroes of Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, chasing the testimony of a once-forgotten sixteenth century explorer whose findings had been cast into doubt by the changing epistemology of discovery. 'One simple reservation remained', mused Verne's protagonists, 'Since neither barometer nor manometer had been invented in the sixteenth century, how could [he] have known that he had reached the centre of the globe?'.[157]

Despite Barkley's illegal undercutting of his trade, Etches was delighted by this discovery and eagerly wrote to Banks: 'their [sic] appears evident probability that, this is the strait laid down by Juan de Fuca… we may presume that the Western Sea laid down by De Fuca, De Fonte, and Aguilar, hath an existance, and the whole now laid down as Continent, is nothing but islands'.[158] In other words, the fur trader wrote to the eminent scientist, the Northwest Passage was real. Etches swiftly planned to dispatch Colnett once more, with plans to establish a permanent 'small

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[155] Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus: Or, Purchas His Pilgrimes.* (London: H. Fetherston, 1625); De Fuca's account has been reprinted in full in a number of places, for example Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 539–43.

[156] John Reinhold Forster, *History of the Voyages and Discoveries Made in the North: Translated from the German of John Reinhold Forster, and Elucidated by Several New and Original Maps; Orbis Situm Dicere … Impeditum Opus et Facundiæ Minime Capax … Verum Aspici Tamen Cognoscique Dingissimum* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1786), 450–51; Previously, Cook had sailed past the supposed entrance with little interest (his orders had been to search in particular for the Passage around 65°, considerably further to the North) and Etches' instructions to Dixon and Portlock had made no mention of de Fuca's story, Gough, *Juan De Fuca's Strait*, 75, 91.

[157] Verne's heroes idolise this explorer, Arne Saknussemm, in anachronistic terms as a Romantic adventurer-scientist, according to the ideals of their times, not of the sixteenth century: 'Arne Saknussemm!' replied Mr. Fridricksson. 'You mean the great sixteenth-century scholar, naturalist, alchemist and traveller?'… 'One of the most illustrious of men?'… 'A man whose audacity was equal only to his genius?' Jules Verne, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth [Voyage Au Centre de La Terre]* (Paris: Pierre-Jules Hetzel, 1864), 129, 54.

[158] 'From Richard Cadman Etches', 30 July 1788, Chambers, *Indian and Pacific Correspondence 2*, 323.

establishment' at Nootka, where his new business partner John Meares claimed to have bought land from the Nuu-chah-nulth.[159] This claim brought Colnett into conflict with José Esteban Martínez, who had sailed to Nootka Sound to claim the region for Spain. The resultant Nootka Crisis, which brought Britain and Spain to the brink of war, is largely out of the purview of this study and has been described at length elsewhere.[160] Notably, however, the Northwest Passage was utilized as a symbol by those who lobbied the British state to defend the Pacific Coast fur trade. When Etches wrote to Banks for support, he leaned heavily on his ships' role in discovery:

> I am sensible I need not make mention either of the many or of the Importance, of the discoveries we had /made/, you can not be a stranger to either – nor of the great probability their was of our reduceing the prospect /of a passage/ to a Certainty… such a discovery, wou'd most assuredly be of infin[i]te Importance to the Nation, but I presume you are Sensible, there can be little probability of accomplishg. it, by an equipment from this Country, as in all former cases, an Establishment in the Sound… with the equipment of small Craft for the Joint purpose of Traffic and Discovery, can alone reduce it to an absolute certainty.[161]

In the midst of the crisis, Meares, whose claim lay at the centre of the controversy, published an account of his voyages that used a (possibly fabricated [162]) claim to have discovered the straits described by Juan de Fuca as the centrepiece of a proposed grand vision for British free trade across the Pacific.[163] Subscribers to the publication of Meares' narrative contained 'a veritable who's who in British administration', including prominent scientists such as Banks and Dalrymple,

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[159] 'From Richard Cadman Etches', 30 July 1788, ibid.; J. Richard Nokes, *Almost a Hero: The Voyages of John Meares, R.n., to China, Hawaii, and the Northwest Coast* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1998), 125.
[160] Perhaps best in Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, which explains that some Spanish actors were also motivated by hopes of finding a Northwest Passage. Martínez was eager to explore the Strait of Juan de Fuca himself, having been convinced of the Passage's existence by the voyages of José Narváez, 163-4. Upon his return to Spain, he petitioned Viceroy Revillagigedo to initiate a renewed search of the Strait. The Viceroy rejected Martínez due to their personal differences, but entrusted the same mission to Dionisio Galiano and Cayetano Valdes, who sailed in 1792, 217. See also Derek Pethick, *The Nootka Connection: Europe and the Northwest Coast, 1790-1795* (Seattle, Vancouver: University of Washington Press, 1980); Nokes, *Almost a Hero*; James Colnett, *The Journal of Captain James Colnett Aboard the Argonaut from April 26, 1789 to Nov. 3, 1791*, ed. F. W. Howay (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1940).
[161] 'From Richard Cadman Etches', 6 May 1790, Chambers, *Indian and Pacific Correspondence 3*, 146.
[162] See F. W. Howay, *The Dixon-Meares Controversy, Containing, Remarks on the Voyages of John Meares* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1929); Nokes, *Almost a Hero*; W. Kaye Lamb, 'Mystery of Mrs. Barkley's Diary; Notes on the Voyage of the "Imperial Eagle" 1786-87.', *British Colombia Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (1942): 31–48.
[163] Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*, lxix, 179. See xli-lxvi for Meares' 'Observations on the Probable Existence of a North West Passage'.

who would have also appreciated Meares' extensive ethnological, zoological, and botanical passages that were included in satisfaction of the period's expectations for a publishing explorer.[164] Clearly the Passage held a formidable significance in the public mind – a significance that had only been enhanced by its growing connotation with imperial science.

When the British Government dispatched George Vancouver to negotiate with the Spanish at Nootka, they also commanded him to search the region for the Northwest Passage and conduct a thorough, scientific, hydrographic survey of the coast.[165] He concluded, as did Malaspina who contemporaneously searched the region for a Passage, that 'with respect to the ancient discoveries of De Fuca, they appear to upheld by tradition alone, and ought therefore to be received with great latitude and to be credited with still more caution'.[166] This, when combined with the increasingly untenability of the sea otter fur trade by the 1790s, put an end for the time being to the British search for the Passage's Pacific entrance.[167] During its brief heyday, however, a cast of fur traders had demonstrated that by the end of the eighteenth century the exploration of the Passage, no matter how commercial, could hardly be performed without participation in the scientific endeavours now expected of explorers, and that the Northwest Passage, having benefited from new scientific associations, wielded both considerable interest and influence.

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[164] Nokes, *Almost a Hero*, 158; Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*, 226–71; Dalrymple himself wrote jingoistic pamphlets during the Crisis recommending that a hardline be taken with Spain: Alexander Dalrymple, *The Spanish Memorial of 4th June Considered* (London: George Bigg, 1790); Alexander Dalrymple, *The Spanish Pretensions Fairly Discussed* (London: George Bigg, 1790).

[165] Vancouver was to survey the Strait of Juan de Fuca, 'which is supposed leads into a Sea of great extent' and 'consider the Investigation of its utmost Extent Eastwards as one of the principal objects of your Survey', Mackay, *In the Wake of Cook*, 99, 102.

[166] W. K. Lamb, *The Voyage of George Vancouver 1791-1795*, vol. iv (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1984), 1553; Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*, 308.

[167] For details on the demise of this trade, see Mackay, *In the Wake of Cook*, 74–78; Spanish investigations continued for a while. See Henry R. Wagner, *Spanish Explorations in the Strait of Juan De Fuca.* (New York: AMS Press, 1971); Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire*.

ALEXANDER DALRYMPLE, CHARLES DUNCAN, AND THE HBC

Perhaps the most avid enthusiast of the reports emerging from the northwest coast was Alexander Dalrymple, the East India Company's hydrographer, who acquired the charts and journals they produced as a matter of urgency.[168] This information, combined with that which he acquired from Peter Pond,[169] the HBC,[170] and William Wales,[171] and his faith in the stories of de Fuca and de Fonte,[172] made Dalrymple a firm believer in the Northwest Passage, which he pictured running through rivers, lakes, and inland seas between the north west coast of Hudson Bay and the Pacific coast, both of which he believed were in fact not coasts but rather archipelagos.[173] Dalrymple hoped that a Passage would allow a united HBC and EIC to carry northwestern sea otter furs, as well as beaver, marten, and fox furs from eastern America, to China and thereby overwhelm any Russian, Spanish, or American competition.[174] 'The most eligible mode of promoting the Enterprize', he wrote to Evan Nepean at the Home Office, 'would be by sending One Vessel round

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[168] Gough, *Juan De Fuca's Strait*, 90, 95, 103, 104; Andrew Cook, 'Alexander Dalrymple and the Hydrographic Office', in *Pacific Empires: Essays in Honour of Glyndwr Williams*, ed. Alan Frost and Jane Samson (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 55–57.

[169] He conflated Hearne's Arathapescow [Great Slave Lake] with Pond's Arabaska [Lake Athabaska], therefore shrinking the continent, and believed that it communicated with Hudson's Bay, Howard Tyrrell Fry, *Alexander Dalrymple (1737-1808) and the Expansion of British Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 203.

[170] 'I cannot conclude without making my acknowledgements to The Hudson's-Bay Company, for their very liberal communication of the many Surveys and Observations that have been made at their expence', Dalrymple, *Plan for Promoting the Fur Trade*, iv.

[171] William Wales claimed to have made 'an irrefragable argument to prove the impossibility of Capt. Middleton's hypothesis' regarding the complete choking up of channels with ice, Wales, 'Journal of a Voyage, Made by Order of the Royal Society', 111; Dalrymple repeated Wales' argument in Dalrymple, *Memoir of a Map of the Lands Around the North-Pole*, 13–14. Dalrymple also used Wales' climatic data taken at Churchill, where the weather is more temperate that at the more southerly Albany, to demonstrate that there was 'a strong presumption of Sea to the Northward', through which the Passage would run, NA CO 42/72, f. 252v. Mr. Dalrymple's opinion of the Route across the continent of America, 2 February 1790.

[172] 'It is so much easier to treat with derision than to investigate', Dalrymple, *Plan for Promoting the Fur Trade*, 20. Dalrymple outlines his refutations against the notion that these stories were fabricated on 17-22.

[173] Ibid., 5, 9.

[174] Ibid., 25–32; See also "Alexander Dalrymple: Memorandum on Trade to the South Seas and the North West Coast of America", 23 February 1791, Harlow and Madden, *British Colonial Developments*, 38, and NA HO 42/13, 57, ff. 163-165, 'Relative to the Discoveries made by Capt. Duncan on the N.W. Coast of America in 1787 and 1788', 1789, which both argued that 'by letting others anticipate Her in the completion of those Discoveries which her Navigators have began', Britain might let one of its rivals 'supplant every other Nation in the Fur Trade'. George Dixon made a similar argument in NA CO 42/72, f. 243v. George Dixon to Evan Nepean, 14 July 1789.

Cape Horn without delay & another to Hudson's Bay'.[175] The first of these two pincers would become the Vancouver expedition and the second would be the little-known explorations of Charles Duncan in 1790-92.[176]

Dalrymple cast doubt upon Hearne's troublesome evidence against such a Passage by casting doubt on his scientific ability, such had the epistemology of cartography evolved:

> Mr. Hearne in the whole time of his journey… gives in his Journal no Observation for the Latitude but at Conge-ca-tha-wha-chaga in June 1771; it is true his Quadrant was destroyed on the 6th October 1771, but it is a very extraordinary circumstance, that, he should have given no observation, during the whole of this intermediate time: it indicates great room for suspicion of the Instrument, an Elton's-Quadrant, or of his ability to use it.[177]

Hearne did not use what was now considered the myriad 'Instruments &c. necessary for the party intended to Cross from Canada to the Pacific Ocean', so asking whether he could have therefore possibly performed a conclusive exploration had become a valid question.[178] This stands in contrast to when commerce had been the vital aspect of the Northwest Passage's meaning, at which time inconvenient geography would be challenged along equally financial lines, as seen in the accusations that Christopher Middleton had been bribed by the HBC.[179] Other sources of reliable information for Dalrymple included the science of linguistics, which had become increasingly represented in exploratory narratives with the inclusion of dictionaries. He argued that the presence of Inuit language on the Pacific Coast proved that 'there is a Sea-Communication, navigable for

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[175] NA CO 42/72, ff. 254. Mr. Dalrymple's opinion of the Route across the continent of America, 2 February 1790

[176] His proposals for the maritime expedition to the Pacific coast, which would eventually become the Vancouver expedition, can be seen in NA HO 42/13, 57, ff. 163-165, 'Relative to the Discoveries made by Capt. Duncan on the N.W. Coast of America in 1787 and 1788', 1789 and NA CO 42/21, ff. 57-62. Memorandum by Alexander Dalrymple: "Observations relating to the proposed Settlement on the NW. Coast of Ama", undated.

[177] Dalrymple, *Memoir of a Map of the Lands Around the North-Pole*, 3. As for Cook's lack of certainty either way regarding a Passage, Dalrymple proposed that he had simply missed it 'altho' I am very far from meaning any imputation on Capt Cook's memory or abilities, I cannot admit of a Pope in Geography or Navigation', NA CO 42/72, f. 248v. Mr. Dalrymple's opinion of the Route across the continent of America, f, 249-56, 2 February 1790.

[178] These were listed as a transit instrument, a time piece, telescopes (a refractor and a reflector), a thermometer graduated considerably below the freezing point, a barometer, a theodolite, azimuth and Hadley, NA CO 42/72, f. 263, Instruments &c. necessary for the party intended to Cross from Canada to the Pacific Ocean, February 1790, Mr. Holland.

[179] See Chapter Three.

their Boats, from Labrador & Greenland to the utmost extremity of America & the Islands'.[180] Dalrymple allowed himself to believe in the stories of De Fuca and De Fonte, because they appeared to be corroborated by modern, scientific proofs.[181]

In his proposals, Dalrymple told Nepean that 'the Hudson's Bay Company have expressed their readiness to co-operate with Government'.[182] A week later, he reported that:

> My Frind Mr Wegg… desires me to say that the Directors of [the HBC] have unanimously determined to send their Sloop, of about 90 Tons, at the Company's Expence, if Government will send a proper Person in her to examine if any out-let can be found from Hudson's Bay to facilitate the Communication with the West-Coast.[183]

Wegg played an active role in the selection of that person, Charles Duncan, who had captained Colnett's subordinate ship on his first voyage for Etches and the KGSC.[184] He was, in Dalrymple's words, 'solicitous to be employed in [the] Publick Service' of finding the Northwest Passage, 'which would at the same time redound so much to the National Honour to his own'.[185] The HBC also agreed to financially support an accompanying overland crossing of the continent led by George Dixon, but this portion of the enterprise was cancelled for unknown reasons.[186] William Jefferson, the factor at Churchill who would play host to Duncan, was ordered to 'give up all

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[180] NA CO 42/72, ff. 250-250v. Mr. Dalrymple's opinion of the Route across the continent of America, 2 February 1790.
[181] 'Every Modern Discovery tends to corroborate the old reports… The Opinion therefore of a NW Passage is strongly confirmed by the concurrence of the ancient Reports, the Indian Maps, & the Opinion of those who have recently visited the NW Coast', NA CO 42/72, ff. 250-251. Mr. Dalrymple's opinion of the Route across the continent of America, 2 February 1790.
[182] NA CO 42/72, ff. 254. Mr. Dalrymple's opinion of the Route across the continent of America, 2 February 1790.
[183] NA CO 42/72, f. 257. Alexander Dalrymple to Evan Nepean, 11 February 1790. The HBC also reached out to the Leader of the House of Lords William Grenville in April to remind the Government of their dedication to the expedition. NA CO 42/72, f. 266. Dalrymple to Right Hon[ble] W. Grenville, 16 April 1790.
[184] NA CO 42/72, f. 259. Alexander Dalrymple to Evan Nepean, 23 February 1790.
[185] NA HO 42/13, 57, ff. 163-165. 'Relative to the Discoveries made by Capt. Duncan on the N.W. Coast of America in 1787 and 1788', 1789. Dalrymple also praised his skills in cartography and command of the local languages.
[186] NA CO 42/72, f. 257. Alexander Dalrymple to Evan Nepean, 11 February 1790. Instructions drawn up for Dixon by the HBC can be seen at HBCA C.7/175, ff. 10-11. Instructions to Captains, 18 May 1790. An early draft version of Duncan's instructions, with commands relative to his expedition's relationship with Dixon, since crossed out, can be seen at HBCA C.7/175, ff. 6-7. Instructions to Captains, 18 May 1790. For the original proposal of these plans, see NA CO 42/72, ff. 243-243v. George Dixon to Evan Nepean, 14 July 1789 and NA CO 42/72, ff. 249-56. Mr. Dalrymple's opinion of the Route across the continent of America, 2 February 1790.

thoughts of trading to the Northward being on express Directions that the Business of Discovery shall be the great object of your exertion'.[187] When the Churchill Sloop proved inadequate to the task of scientific discovery,[188] the HBC provided Duncan 'at the Expence of several Thousand Pounds, a remarkably strong Vessel named the Beaver Brig', to try again the following year, and reiterated to Jefferson that he was 'injoined to give every assistance to his Exertions on this important Business and aid him with goods, Provisions, and every thing he may Desire', as 'We not only hope for much nautical Information… but may probably learn several Circumstances that may be highly useful to the public in general'.[189] Jefferson, in return, promised to do all that he could, and expressed his wish that Duncan's 'discovery's may either be useful to the public, or to the Ennoblement of Your Honours'.[190] The Company's swift and enthusiastic approval of Dalrymple's plans stands in stark contrast to its reaction to similar plans put forward by Dobbs half a century earlier. Governor Wegg had repositioned the HBC as a notable patron of science in the national interest, and with the Northwest Passage increasingly understood as one such pursuit, it was natural that he should eagerly embrace the opportunity to throw the support of the Company

[187] HBCA A.6/14, f. 105v. [Committee to] Messrs Wm Jefferson & Council at Churchill Factory, May 1790. Duncan's own instructions for 1790 can be found at HBCA C.7/175, ff. 4-5v. Instructions to Captains, 18 May 1790.

[188] It was, as factor Jefferson reported, 'unfitt for the Service… [we] cannot think of proceeding with her on the intended expedition', HBCA A.11/15, f. 154v. William Jefferson and Council to the Committee, 23 September 1790. Duncan took this setback badly and accused Jefferson of 'being a Very Illiterate man [who] goes on with the Ill founded Idea that all pursuits to the Northward will be pleasing to the Company is rendered abortive', HBCA A.11/15, f. 184v. Charles Duncan to Committee, 10 September 1791. Duncan retained his animosity for Jefferson, drafting a letter to the Mayor of Newcastle upon his return to England in 1792 that stated that 'the unfortunate cruelties I met with on board my vessel, and persecutions during my stay at Churchill, are convincing proofs to one, I was meant as a sacrifice for the most diabolical purpose', NA HO 42/22/110. Draft to the Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne, 5 November 1792. It is probable that Duncan, being deeply mentally troubled by his failure to discover the Passage, had latched on to Jefferson as a scapegoat for his distressing failure. There is no indication in the surviving documentation that Jefferson had set Duncan up to fail, see for example HBCA B.42/a/116. Churchill Post Journal, 1790-91 and HBCA B.42/a/117. Churchill Post Journal, 1791-2. Certainly, Jefferson's ability to control the quality of Duncan's ship – his supposed crime – would have ended with the introduction of the *Beaver*.

[189] HBCA C.7/13, f.1. Beaver (brig): North West Passage Papers, Report; HBCA A.6/14, f. 139v. [Committee to] Messrs Wm Jefferson & Council at Churchill Factory, May 1791. Duncan's instructions for 1791 can be seen at HBCA C.7/175, ff. 8-9. Instructions to Captains, 2 May 1791.

[190] 'Your Honours may depend of Captain Duncan being supply'd with every thing he desires that is in my power to give him', HBCA A.11/15, f. 162. William Jefferson to the Committee, 8 September 1791.

behind plans to pursue it.[191] There was certainly no need for Dalrymple to make the kind of moral exhortations and legal challenges regarding the HBC's obligation to seek the Passage that Dobbs had.

As well as his sincere desire for exploration to serve as means through which science and therefore the greatness of his nation could be advanced, Wegg also intended that the HBC would be *seen* to be patrons of science. Most notably, Duncan was ordered to publish an account of his voyage upon his return to England, which would position himself and by extension the HBC as publicly-minded explorer-scientists in the mould of Cook.[192] The recent explorations of Alexander Mackenzie and Peter Pond of the North West Company, as well as those of the fur traders on the Pacific Coast, had made the recent exploratory efforts of the HBC seem inadequate in a way that they had not for some time, increasing the urgency of such politicking.[193] 1790 had also seen the publication of Edward Umfreville's *The Present State of Hudson's Bay*, which contained bitter attacks on the Company's supposed lack of enterprise.[194] The *Gentleman's Magazine*, when calling in the wake of Meares' discoveries for a new Northwest Passage expedition, from which

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[191] There were also, of course, financial reasons for the Company to cooperate. The discovery of new routes west into the continent would have appealed to the HBC as means of better competing with the North West Company, who had begun to dominate the inland fur trade and cut away at Churchill's viability. That this was a pressing issue at the factory can be seen for example in HBCA A.11/15, f. 162. William Jefferson to the Committee, 8 September 1791. Dalrymple had mentioned in his proposals that if a Northwest Passage could be found that communicated with the lakes of Canada, the 'compleat command of the Fur Trade' could be attained, NA CO 42/21, f. 60. Memorandum by Alexander Dalrymple: "Observations relating to the proposed Settlement on the NW. Coast of Ama", undated.

[192] HBCA C.7/13, f. 1v. Beaver (brig): North West Passage Papers, Report, 1792-1812.

[193] For more information on the travels of Peter Pond, see Williams, 'A Remarkable Map'; Gloria Fedirchuk, 'Peter Pond: Map Maker of the Northwest (1740-1807)', *Arctic* 43, no. 2 (1990): 184–86; Derek Hayes, 'You Will Readily Conjecture: The Explorations and Maps of Peter Pond', *Mercator's World* 7, no. 2 (2002): 30–37; Bruce Robert Greenfield, 'Creating the Distance of Print: The Memoir of Peter Pond, Fur Trader', *Early American Literature* 37, no. 3 (2002): 415–38; David Chapin, *Freshwater Passages the Trade and Travels of Peter Pond* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); Barry M. Gough, *The Elusive Mr. Pond: The Soldier, Fur Trader and Explorer Who Opened the Northwest* (Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2014).

[194] Edward Umfreville, *The Present State of Hudson's Bay: Containing a Full Description of That Settlement, and the Adjacent Country* (London, 1790), For examples of unflattering comparisons made with the NWC, see 95–105; Umfreville was a plagiarist bitter at his lack of advancement through the HBC, Andrew Graham, *Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1767-91*, ed. Glyndwr Williams, 27 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1969), xxx–xxxi.

'some great points of public utility would appear, which the nation would endeavour to turn to the benefit of the community', had recommended that the ships involved should avoid the HBC to 'prevent all sinister tampering'.[195] That the Committee were 'particularly solicitous' that the Government, not the HBC, should provide the captain of the new expedition, so that 'the Publick may be assured of every thing being done to effect the desired Purpose', represented a clear attempt to refute such claims and avoid the kind of reputation-damaging accusations that followed Middleton's failure to discover the Passage.[196] Indeed, an internal HBC report retrospectively explicitly credited the origins of the voyage to the circulation of reports that 'the Governor & Directors of the Hudson's Bay Company were desirous of withholding from the public the probability of a North West Passage'.[197]

Ultimately, however, Duncan would not produce either the Passage for Dalrymple or a politically useful scientific narrative for the HBC, having become deeply mentally troubled during his return home from the expedition.[198] As an internal report recorded:

> Capt. Duncan, prior to his Sailing, entertained the most propitious Assurances that he should discover the often sought for North-West Passage; and he felt the Disappointment so severely, that whilst on his Voyage home he was attack'd with a Brain Fever, the ill Effects of which wholly prevented him from delivering a Journal of his Voyage.[199]

However, the expedition had not been a complete failure for Wegg. The simple fact of Duncan's dispatch, according to Meares in his 1790 narrative, read as proof of the HBC's 'liberal conduct

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[195] W. Williams, 'North-West Passage to the Pacific Ocean Practicable', *The Gentleman's Magazine* 61 (1791): 405.
[196] NA CO 42/72, f. 257. Alexander Dalrymple to Evan Nepean, 11 February 1790.
[197] The HBC files it within the date range "1792-1812", rather than assigning any specific date, but we can tell that it was written in retrospect because the report refers to Dalrymple as Hydrographer to the Admiralty, a position he would not hold until 1795. HBCA C.7/13. Beaver (brig): North West Passage Papers, Report, 1792-1812.
[198] Indeed, he did not even produce the *Beaver*'s 'Register, Master Certificate & Papers which the Company will soon stand in need of', having departed London in a rush, HBCA A.5/3, f. 100v. To Charles Duncan, 12 February 1793.
[199] HBCA C.7/13, f. 1v. Beaver (brig): North West Passage Papers, Report. Duncan attempted suicide on his voyage home and was strapped to his bunk as a result. Duncan had sent home a report covering his second journey from the Orkneys to Hudson Bay in 1791, but this was hardly what Wegg had hoped for. HBCA A.10/1, ff. 26-33. Charles Duncan To the Honorable Hudson's Bay Company, 8 September 1791.

and disposition' and earned it a refutation against those 'former complaints concerning the mysterious concealments of the Hudson's Bay Company'.[200] William Goldson's 1793 *Observations on the Passage Between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans*, a history of the exploration of the Northwest Passage and argument for its existence – a question that Goldson stated now engaged the attention of the geographer as well as the merchant – included Duncan's voyage in its history, implicitly making him a peer of Cook.[201] The HBC's extensive support for Duncan, Goldson wrote, 'does credit to the liberality of the directors'.[202] It was not the height of Wegg's success in translating his passion for conduct public science into advantageous public relations for the Company, but it was by means nothing.[203]

CONCLUSION

Exploration had reinterpreted itself as a scientific pursuit by the end of the century, in a manner that reflected the new functions and cultural meanings of science that had emerged at that time. Understood through a Baconian lens, this made it an activity for the good of mankind, and through an eighteenth century lens, therefore an activity for the good of the British Empire. After the "nationalization" of the Northwest Passage in the Dobbs years, it was unlikely to prove an exception to this rule. Its environs also become a laboratory within which explorers conducted all manner of scientific observations in the Linnean mould. This is not to say that all explorers in this

[200] Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*, xlix. What is also notable is that this praise comes from an acolyte of Dobbs' geography, see xli.
[201] Goldson, *Observations on the Passage*, viii, vi, 53. Despite Duncan's failure, Observations depicted a Passage that connected Repulse Bay, Wager River, many inland lakes, and, on the Pacific Coast, Prince William Sound, i-ii.
[202] Ibid., 53.
[203] He would have more success with the overland expeditions led by Peter Fidler and Philip Turnor, see Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 111–22.

period pictured themselves exclusively as scientists. The financial imperative of course remained a vital one, not least for fur traders. But the public expectations of explorers *had* changed.

Alexander Mackenzie makes for an interesting counter-example with which to demonstrate these expectations. He explicitly warned his readers that he was motivated by 'commercial views' and that he had afforded little time to scientific observations:

> I do not possess the science of the naturalist; and even if the qualifications of that character had been attained by me, its curious spirit would not have been gratified. I could not stop to dig into the earth, over whose surface I was compelled to pass with rapid steps; nor could I turn aside to collect the plants which nature might have scattered on the way, when my thoughts were anxiously employed in making provision for the day.[204]

In response, the *Annual Review* derided his work as 'provokingly inaccurate' and 'miserably meagre' when compared with Hearne's *Journey*, and asked 'What then has the traveller discovered? That going sometimes by land and sometimes by water, it is possible to penetrate from fort Chepewyan to the Pacific. But who ever doubted this?'.[205] The *Edinburgh Review* likewise called Mackenzie's discoveries 'the least interesting of any with which modern enterprise has made us acquainted'.[206] His narrative was also only moderately successful with the public.[207] Indeed, what positive recognition Mackenzie did receive focused on the scant ethnographic passages he had included.[208] Mackenzie's woes in the press demonstrate the changed public expectations for Arctic explorers as ably as Hearne's successes do. Others in this period – Hearne,

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[204] Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal Through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in 1789 and 1793*, 57–59.
[205] 'Mackenzie's Voyages', *Annual Review* 1 (1803): 40.
[206] 'Mackenzie's Voyages', *Edinburgh Review* 1 (1802): 158.
[207] This fact has been routinely misunderstood. See: Robin Jarvis, 'Curious Fame: The Literary Relevance of Alexander Mackenzie Reconsidered', *Canadian Literature* 193 (2007): 54–73.
[208] Tom More's 1806 poem 'To the Lady Charlotte Rawdon, from the Banks of the St Lawrence' cites Mackenzie among several sources regarding the language, customs, and beliefs of indigenous people, Robert Sands and James Eastburn's 1820 poem "Yamoyden" alludes twice to Mackenzie's accounts of indigenous beliefs regarding the afterlife and creation myths, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge referred to John Franklin's 1823 descriptions of Chipewyan life as a "worthy... successor to Hearne's and Mackenzie's volumes". Ibid.

Strange, Meares, and especially Wegg – either understood the changes that had taken place, or naturally acted according to the new mores as men of their time.

As has also been demonstrated, the epistemology of exploration had also changed to bring it in line with the methods of other sciences by the end of the century. This, in many regards, made it a science. Exploration conducted without specialized equipment in the scientific age could no longer be considered exploration at all, and the conclusions of earlier navigators accordingly came into doubt as instrumentation improved. Even Mackenzie aligned himself with instrumental observation as far as cartography was concerned, writing of his 'hope that this volume, with all its imperfections, will not be thought unworthy the attention of the scientific geographer' for this reason.[209] This was a subtler, but no less important, transformation of exploration.

These changes, as with any other in the fluctuating cultural history of the Northwest Passage, would not be permanent. Science itself would change in the nineteenth century under the influence of new Romantic predictions and priorities, and through the emergence of new era of professionalization and scientific specialization that greatly reduced the influence of amateur generalists like Banks.[210] Furthermore, the language of glory and honour that had attended scientific discoveries in the late eighteenth century would also shed their attachment to the actual science of those discoveries, reaching a logical end point in the nineteenth century in which the very image of the process of exploration became so important as to eclipse the targets of exploration themselves, be they scientific or commercial. Indeed, the very act of exploration for

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[209] Cheryl Cundell, 'The Disorder of Things: Empiricism and the Cartographic Enterprise, or, the Observations of Samuel Hearne (1795) and Alexander Mackenzie (1801)', in *British Narratives of Exploration: Case Studies of the Self and Other*, ed. Frédéric Regard (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), 110; Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal Through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in 1789 and 1793*, 60.

[210] Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment*, 4; General scientific societies like the Royal Society also lost their premier position in the organization of science to specialist organisations and universities, McClellan, *Science Reorganized*, xxi.

its own sake came to be understood as generative of national, institutional, and personal prestige. Finally, in the biggest change from this period, the aesthetic of the Sublime would come to dominate understandings of the Northwest Passage, presenting images that were in many ways inherently 'a form of discursive protest against the rigors of scientific discovery'.[211] Emotions, not observations, were set to become the most important way of responding to the Arctic. Science and scientific methods would remain part of the cultural fabric of the Northwest Passage, but never again in the manner that had been produced by the specific cultural developments of the late eighteenth century.

[211] Erika Behrisch, '"Far as the Eye Can Reach": Scientific Exploration and Explorers' Poetry in the Arctic, 1832-1852', *Victorian Poetry* 41, no. 1 (2003): 73.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE ARCTIC OF EMOTIONS

'We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard'.

– John F. Kennedy, 1962.[1]

INTRODUCTION

By the nineteenth century the possible route of the Northwest Passage had been firmly confined to frozen regions evidently devoid of commercial or strategic use. Samuel Hearne had even gone as far as to declare in his turn-of-the-century narrative that his travels had 'put a final end to all disputes concerning a North West Passage'.[2] Despite this, in the three decades between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the cataclysmic Franklin disaster, the Passage reached the zenith of its cultural relevance. This was a time when the aesthetics of Romanticism exercised great influence over British cultural life, a movement that both catapulted the search for the Northwest Passage to relevance and reinterpreted the purpose of that search. The world of the Passage became one constructed by and reacted to along almost entirely emotional lines. Its explorers came to be seen as symbols of Britain's superiority explicitly because of their emotions: because they were perseverant and brave in the face of Sublime landscapes and because they were masculine in chivalric modes. The resource Britain was extracting from the Passage was not financial or scientific, but rather the projection of its power and prestige. In lieu of a hostile battlefield, the

[1] John F. Kennedy, "Address at Rice University in Houston on the Nation's Space Effort", 12 September 1962, *The American Presidency Project*, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/236798 [accessed 14 December 2023].
[2] Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*, 303.

extreme hostility of the Arctic landscape became the most important theatre of patriotic heroism, and in place of battlefield victories, the attainment of the Northwest Passage with its attendant emotional requirements became the ultimate articulation of national superiority. Great risk was to be boldly taken for the sake of proving that the nation had the boldness to take great risks. The prize generated by undergoing the emotions of Arctic exploration, therefore, was itself an emotion – after all, there is no such tangible thing as prestige, just the feelings of pride and confidence. This chapter will both provide informative examples of the emotional Arctic in action from the world of the fur trade and explore the ways in which the HBC sought to use the new cultural importance of Passage exploration to its advantage, transmuting contributions to the emotional quest for national prestige into endorsements for its continued existence along equally emotional lines.

In making its argument, this chapter frequently refers to the bestselling "narratives" published by explorers upon their return to Britain, both as a source from which to interpret and as a concern of its protagonists.[3] While the characteristic voice of a traveller's narrative in the eighteenth century tended to be sober and analytical, the Romantic explorer-author was far likelier to present impassioned images of his experiences and surroundings.[4] These narratives, rather than being mere reproductions of explorer's field journals, were adapted with institutional oversight

[3] Books on travel and exploration were outsold at this time in Britain only by those on theology, Beau Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism, and Geographical Discovery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 13; The first edition of Parry's 1821 narrative, for instance, sold out its initial print of 1,500 copies in a single day. Janice Cavell, 'Making Books for Mr Murray: The Case of Edward Parry's Third Arctic Narrative', *The Library* 14, no. 1 (March 2013): 45–69; 'The metropolis of England was scarcely less agitated on the news of the victories of the Nile and Salamanca... than it was on the eve of the publications of [Parry and Franklin]', T. F. Dibdin, *The Library Companion*, vol. i (London: Harding, Triphook and Lepard, 1825), 351.

[4] Roger Cardinal, 'Romantic Travel', in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Roy Porter (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1996), 136; Batten, *Pleasurable Instruction*, 63; Viewed from today's perspective, some of these texts can seem subdued, but even these volumes were seen as dramatic at the time. Wintering in the Arctic, for example, was entirely new to the readers of William Edward Parry's 1821 narrative, and therefore thrilling. 'Thus, as unromantic as the book seems today, it created a very romantic image. Even Parry's understatement and logic in describing the unusual – his unwillingness to indulge in raptures – emphasized the strangeness and vastness of the Arctic', Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*, 16.

and with a paying reading public in mind, a process that left them indelibly marked by metropolitan understandings of and expectations for stories of exploration.[5] Each narrative therefore represents a controlled intersection of the voices of the explorer, his director, and the publisher who acted according to the tastes of his consumer base – what Adriana Craciun calls 'an aggregate author – not of multiple, unified coauthors, but of an unindividuated "author" comprising an uneven aggregate of individual and institutional agents' – and so can help reveal the ways that the Passage was understood by a broad range of actors both inside and outside the business of exploration.[6] On a fundamental level, then, the narratives of this period give the historian more to work with than equivalent texts from any previous era. The content and themes of these narratives were reproduced, commented upon, and expanded in periodicals that reached a wider middle class audience than the expensive original publications.[7] Working from Marilyn Butler's proposal that reviews in periodicals can be understood as the 'matrix' of Romantic culture, and engaging with the work of Beau Riffenburgh and Janice Cavell in studying the Arctic's presence in the nineteenth century press, this chapter frequently quotes such articles to represent wider cultural reactions to exploration.[8] That the Romantic era of exploration coincided with a steady growth in literacy

[5] Publishers such as John Murray played a significant role in directing the content and style of explorer-authors' work, Innes M. Keighren, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 222.

[6] Adriana Craciun, 'Writing the Disaster: Franklin and Frankenstein', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 65, no. 4 (2011): 471; 'The move into print was far from a straightforward recounting of events or the cataloging of simple travel facts... Editing was not something done unto authors but part of "authorship"' Keighren, *Travels into Print*, 2, 19; 'The literary consequence' of this process, writes Ian MacLaren, 'played out an ideology, if it did not quite represent matters as accurately as was thought by credulous readers of travel literature', MacLaren, 'From Exploration to Publication: The Evolution of a 19th-Century Arctic Narrative', 44.

[7] The narratives were expensive by design. Each book was a remarkable aesthetic object, printed in the lavish quarto format, appealing directly to high society where such tomes would be proudly displayed to impress guests. By making the narratives themselves physically prestigious items, their contents therefore benefitted from the same connotations – Arctic exploration was to be the concern of the influential. For specifics on the cost of these volumes, often triple the price of those printed a generation earlier, see Cavell, 'Making Books for Mr Murray'.

[8] Marilyn Butler, 'Culture's Medium: The Role of the Review', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 127–52; Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*; Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*.

makes these public-facing textual sources more important than at any previous stage in the history of the Northwest Passage.[9] Private texts – correspondence, instructions, minutes – of course remain as important as ever to this study, particularly in this case the records of George Simpson.[10] Finally, as the emotions of the Northwest Passage were tightly bound to the representation of its landscape, this chapter also turns to visual art, poetry and fiction.

The central figures in this study are the HBC's overseas governor George Simpson, who had both considerable control over Company policy and a predilection for the aesthetics of Romantic travel; his under-examined nephew Thomas Simpson, who, more than any other in the fur trade, embodied the cultural expectations of a Romantic explorer; and to a lesser degree Admiralty don John Barrow, who exercised too much influence over the exploratory culture of the time to be ignored, and the naval explorer John Ross, whose fluctuating fortunes ably demonstrate the changing times. The use of central figures as avatars for their period is perhaps more methodologically appropriate in this chapter than any other considering the way in which Romantic thinking emphasised the actions of heroic individuals. These individuals are, however, presented in concert with examples from across the wider culture of exploration in order to better understand the culture of exploration that they embodied. I will also briefly consider the world of the Passage as understood following the disappearance of the 1845 Franklin expedition. Too much has been written regarding the search for Franklin to possibly be listed here.[11] I, however, reframe this period as a battle over the Romantic Arctic narrative discussed in the rest of the chapter,

[9] David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination*, 8.
[10] Simpson's 'attention to record-keeping, much beyond the administrative procedures required of him', notes Deidre Simmons, 'has proved to be a delight to archivists and historians researching this era', Simmons, *Keepers of the Record*, 106.
[11] Alan Day's comprehensive bibliography of Northwest Passage literature lists 124 pages of publications concerning the search, and that was published four decades before this dissertation. The current extent of the literature is bewilderingly large, Day, *Search for the Northwest Passage*, 443–567.

picturing it as a rhetorical and aesthetic struggle in which competing voices fought to control a diversifying cultural narrative. In doing so I help demonstrate the influence emotions held over the nineteenth century understanding of the Northwest Passage.

This period in the history of the Northwest Passage has been subject to considerably more historiographic attention than any thus far discussed. Many works of popular history have, of course, retold the Arctic adventures of the period's foremost explorers with emphasis on their courage and the overcoming of natural adversity.[12] Scholarly discussions of the issue include Adriana Craciun, Janice Cavell, and Ian MacLaren's examinations of the cultural role of the explorer-author in this period and the processes of publication that were vital in propagating Arctic cultural narratives;[13] Russell Potter's discussion of representations of the North in popular visual culture;[14] and Francis Spufford, Robert G. David, Eric Wilson, Katherine Bowers, and Sage Alexandra Freeburg's considerations of the Arctic's influence upon nineteenth-century literature and vice-versa.[15] The most influential work has proved to be the scholarship originated by Chauncey Loomis that discusses the role of aesthetics in European understandings of the North, particularly the modes of the Sublime and Picturesque, a rich tradition in which my work is firmly situated.[16] I build on this work by understanding these ways of seeing as fundamentally emotional

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[12] Notable examples include Berton, *The Arctic Grail*; Fleming, *Barrow's Boys*; Edinger, *Fury Beach*; Brandt, *The Man Who Ate His Boots*; Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth*; Palin, *Erebus*.

[13] Craciun, *Writing Arctic Disaster*; Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*; Cavell, 'Representing Akaitcho'; MacLaren, 'Exploration/Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Author'; MacLaren, 'From Exploration to Publication: The Evolution of a 19th-Century Arctic Narrative'; MacLaren, 'The HBC's Arctic Expedition'; MacLaren, 'In Consideration of the Evolution of Explorers and Travellers into Authors'.

[14] Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*.

[15] Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*; David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination*; Eric Wilson, *The Spiritual History of Ice: Romanticism, Science, and the Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Bowers, 'Haunted Ice, Fearful Sounds, and the Arctic Sublime: Exploring Nineteenth-Century Polar Gothic Space'; Sage Alexandra Freeburg, 'Dreaming Through Snow: The Arctic Imaginary in Nineteenth Century European Literature' (M.A., United States -- California, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2020).

[16] Loomis, 'The Arctic Sublime'; Loomis' influence has been profound. Discussions akin to his of Arctic aesthetics can be seen in: I. S. MacLaren, 'The Grandest Tour: The Aesthetics of Landscape in Sir George Back's Explorations of the Eastern Arctic 1833-1837', *English Studies in Canada* 10, no. 4 (1984): 436–56; I. S. MacLaren, 'The Aesthetic

responses equivalent to and constructive of other Arctic emotions like notions of gallant adventure and national prestige, and by applying these theories to the fur trade's engagements with Romantic exploration, particularly the Simpson-Dease expedition. I also integrate Jen Hill and Lisa Bloom's gender history examinations of the North by considering Romantic Arctic explorers as deliberately masculine figures, whose emphasised masculinity played an important role in the period's understanding of the Passage, and in why its conquering represented the prestige (and, implicitly, the virility) of empire.[17] A continued debt is also owed to Ted Binnema's thesis that the HBC was deeply invested in receiving public tribute for its work, as discussed in Chapter Four.[18]

THE ROMANTIC ARCTIC

Romanticism, the greatly influential intellectual movement that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century, is hard to pin down, but some of its chief hallmarks were the exaltation of individual emotion over systematic rationality, reverence for the grandeur and mystery of the natural world, preference for medieval as opposed to classical values, and a lionization of the solitary genius or hero.[19] The masculine ideal of this solitary hero no longer necessarily sought to understand the landscape he encountered, but rather used it in his quest to understand himself,

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Mapping of Nature in the Second Franklin Expedition', *Journal of Canadian Studies* 20, no. 1 (1985): 39–57; I. S. MacLaren, 'The Aesthetic Map of the North, 1845-1859', *Arctic* 38, no. 2 (1985): 89–103; I. S. MacLaren, 'Touring at High Speed: Fur-Trade Landscapes in the Writings of Frances and George Simpson', *Musk-Ox* 34 (1986): 78–87; I. S. MacLaren, 'The Poetry of The "New Georgia Gazette" or "Winter Chronicle" 1819-1820', *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews* 30 (Spring/Summer 1992): 41–73; Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*; John Moss, *Enduring Dreams: An Exploration of Arctic Landscape* (Don Mills: Anansi, 1994); David F. Pelly, 'Treasures of an Arctic Artist', *Canadian Geographic* 115, no. 4 (1995): 56–62; Spufford, *I May Be Some Time*; David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination*; Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*; Wilson, *The Spiritual History of Ice*; Behrisch, 'Far as the Eye Can Reach'; Fulford, Lee, and Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era*; Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*; Kim Wheatley, 'John Barrow, John Ross, and the Arctic Sublime', in *Romantic Feuds: Transcending the 'Age of Personality'* (London: Routledge, 2013); Byrne, *Geographies of the Romantic North*; Benjamin Morgan, 'After the Arctic Sublime', *New Literary History* 47, no. 1 (2016): 1–26.

[17] Lisa E. Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Hill, *White Horizon*.

[18] Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*.

[19] Academic work on Romanticism is both legion and disparate. The totemic *Routledge Library Editions: Romanticism* (London: Routledge, 2016), gathers a number of the most influential works on the subject.

especially in tales of courageous perseverance against the overwhelming natural dangers it presented.[20] Mungo Park, for example, is presented by Richard Holmes as a quintessential Romantic because his publications revealed a man whose 'heart was a *terra incognita* quite as mysterious as the interior of Africa'.[21] Romanticism has most often been discussed in the contexts of visual arts, poetry, or fiction, but the movement also had obvious impacts on exploration. Romanticism was both in part produced by exploration – which provided a wellspring of the kinds of imagery it thrived upon – and helped spur it on, as men chased new lands and experiences to live out the ideals of their time.[22] Just as William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley extolled the virtues of braving muscular exertion to achieve visionary experiences in the overwhelming natural environs of the Alps, explorers would follow suit in the Arctic or Africa, their actions in turn inspiring a plethora of new cultural output from pantomimes to poetry.[23]

In many ways, the Northwest Passage was perfectly suited to be a cultural fascination for the Romantic age. The Passage, having been pushed into extreme latitudes after the unsuccessful expeditions of the eighteenth century, now represented a world utterly remote from Britain in terms of both geographic distance and phenomenal experience. The poverty of words in the British lexicon to describe this alien world of extreme weather, bizarre cycles of night and day, and vast landscapes – as John Ross wrote, 'to those who have not seen a northern ocean in winter, the term

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[20] Romantic exploration 'lead ultimately, not unidirectionally out into the blank plains, dense forests, or nebulous skies of a beckoning and unknown land, but back into the tangled self' Barbara Maria Stafford, *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature, and the Illustrated Travel Account, 1760-1840* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), 444.
[21] Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science.* (United States: Knopf, 2010), 221.
[22] Byrne, *Geographies of the Romantic North*, 5; Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xi.
[23] William Wordsworth, 'Book Sixth: Cambridge and the Alps', in *The Prelude* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1850), 133–67; Percy Brysshe Shelley, 'Mont Blanc', first published in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and Percy Bysshe Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour Through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland: With Letters Descriptive of a Sail Round the Lake of Geneva, and of the Glaciers of Chamouni* (London: T. Hookham, Jun., and C. and J. Ollier, 1817), 175–83; MacLaren, 'The Grandest Tour'.

ice, exciting but the recollection of what they only know at rest, in an inland lake or canal, conveys no ideas of what it is the fate of an Arctic navigator to witness and to feel'[24] – meant that those tasked with describing it leaned on the language of emotion and the senses, mutually constructing a near-magical realm of terrifying danger and exquisite beauty.[25] In particular, they turned to the Sublime, the aesthetic quality of vastness beyond all measurement or control, in which the natural world both overwhelmed and thrilled its observer. In Chauncey Loomis' famous description,

> The Natural Sublime, suggesting in its magnitude the immensity of creation, and in its irregularity a natural order that is beyond man's ken, strains the soul of the observer. Part of him goes out to it in rapture; part of him withdraws from it in fear. It simultaneously reminds him of his own responsive vastness of soul, and of his mortal smallness in the universe.[26]

The emotions of the Sublime, 'exultation and terror, liberation and acrophobia, a mixed sense of triumph and defeat', he argued, 'vitalized' nineteenth century engagement with the Arctic.[27] The Northwest Passage, rendered ever more mysterious with each failed attempt to map it, made for a particularly Sublime thrill, inspiring works such as Caspar David Friedrich's *The Sea of Ice*, the poetry of Eleanor Porden, and the narratives of John Franklin and William Edward Parry, all of which further solidified this view of the Arctic world.[28] At one point in Thomas De Quincy's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1823), the Northwest Passage even served as an effective metaphor for the terror and ecstasy of opium.[29] At the time, it was an apt comparison.

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[24] John Ross and James Clark Ross, *Narrative of a Second Voyage in Search of a North-West Passage: And of a Residence in the Arctic Regions During the Years 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1833* (A.W. Webster, 1835), 152.
[25] Likewise, Passage explorers were also frequently bereft of the ways they had traditionally visually communicated their surroundings, as extreme cold froze the oils, watercolours, and fingers of any who tried to capture them on canvas, meaning that Arctic images increasingly came to be produced from subjective memory, David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination*, 12–13, 30.
[26] Loomis, 'The Arctic Sublime', 98.
[27] Ibid.
[28] For a discussion of Arctic panoramas, see: Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*; Caspar David Friedrich, *The Sea of Ice*, 1824 1823, Oil on Canvas, 1824 1823, Hamburger Kunsthalle, https://online-sammlung.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/de/objekt/HK-1051; Regarding Porden's poetry, see: Fulford, Lee, and Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era*, 168; and Catherine Lanone, 'Arctic Romance under a Cloud: Franklin's Second Expedition by Land (1825-7)', in *Arctic Exploration in the Nineteenth Century: Discovering the Northwest Passage*, ed. Frédéric Regard, n.d., 95–114.
[29] Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1823), 110–11.

This change in the way that the Arctic landscape was imagined can easily be seen in a comparison of the ways in which the geography of the Passage was depicted in illustrations from the expeditions of Martin Frobisher (1574) and William Edward Parry (1824) [*FIGURES 3 AND 4*]. The Elizabethan explorers, confident in their ability to master a Passage they intended to extract gold from, depicted a landscape that bent to their will, in which thousand-foot cliffs were reduced to mere hillocks. In the lands of the Romantic passage, however, where explorers travelled to experience the emotions produced by the testing of their mettle against extreme nature, cliffs were depicted towering vertiginously over vulnerable ships, themselves already lifted aloft and askew from their safe home in the water by floes of ice. As J. W. Watson argued, 'The geography of any place results from how we see it as much as what may be seen'.[30]

FIGURE 3: "The Skirmish at Bloody Point, Frobisher Bay".[31]

FIGURE 4: "Situation of the Ships Hecla and Fury".[32]

[30] J. W. Watson, 'The Role of Illusion in North American Geography', *Canadian Geographer* 13, no. 1 (1969): 10.
[31] John White, *The Skirmish at Bloody Point, Frobisher Bay*, 1593 1585, Drawing, 1593 1585, The British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_SL-5270-12.
[32] 'Situation of the Ships Hecla and Fury', William Edward Parry, *Journal of a Third Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific [Microform]: Performed in the Years 1824-25, in His Majesty's*

This geographic cultural imaginary was propagated also through the public panoramas inspired by such depictions, a unique feature of this period that both emerged from and helped defined the new aesthetics of the Arctic.[33] The headline attraction of the panorama of John Ross' Arctic travels, held at the Royal Gardens (Vauxhall) in 1834, for example, was '***IMMENSE ICEBERGS*** Which are as large as reality, many being *UPWARDS OF SEVENTY FEET HIGH*' – the physical aspects of the landscape, once incidental to the cultural discussion of the Northwest Passage, was now the centre of its emotional draw.[34] In panorama, epistemologically and experientially, the Arctic *was* the landscape. For many, especially the illiterate, panoramas were the primary way in which the Northwest Passage expeditions were interacted with, thus reinforcing on a wide scale the new vitality of the emotions of Sublime landscape to the understanding of the Passage.[35]

One response to the Sublime that influenced certain British engagements with the Northwest Passage in the early part of this period was the aesthetic of the Picturesque, which sought to find pleasure in landscapes, viewing them as a painter would in a conscious or unconscious attempt to regain control of the landscape. This was a way of taming the sensory experience, by isolating a pleasurable view from the sensations of temperature, hunger, disgust, shame, or fear. While the Sublime forced the viewer to examine his own emotions, the picturesque eye attempted to return focus to the scene itself.[36] This 'painterly screening effect', argued Nigel Leask, 'worked as an existential formula for viewing territory where unseen horrors might lurk'.[37]

Ships, Hecla and Fury, Under the Orders of Captain William E. Parry, R.n., F.r.s., and Commander of the Expedition (London: John Murray, 1826).

[33] A thorough history of Arctic panoramas can be found in Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*.

[34] Lambeth Archives, IV/162/5/6. Entertainment Bills, 1834.

[35] Panoramas drew in a cross-section of society across gender, class, and professional lines unlike any other visual medium of the time, Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*, 8.

[36] Christopher Hussey, *Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View.* (London: Routledge, 1927).

[37] Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*, 169.

It allowed foreign lands to be viewed with a distinctly English eye, for example by likening a ship beset by ice to the more familiar image of a horse and carriage passing through a country estate, and thereby provided the affirmation that it was Britain's destiny to conquer the Passage, if, after all, it was English in character.[38] Ian MacLaren has demonstrated how John Franklin, for example, chose the sites of his base camp forts for its likeness to familiar landscape paintings, so as to provide aesthetic relief from the Sublime terrors of his journey.[39] The Picturesque domesticated the Arctic into a form suitable for comic theatre afterpieces like the Royal Amphitheatre's *Frozen Regions, or the Treacherous Esquimaux* (1822) in which the audience might find that 'the frozen rocks and ocean are delightful', rather than terrible.[40] Picturesque depictions of the Passage, however, were never as pervasive as Sublime ones, and decreased in prevalence over the course of the period, especially after the Franklin disappearance.

A more influential response to the Sublime conception of the Arctic landscape was the idea that its qualities made it a perfect setting in which to situate Romantic stories of adventure. In the traditional structure of a medieval quest romance – revived in the public imagination at the start of the nineteenth century in works such as Walter Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), and *Ivanhoe* (1819) – a chivalrous adventuring hero undertook a journey through perilous and beautiful landscapes, usually for the sake of a lady, with supernatural powers frequently figuring in the tale.[41] A daring and resilient explorer, encountering a Sublime Arctic landscape of unknowable and mystical power, one frequently coded in feminine terms, for the sake

[38] MacLaren, 'The Aesthetic Map of the North, 1845-1859', 90; MacLaren, 'The Grandest Tour', 442.
[39] MacLaren, 'The Aesthetic Map of the North, 1845-1859', 90–91.
[40] 'The scenery is the ne plus ultra of painting, and does the highest credit to the celebrated artist Mr. SCRUTON. The frozen rocks and ocean are delightful', 'Royal Amphitheatre', *The Drama: Or, Theatrical Pocket Magazine* 2 (1822): 364.
[41] Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*, 82.

of his mother country, handsomely fit the bill.[42] That the frozen Passage was patently useless for commerce or strategy made it the purest form of Romantic adventure, in which gallantry, untainted by self-interest, was an end in itself.[43] 'These men', wrote Beau Riffenbaugh, 'became folk figures, larger than life, and their failings, flaws, and human frailties were ignored by the press and public, which saw in them everything grand and honourable'.[44] Personally, they were handsomely rewarded. William Edward Parry – who became one of the Romantic Arctic's foremost heroes by carving a path into the Arctic Archipelago deeper than any before him and courageously mastering his emotions against the geography of the North during a ten-month wintering in which temperatures reached as low as -47°C – received a rapturous reception in the press, a £5,000 parliamentary reward and constant visits and letters from adoring fans.[45] Eleanor Porden's *The Arctic Explorations, a Poem* lauded such 'undaunted heroes', defining them by how they braved 'fatigue and frost, and storms, and death' to plant 'Britain's trident' in the North.[46] As an oft-quoted comment from the *Spectator* said, 'Arctic expeditions are the knight errantry of our day'.[47]

These tropes were most successfully deployed by John Barrow, the Second Secretary to the Admiralty, the period's foremost sponsor and propogandist of Northwest Passage expeditions.[48] In the context of a burst of British nationalism following the Napoleonic Wars,

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[42] For discussions of the supernatural and feminine connotations of the Arctic in this period, see: Wilson, *The Spiritual History of Ice*; Hill, *White Horizon*; McCorristine, *Spectral Arctic: A History of Dreams and Ghosts in Polar Exploration*.

[43] 'If the passage had a use, then its discovery would be no more glorious than flushing out a clogged pipe. A useless passage, and only such, was a worthy goal for a mighty nation and its knights-errant of the sea', Regard, *Arctic Exploration in the Nineteenth Century*, 10.

[44] Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*, 16.

[45] 'What with visits, and what with letters, I have been literally overwhelmed', Parry told his father, 'even strangers in the coffee room introduce themselves, and beg to shake hands with me', William Edward Parry, *Memoirs of Rear-Admiral Sir W. Edward Parry, Kt., F.R.S. Etc., Late Lieutenant-Governor of Greenwich Hospital* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1857), 130.

[46] Lanone, 'Arctic Romance under a Cloud', 102.

[47] 'Arctic Enterprise', *Spectator*, February 1850. Quoted for example in Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*.

[48] As well as holding the position of Second Secretary of the Admiralty, from which Barrow directed the Admiralty's search for the Passage in this period, he also wrote swathes of nominally anonymous articles for the influential

Barrow used Romantic depictions of exploration amongst Sublime landscapes as evidence for the glory and valour of the nation at large.[49] In his texts, he reinterpreted the Northwest Passage as a teleologic centuries-long national quest, in which modern explorers strove to replicate the 'daring enterprizes and the perilous and persevering efforts of our early navigators', therefore tying the Passage directly to the glory of the Elizabethan age.[50] He extended his explorers' glory as synecdoche for the nation by claiming that 'so powerfully infused into the minds of Britons was the spirit of enterprize', that the masses 'strove eagerly to share in the glory and the danger of every daring adventure'.[51] Barrow's era-defining writing both guided and reflected British culture. Parry, for example, echoed Barrow in poetry that tied 'our much-lov'd Country's glorious claim / To stand pre-eminent, unmatched in fame' to both victory in Europe and its intrepid commitment 'to force a passage through the arrested tide' in spite of every privation.[52] At the heart of his thinking was a radical reinterpretation of imperial Baconianism, in which the prestige bequeathed by making discoveries was more important than the discoveries themselves and the manner in which those discoveries were pursued was more important in generating that prestige than the usefulness of those discoveries.[53]

Emotions formed a fundamental part of such claims to greatness. 'The whole series of expeditions', wrote the *British Review and London Critical Journal*, 'is distinguished by marks of

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Quarterly Review. In these articles he, in Wheatley's words, created 'a cultural identity for himself as the expert on polar exploration while at once hiding and revealing his position as the mastermind behind it'. Kim Wheatley, 'The Arctic in the Quarterly Review', *European Romantic Review* 20, no. 4 (2009): 476. Wheatley has demonstrated the ways in which Barrow not only applied these Romantic tropes to individual expeditions, but also presented an over-arching master-narrative, in which each expedition represented the next step of the archetypal heroes' journey, one that was building towards the ultimate climatic happy marriage: the Atlantic and the Pacific.

[49] For examples of the ways Barrow invoked Sublime images from nature, see Wheatley, 'John Barrow, John Ross, and the Arctic Sublime'.

[50] John Barrow, 'Lord Selkirk, and the North-West Company', *Quarterly Review* 16, no. 32 (October 1816): 156.

[51] Barrow, *A Chronological History of Voyages into the Arctic Regions*, 51–52.

[52] MacLaren, 'The Poetry of The "New Georgia Gazette" or "Winter Chronicle" 1819-1820'.

[53] For discussions of the eighteenth century conception of imperial Baconianism, in which scientific discoveries were imagined as being for the good of humanity at large and were on that basis prestigious, see Chapter Four.

hardihood and endurance, which at once exhibit and dignify the character of England'.[54] The 'cheerfulness, sobriety, discipline, patient endurance of fatigue and hardship' of Parry's 'brave and enterprising' crews, wrote the *British Critic*, 'would hardly be found among any class of men but British seamen'.[55] Journalist William Henry Davenport Adams wrote that 'our national virtues of resolute perseverance and patient courage have never been more happily displayed than in the prosecution of the great work of Arctic Discovery'.[56] The advertising material of the aforementioned Royal Gardens panorama announced that the product of the emotional landscape it depicted was '**A GRAND ALLEGORICAL DISPLAY, COMPLIMENTARY TO BRITISH ENTERPRISE**'.[57] Jen Hill has described how the public understood Franklin's descriptions of his suffering on the Coppermine River as a stand-in for the mythical national male body, with his eventual survival serving to prove the strength of the British character.[58] The *Edinburgh Review* went a step further, declaring not only that the search for the Passage represented British greatness, but that it was also the source of that greatness: 'The naval energy – the spirit of enterprise – the love of knowledge and adventure, which Britain has displayed beyond any other people, [has] been greatly owing, we are persuaded, to the stern and severe struggles which she has so long maintained with the tempests and snows of the north'.[59] The Northwest Passage's prize – the emotion of

[54] 'Franklin's Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea', *The British Review and London Critical Journal* 22 (1824): 1–25.
[55] 'Captain Parry's Voyage', *British Critic* 15 (1821): 619.
[56] The full quote hits all of Barrow's beats: 'Englishmen have always felt a special interest in the regions of the icy North… The interest originally kindled by commercial considerations has been maintained by purer and loftier motives,– by the thirst after knowledge, and the sympathy with the brave deeds of brave men. And it must be admitted that our national virtues of resolute perseverance and patient courage have never been more happily displayed than in the prosecution of the great work of Arctic Discovery. Our explorers have refused to know when they were beaten; and in defiance of a terrible climate, of icebergs and ice-floes, of hurricanes and driving snow-storms, of obstacles, dangers, and difficulties, have pressed onward, until the latest adventurers have crossed the Threshold of the Unknown Region, and confronted the immense plain of ice that extends for four hundred miles from the Pole'. W. H. Davenport Adams, *The Arctic World: Its Plants, Animals and Natural Phenomena: With a Historical Sketch of Arctic Discovery down to the British Polar Expedition: 1875-76* (T. Nelson and Sons, 1876), ii.
[57] Lambeth Archives, IV/162/5/6. "Entertainment Bills", 1834.
[58] Hill, *White Horizon*, 45–46.
[59] 'North West Passage', *Edinburgh Review* 48 (1828): 423.

national pride – was therefore commonly understood to be generated by the exercising of the right emotions in the Arctic.

SCIENCE IN THE ROMANTIC ARCTIC

In a conception where the exploration of the Northwest Passage directly symbolized the prestige of the Empire, the stakes of completing that discovery became considerable. As Barrow wrote:

> To have abandoned any attempt any further attempt to fulfil an object which has never ceased to occupy the attention of the British government since the days of our Elizabeth... to have left it to be completed by a foreign navy, after the doors of the two extremities of the passage had been thrown open by the ships of our own, would have been little short of an act of national suicide.[60]

Other voices, like the *Edinburgh Review*, echoed his urgency.[61] Such desperation left little time for other Arctic activities beyond raw cartographical progress and the emotions it produced. In a cyclical fashion, as expeditions shed other commitments and therefore other issues to report upon, explorers and cultural voices alike focused ever more on emotional issues, further marginalizing those possible other concerns. The most notable victim of this paradigm was science, the great motivator of Northwest Passage exploration in the late eighteenth century.

Barrow's mission statement, *A Chronological History of Voyages into the Arctic Regions*, released alongside his first Northwest Passage expedition, made it clear that science would play a decidedly secondary role in his conception of the quest for the Passage:

> A number of new and valuable instruments were prepared for making observations in all the departments of science… in order that, in the event of the main object of the voyage being defeated either through accident or from utter impracticability, every possible attention might be paid to the advancement of science.[62]

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[60] Barrow, *Voyages of Discovery and Research within the Arctic Regions, from the Year 1818 to the Present Time*, 22.
[61] 'it would now be a national disgrace to allow the completion of our great arctic survey to be effected by any foreign power. The improved resources of England cannot be better employed than in the promotion of discoveries by which these very resources may be enlarged, and the national wealth and reputation simultaneously extended', 'Captain Back's Expedition to the Arctic Regions', *Edinburgh Review* 63 (1836): 314.
[62] Barrow, *A Chronological History of Voyages into the Arctic Regions*, 367.

Science was de-emphasised in the official instructions Barrow gave to the explorers he dispatched. By 1824 Parry was being ordered to not stop 'for any other object not of imperious importance' and to only make observations regarding the Arctic coastlines when held up by ice.[63] The HBC followed suit in the construction of its expeditions. While Peter Warren Dease and Thomas Simpson's 1836 orders did stipulate that 'it is also desirable that you make a collection of minerals, plants, or any specimens of natural history you may fall in with, that appear to be new, curious, or interesting', this came not only as the lowly order 14 out of 16, but also as an afterthought within that order itself, which was primarily concerned with cartographic practice.[64] In the report of their first season of exploration, Dease and Simpson admitted that 'in the botanical kingdom scarcely a flower or moss was obtained', and when their official narrative was published it did not list a single species of plant new to British science.[65] In 1846 John Rae was ordered to, in addition to his 'principal and essential task' of exploration, devote attention to botany, geology, zoology, weather, ice conditions, magnetism, and refraction, but the HBC were seemingly unconcerned that he had little expertise in these fields – 'of Geology and Mineralogy', for example, Rae declared, 'I know little or nothing' – because of his skill in covering huge distances at pace.[66] The Company hoped

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[63] Parry, *Journal of a Third Voyage*, xix. Parry's scientific orders only arrived eight pages into his instruction's eleven. In contrast to the nigh-fetishism of instrumentation seen on earlier expeditions, Parry's instructions 'deem in unnecessary to specify these objects', xxiv. This expedition, wrote Fergus Fleming, 'was to barely scrape the surface of scientific observation. Parry did not care, nor did Barrow... by far the most important thing was to find the Passage before someone else did', Fleming, *Barrow's Boys*, 110.

[64] Thomas Simpson, *Narrative of the Discoveries on the North Coast of America: Effected by the Officers of the Hudson's Bay Company During the Years, 1836-39* (London: R. Bentley, 1843), 8.

[65] Peter Warren Dease and Thomas Simpson to the Directors of the Hudson's Bay Company, 5 September 1837, Alexander Simpson, *The Life and Travels of Thomas Simpson: The Arctic Discoverer* (London: R. Bentley, 1845), 251; Simpson, *Narrative of the Discoveries on the North Coast of America*, 409–81; Only one of the species of plant listed had not already been gathered by John Richardson for previous expeditions, Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 151; Dease reflected in 1838: 'as you know Scientific pursuits are out of my reach therefore I do not aspire to undeserved distinction', Peter Warren Dease to John Stuart, 18 December 1838, quoted in MacLaren, 'The HBC's Arctic Expedition', 469.

[66] John Rae, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Shores of the Arctic Sea in 1846 and 1847* (London: T. & W. Boone, 1850), 15; John Rae to George Simpson, 24 February 1846, Rae, *John Rae's Correspondence with the Hudson's Bay Company on Arctic Exploration, 1844-1855*, 22–23. Rae responded to his instructions with doubts over their scientific orders, writing: 'You appear to think that I have got a head stuffed with all sorts of knowledge, if I may judge by my letter of instructions. The head is big enough certainly on the outside, but whether there is a large quantity of bone in

to continue enjoying the benefits of the cultural capital associated with scientific enterprise, but ultimately understood that the cultural capital of Romantic exploration and its attendant prestigious discoveries was now of greater value, and their priorities shifted accordingly. It is too simple to say that the Romantic era saw the total displacement of science from exploration, but the changing priorities of its directors were clear.[67]

The published narratives produced by such expeditions reflected this change in quite literal terms as the most explicitly scientific content within them, such as the tables of observational data and botanical descriptions, increasingly began to be taken out of expedition narratives. Parry's first narrative sequestered scientific data into appendices at the back of the book and worked to avoid using technical language throughout, and his second evacuated scientific content entirely into a separate volume.[68] Nominally appendices were to make the inspection and comparison of this data easier, but in reality, their advantage was that boring numbers and tables would no longer get in the way of the Romantic adventure stories that the reading public now craved from exploration literature.[69] When John Ross' *Narrative of a Second Voyage* included a crucial piece of scientific

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it or not I have not yet tested. It is certainly a poor affair, but I shall endeavour to make the best use of it I can', John Rae to George Simpson, 5 July 1846, ibid, 32.

[67] Indeed, argues Morgan Benjamin, science constituted an Arctic aesthetic that at this time 'came "after" the sublime... in order of prominence. After one grappled with the threats of icebergs, polar bears, and endless nights, one set about the taxing work of observing and notating—but perhaps this did not entail leaving behind one's aesthetic sensibilities'. Morgan, 'After the Arctic Sublime', 13; See also Catherine Lanone's study of Franklin's fascination with magnetic experimentation: Lanone, 'Arctic Romance under a Cloud'; Or, in broader terms, Trevor Levere's study of nineteenth century Arctic science: Levere, *Science and the Canadian Arctic*.

[68] William Edward Parry, *Journal of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific: Performed in the Years 1819-20, in His Majesty's Ships Hecla and Griper; Under the Orders of William Edward Parry, R.n., F.r.s., and Commander of the Expedition: With an Appendix* (London: John Murray, 1821), 267-; William Edward Parry, *Appendix to Captain Parry's Journal of a Second Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific, Performed in His Majesty's Ships Fury and Hecla in the Years 1821-22-23* (London: John Murray, 1825); It should be noted that three years after the first narrative's publication, Edward Sabine published a separate 'supplement' to the in-volume appendices: Edward Sabine, *A Supplement to the Appendix of Captain Parry's Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage, in the Years 1819-20: Containing an Account of the Subjects of Natural History* (London: John Murray, 1824).

[69] For an example of the supposed scientific benefits of an appendix, see: Ross and Ross, *Narrative of a Second Voyage*, 234.

data actually within its main text instead of in its appendices, it admitted that it had done so because 'many readers will never consult those'.[70] In Barrow's radical interpretation of Baconianism, where the prestige bequeathed by the pursuit of science was more important than the actual results of that science, science had become the ironic victim.

The Romantic understanding of Arctic exploration itself was in fact both a product of scientific exploration and a reaction against it. By generating encounters with previously unimaginable places and peoples, the age of scientific exploration had helped produce the kind of emotional responses that led to its own decline.[71] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for example, famously drew from a number of scientific Arctic narratives in order to construct his greatly influential imagined Antarctic in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner".[72] However, the Sublime environs of the high Arctic had in turn made the limitations of the scientific approach in understanding foreign worlds clear. When delicate scientific apparatus broke down under the strain of extreme cold, they provided a devastating literalization of William Blake's skewering of supposedly universal European laws and measurements and the way they entrapped the human imagination in 1794's *The Book of Urizen*.[73] Likewise, the 'self-annihilation' inherent to the linguistic confines of scientific rhetoric and its stress on "objective" observation proved virtually impossible to maintain in environments where emotional responses were a vital way of grounding oneself amongst the Sublime.[74] Romantic imagery, which gave precedence to subjective perception and centred the

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[70] Ibid., 488.
[71] Goetzmann, *New Lands, New Men*, 2–3; In this regard at least, Joseph Banks could be considered a 'founding father' of Romanticism, Fulford, Lee, and Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era*, 273.
[72] Loomis, 'The Arctic Sublime', 98.
[73] William Blake, *Blake's Poetry and Designs*, ed. John E. Grant and Mary Lynn Johnson, vol. ii (New York and London: Norton Critical Editions, 1979), 145.
[74] The phrase 'self-annihilation' comes from George Levine, who identified this as the crux of establishing scientific authority in exploration, George Levine, 'Two Ways Not to Be a Solipsist: Art and Science, Pater and Pearson', *Victorian Studies* 43, no. 1 (2000): 14–15; Scientific exploration and the mathematization of nature, wrote Paul Sawyer, 'severs rather than reaffirms the human connection with nature'. A human connection with nature was a vital way of grounding oneself amongst the terrors of a Sublime landscape. Paul L. Sawyer, 'Ruskin and Tyndall: The

individual, therefore made for an enticing 'discursive protest' against the dehumanizing process of recording scientific data.[75] William Pullen, for example, when encountering the 'unearthly beauty' of the aurora borealis in 1852, first attempted to measure the phenomenon scientifically with a declinometer, but, upon seeing this prove inadequate – 'the needle moved not in any way appreciable to the eye or senses' – turned instead to the Romantic imagery of the Sublime, writing: 'such a strange fire and glare of indescribable beauty, rolling about and ever changing in form and colour that my pen fails to describe it. All I can say further, is that in all my experiences I never saw the like before or since'.[76] In this one scene, Pullen had acted out a generational change in microcosm.

Furthermore, the science conducted during this period was not quite the same science as that conducted by Cook or Phipps. The focuses, purpose, and epistemology of science had evolved to reflect the Romantic ideals of a new age.[77] While continuing to rely on instrument-driven field work, Romantic scientists sought less to control nature than to situate themselves within it, celebrating its aesthetic grandeur and considering their emotional responses to it to be an intrinsic part of scientific observation. Language of the sensory, the spiritual, and the subjective duly entered the scientific lexicon.[78] Furthermore, the Linnean focus on distinguishing exact forms into taxonomies and mathematizing nature gave way to contemplations of the interconnectedness of all

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Poetry of Matter and the Poetry of Spirit', in *Victorian Science and Victorian Values: Literary Perspectives*, ed. James Paradis and Thomas Postlethwait (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1981), 222.

[75] Behrisch, 'Far as the Eye Can Reach', 73, 86; Poetic language, argued Paul Ricoeur, "creates or induces a new manner of finding oneself, of feeling oneself living in the world. A poem renovates our horizon, by projecting it from its center of orientation - our very being in the world", Paul Ricoeur, 'The Power of Speech: Science and Poetry', trans. Robert F. Scuka, *Philosophy Today* 29 (1985): 69.

[76] SPRI MS 274; BJ OS [Pullen], 14, ff. 8-9. Extract of Notes of Vice Admiral W. J. S. Pullen, 5 January 1852.

[77] For overviews of Romantic science, see: Stefano Poggi and Maurizio Bossi, eds., *Romanticism in Science: Science in Europe, 1790-1840* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1994); and Holmes, *The Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science.*; For a study of the ways nineteenth century scientists communicated their work to a Romantic society, and the ways in which this effected how science was seen and conducted, see: Fulford, Lee, and Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era*.

[78] Byrne, *Geographies of the Romantic North*, 4.

physical phenomena. Alexander von Humboldt, often given as the prototypical example of the Romantic explorer-scientist, wrote that he preferred not to present isolated, itemized forms, but rather to consider 'the picturesque character of vegetation over the entire surface of the globe, and the impression produced on the mind of the beholder by the grouping of contrasted forms in different zones of latitude or elevation'.[79] 'Insight into the world-organism', he wrote, 'creates an intellectual enjoyment, and an *inner* freedom, which amidst the blows of fate cannot be destroyed by any foreign power'.[80]

A good example of this Romantic turn in field science as seen in an Arctic context is James Clark Ross' presentation of his discovery of the location of the northern magnetic pole in 1831:

> I could even have pardoned any one among us who had been so romantic or absurd to expect the magnetic pole was an object as conspicuous and mysterious as the fabled mountain of Sinbad, that it was a mountain of iron, or a magnet as large as Mount Blanc. But nature had erected there no monument to denote the spot which she had chosen as the entre of one of her great and dark powers; and where we could do little ourselves towards this end, it was our business to submit and be content in noting by mathematical numbers and signs, as with things of far more importance in the terrestrial system, what we could but ill distinguish in any other manner.[81]

Ross and his companions turned to observation-based mathematical readings just as their predecessors had, but they pictured the pole within a larger "terrestrial system", a frame of reference not seen in, for example, Samuel Hearne's exhaustive listing of Arctic fauna.[82] Ross also depicted the act of his scientific work in Romantic terms. His emotional response to magnetism,

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[79] Alexander von Humboldt, *Aspects of Nature, in Different Lands and Different Climates with Scientific Elucidations*, trans. Elizabeth Juliana Sabine, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1849), 205; 'Humboldt's work as a whole', contends Felix Driver, 'can be seen as constituting an aesthetic project, an effort to define a scientific sensibility for a new age, synthesising subjective experience and universal law', Driver, 'Distance and Disturbance', 76.

[80] Alexander von Humboldt, *Essai Sur La Géographie Des Plantes: Accompagné d'un Tableau Physique Des Régions Équinoxiales, Fondé Sur Des Mesures Exécutées, Depuis Le Dixième Degré de Latitude Boréale Jusqu'au Dixième Degré de Latitude Australe, Pendant Les Années 1799, 1800, 1801, 1802 et 1803* (Paris: Chez Levrault, Schoell et compagnie, Libraires, 1805), 156; Translation from: Michael Dettelbach, 'Global Physics and Aesthetic Empire: Humboldt's Physical Portrait of the Tropics', in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature*, ed. David Philip Miller and Peter Hanns Reill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 271.

[81] Ross and Ross, *Narrative of a Second Voyage*, 555–56.

[82] Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort*, Chapter 10.

specifically his awe at a "great and dark power", was foregrounded in the narrative rather than the results of his observations. In describing for the reader his awe of magnetic force, Ross called forth the imagery of mountains, perhaps *the* archetypal image of the Sublime, as articulated by Byron:

> Above me are the Alps,
> The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
> Have pinnacle in clouds their snowy scalps,
> And throned Eternity in icy halls
> The avalanche – the thunderbolt of snow!
> All that expands the spirit, yet appals
> Gather around these summits.[83]

Specifically, Ross referred to Mont Blanc, the subject of Percy Bysshe Shelley's most famous contemplation of the terrifying Sublime power of nature, and to the explicitly fantastical mountains of Sinbad the Sailor.[84] The most obvious change, however, is that Ross and his team's observations were not actually given in the text of the narrative but jettisoned into separate works – papers in the Royal Society's *Transactions* and a separately published appendix.[85] Ross even apologised for the presence of what scant descriptions of his findings he did actually provide in the text.[86] This episode makes clear that what interested the reading public was no longer the detailed results of Arctic science but rather the thrill that it was being done in such Romantic environs and on such Romantic terms.

Ross' uncle and commanding officer, John Ross, lived a career that makes for an excellent demonstration of the reduced cultural currency science wielded in the Arctic when compared to

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[83] Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (London: John Murray, 1812), III, LXIII; For more discussion of the centrality of mountains to the aesthetic of the Sublime, see: Loomis, 'The Arctic Sublime'.
[84] Percy Brysshe Shelley, 'Mont Blanc', first published in Shelley and Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, 175–83.
[85] 'The details for the purposes of science have been since communicated to the Royal Society; as a paper containing all that philosophers require on the subject has now also been printed in their Transactions. I need not therefore repeat them here', Ross and Ross, *Narrative of a Second Voyage*, 556; John Ross and James Clark Ross, *Appendix to the Narrative of a Second Voyage in Search of a North-West Passage: And a Residence in the Arctic Regions During the Years 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1833* (London: A.W. Webster, 1835).
[86] 'This subject is much too interesting, even to general readers, to permit the omission of a few other remarks relating to the scientific part of this question, desirous as I have been of passing over or curtailing these', Ross and Ross, *Narrative of a Second Voyage*, 557.

Romantic ideals. On his 1818 expedition, Ross made a plethora of scientific achievements. He successfully confirmed the existence of Baffin Bay, made valuable observations on currents, tides, ice conditions, and magnetism, collected natural specimens, documented Inuit customs, made an early estimation of the ellipticity of earth, and even invented a new scientific instrument for gathering specimens from the ocean floor.[87] In Glyn Williams' words, his ships had acted in effect as 'floating laboratories'.[88] Crucially, however, Ross elected to abandon his search for the Passage after glimpsing an illusory mountain range blocking Lancaster Sound through a brief break in the fog.[89] Instead of Romantically persevering through insurmountable odds, Ross' journal entries reveal him to have been possessed by a lingering pessimism unique amongst his crew, and his actions showed him far too eager to concede defeat.[90] Barrow reacted furiously in the *Quarterly Review*. He claimed that Ross was 'impenetrably dull', had learned no more of the Arctic 'than he might have known by staying at home', and roundly mocked many of his scientific discoveries.[91] Crucially, Barrow accused Ross of cowardice, writing that 'A voyage of discovery implies danger,

[87] Trevor H. Levere, 'Science and the Canadian Arctic, 1818-76, from Sir John Ross to Sir George Strong Nares', *Arctic* 41, no. 2 (June 1988): 129.
[88] Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth*, 173.
[89] Ross' published account of his decision to leave - in a book so plainly designed as damage control as to deceptively suggest in its title that Baffin Bay, not the Passage, was his intended goal - can only offer the limp excuse that two other men on board (both in junior roles and therefore unlikely to contradict their captain) had been witnesses and collaborators in his opinion that the waterway was a closed bay, which they had formed during fifteen fog-free minutes, a remarkably short amount of time. John Ross, *A Voyage of Discovery Made Under the Orders of the Admiralty, in His Majesty's Ships Isabella and Alexander, for the Purpose of Exploring Baffin's Bay, and Enquiring into the Probability of a North-West Passage* (London: John Murray, 1819), 174–75.
[90] William Hooper, purser of the Alexander, could not hide the mood of the officers in his journal, writing that 'to describe our mortification and disappointment would be impossible at thus having our increasing hopes annihilated in a moment, without the shadow of a reason appearing'. Parry's (then the captain of Ross' junior ship) journal had expressed genuine optimism regarding Lancaster Sound. Ross' private journal, however, painted a much more pessimistic picture: 'during the night the mountains on each side being free from clouds had a beautiful appearance, but those in the bottom of the bay continued covered with fog' - he had seemingly prematurely decided that he was in a bay, regardless of the fog. M. J. Ross, *Polar Pioneers: John Ross and James Clark Ross* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 46, 48, 68.
[91] Barrow derided Ross' depiction of icebergs, his name 'Arctic highlanders' for the Inuit he encountered, his claim that these people were fascinated by mirrors, his observations regarding red snow, discrepancies between Ross' charts and his text, his cartography, and accused him of neglecting his magnetic observations. John Barrow, 'Ross's Voyage of Discovery', *Quarterly Review* 21, no. 41 (January 1819): 214, 251; 215–16, 222–23, 225, 230–32, 243–44, 257.

but a mere voyage like his round the shore of Baffin's Bay, in the three summer months, may be considered a voyage of pleasure'.[92] The conclusion was clear: in Romantic Britain, to have explored the Arctic without facing danger was to have not explored at all.[93]

Barrow's review, and others like it, cast a long shadow over Ross.[94] To the other explorers, he became 'the blundering Ross', a laughing-stock to be avoided for the sake of their careers.[95] The ridicule that Ross faced is perhaps best demonstrated by George Cruickshank's caricature "Landing the Treasures, or Results of the Polar Expedition!!!" [*FIGURE 5*]. Cruickshank depicted a pompous Ross being welcomed into London by a figure who derides his scientific specimens by muttering 'I think as how we have Bears, Gulls, Savages, Chump wood, Stones & Puppies enough without going to the North Pole for them'. Ross' crew were shown carrying specimens of comedic unimportance, such as a tree stump, a rock and 'worms found in the intestines of a seal by a volunteer'. Edward Sabine, the ship's naturalist is seen proudly holding aloft a common gull tagged with a label reading '-? Sabini', evidently thirsting to make a reputation for himself despite his seemingly insignificant discoveries. Ross' ethnographic work, once a backbone of Arctic science's respectability, also came in for derision. Ross had reported that the Inuit exchanged greetings by rubbing noses, so he and his crew were depicted having worn their noses off from fraternising with the Inuit too much. This was certainly no celebration of Arctic science.

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[92] Ibid., 251–52. By contrast, Barrow's article made excuses for David Buchan, whose simultaneous expedition to the Russian Arctic had ended in a near-shipwrecked disaster, but never avoided taking "brave" risks, 213.

[93] As phrased by the *Nautical Magazine*, 'Reputation and risk are almost inseparable in the life of a naval officer; at least the former is rarely acquired without a large portion of the latter', 'Sir John Ross's Expedition', *The Nautical Magazine* 19 (1850): 252.

[94] Barrow's tone was mirrored in the *Monthly Review*. Other publications were less vicious but found it difficult to praise Ross. For details, see: Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*; A century later, Farley Mowat wrote that 'it has been habitual to speak of Ross – when he is mentioned at all – in a derogatory manner, as an incompetent sort of fellow who can have no claim upon our admiration', Mowat, *Ordeal by Ice*.

[95] Parry, quoted in, Ross, *Polar Pioneers*, 62.

FIGURE 5: "Landing the Treasures, or Results of the Polar Expedition!!!".[96]

Ross never commanded a naval vessel again. In 1828, however, he finally secured private funding to make a second attempt on the Passage. Ross went on to endure a harrowing four years in the Arctic, getting so stuck in ice in the Gulf of Boothia that his ship moved only seven miles between September 1829 and May 1832.[97] It was during this time that James Clark Ross discovered the northern magnetic pole while John remained at the ship, but there were precious few other scientific achievements, especially ones that Ross himself could claim to have achieved. His cartography in particular was especially dubious.[98] Stranded in the ice, Ross expressed his emotions in Romantic poetry.[99] Ross was eventually forced to abandon ship and then led his men

[96] George Cruickshank, *Landing the Treasures, or Results of the Polar Expedition!!!*, 1819, Print, 1819, The British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1859-0316-142.
[97] For an engaging overview of this period, see Edinger, *Fury Beach*.
[98] James Clark Ross had charted three islands in James Ross Strait in 1830, naming them the Beaufort Islands. Ross, who never saw the islands, rendered these on his map as the Clarence Islands after William Duke of Clarence (by then King William IV), and added six fictional islands so that he could name each one individually after the other members of the royal family. Ross and Ross, *Narrative of a Second Voyage*, 741.
[99] Erika Behrisch has discussed how Ross, in his verse, gave absolute precedence to the Romantic matter of experiencing the landscape, rejected any kind of separation between man and surroundings, and, in contrast to Cook and Hearne's self-identification with scientific equipment and the Linnean drive for scientific observation and classification, presented himself as more comfortable interfacing with the landscape only with his eye and its acknowledged limits of reach. Behrisch, 'Far as the Eye Can Reach', 80.

on a truly daring three-month northwards trek in hope of being rescued by a passing whaler.[100] When Ross did eventually return alive to Britain, having only lost three men, he arrived as a Romantic hero, the gallant enactor of a nigh-miracle. He received 4,000 letters from the public, the freedom of five cities, a knighthood, honours from six European nations, two public panoramas celebrating his feat, and four years' worth of double pay from the Admiralty even though his expedition had been a private endeavour.[101] Parliament even recommended that Ross be awarded £5,000 for his 'great services'.[102] Despite its serious defects, the press at large warmly received Ross' self-published narrative, replete with its Romantic thrills.[103] 'This splendid quarto volume', concluded the Sheffield Mercury, 'should be immediately placed in every respectable library'.[104] The contrast in receptions received by Ross in 1819 and 1833 speaks volumes of science's diminished role in nineteenth-century cultural expectations regarding the Northwest Passage. Discoveries that would have been treasured in earlier decades were not enough to prevent his ostracization for flouting Romantic values, just as a dearth of scientific discoveries was totally irrelevant when declaring his later brush with death to be a triumph of exploration.

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[100] In a sweet twist of fate, the whaler that rescued them was a repurposed *Isabella*, Ross' ship from 1818.

[101] Ross, *Polar Pioneers*, 165; The Times spoke in rhapsodies of the panaroma at Vauxhall Gardens: 'It is almost impossible by verbal description to convey an accurate idea of the effect of this exhibition, which is in every respect the most interesting both in general arrangement and detailed execution that has been submitted to the visitors of these gardens', 'Vauxhall Gardens', *The Times*, 31 May 1834, 3.

[102] 'House of Commons', *The Times*, 18 March 1834, 1. Ross' award would be worth ~£500,000 in today's money, "Inflation Calculator", Bank of England, 21 November 2023, https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator.

[103] Regarding these defects, see Ross, *Polar Pioneers*, 182–85; Barrow was an exception. He continued his (by now deeply personal) vendetta against Ross by lambasting Ross' prose as 'uninteresting' 'trash', John Barrow, 'Captain Ross's Second Voyage', *Quarterly Review* 54, no. 108 (1835): 23, 3; Ross had deliberately provoked Barrow's ego in his narrative by, amongst other things, claiming that the return of the Passage to the public consciousness owed itself entirely to the whaler William Scoresby, Ross and Ross, *Narrative of a Second Voyage*, x.

[104] The *Times* likewise wrote: 'Never did we read a History of almost unexampled disappointment, labour, suffering and peril, written in a tone so free from querulousness. Never perhaps did a body of even British seamen exhibit an example of so much steadiness, sobriety, patience, and alacrity to undergo fatigue and endure privation, and submission to judicious restraint, as the companions of Sir John Ross'. For these and other such reviews, see: Earnest Dodge, *The Polar Rosses: John and James Clark Ross and Their Explorations* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 186.

GEORGE SIMPSON AND THE HBC AS EXPLORATION'S HOST

The most famous fur trader of this era was George Simpson, the Governor-in-Chief of Rupert's Land from 1821 to 1860.[105] Simpson came to power as the HBC merged with the North West Company, a process that ensured its monopoly over the British fur trade, drove down the price of the pemmican that facilitated travel and expansion into the far north, and ultimately initiated a period of financial prosperity for the company.[106] However, the Company faced challenges from expanding Russian interests on the Northwest Coast and from the growing liberal and humanitarian movements in Britain, which questioned both its monopolistic nature and its treatment of indigenous peoples.[107] The cultivation of respect and goodwill from officials, politicians, and other influential public figures, therefore, remained as important as ever. Simpson himself also thirsted after recognition for his own personal brand, revelling in whatever celebrity he could attain as a powerful and important figure in British society.[108] Much has been written about how much power Simpson wielded – for just three examples, John West Chalmers described him as 'the undisputed ruler of one half of a continent', Peter C. Newman referred to 'an uncrowned king', and E. E. Rich spoke of an 'absolute governor' who reduced the London Committee to a mere rubber-stamping body – whether or not these images are accurate is less important than the fact that Simpson himself

[105] It should be noted that this role was not synonymous with the role of Governor of the Hudson Bay Company. This role was filled for most of Simpson's tenure by John Henry Pelly.
[106] Regarding pemmican's role in imperial expansion, see Colpitts, *Pemmican Empire*.
[107] Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 129; For an effective overview of the HBC's clashes with Russia during this period, see: Andrei Val'terovich Grinev, 'Anglo-Russian Rivalry in the American Arctic, Eighteenth to Mid-Nineteenth Centuries', *Northern Review (Whitehorse)*, no. 49 (2019): 1–190; Ultimately, as Simpson himself knew, London was unlikely to not intervene if the situation deteriorated, but a higher profile for the HBC would certainly help in any negotiations. See: E. E. Rich, ed., *Minutes of Council, Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821-31* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1940), 412–13.
[108] Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 15; Raffan, *Emperor of the North*. Simpson's thirst for social recognition emerges as the central thesis in Raffan's biography, although perhaps he belabours the importance of Simpson's bastard birth in making this argument.

sought to be seen this way.[109] Simpson recognized that supporting Romantic exploration was an excellent way of generating prestige both for the Company and himself. The naval expeditions had brought Barrow renown and respect – upon Parry's triumphant first return, the *British Critic*, as an example, had written that his 'merit, we really think, is upon the whole, greater, if possible, even than that of the individual by whom the voyage has been accomplished' – might HBC expeditions not do the same for Simpson?[110] With both the means and the emotional need to pursue the Northwest Passage, Simpson took on an important role in its exploration.

Simpson was also himself a Romantic traveler, spending much of his time in North America traversing the wilderness between forts, sometimes to the chagrin of the Committee, who noted that 'you run more risks and exert yourself more than is absolutely necessary for the service'.[111] Most notably, Simpson set out to circumnavigate the globe in 1841, which he hoped would produce an exploratory narrative capable of securing him the widespread fame enjoyed by the era's Romantic explorer-author-heroes.[112] Indeed, in his 1857 portrait [*FIGURE 6*], Simpson elected to be depicted in front of a bookshelf housing a copy of the resultant *Narrative of a Journey Round the World*, which rested against the narratives of Northwest Passage expeditions he had commissioned, with the other shelves holding the narratives of Hearne, Mackenzie, and John Richardson, and Barrow's histories of Passage exploration – a telling insight into both the kind of

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[109] John West Chalmers, *Fur Trade Governor: George Simpson, 1820-1860* (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Art, 1960), 4; Peter C. Newman, *Caesars of the Wilderness* (Markham: Viking, 1987), xx; E. E. Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, vol. 3 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1960), 463, 467; Indeed, much has been overwritten in this regard, not least in passages like 'we can no more confine Simpson's greatness to words than we can explain the final genius of Shakespeare or Beethoven', courtesy of Lahey, *Blaze of Glory*, 234.

[110] 'Captain Parry's Voyage', 603 Furthermore, public tributes for the HBC's support of science frequently mentioned the governor by name, and the tribute that explorers themselves could give might secure Simpson's name on American geography forever. John Rae, for example, left behind the name Simpson's Peninsula in 1848. HBCA E.15/5, f. 19. John Rae to George Simpson, [undated, September] 1848.

[111] Andrew Colvile to George Simpson, December 1827, quoted in Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 3:457–58.

[112] Peter C. Newman has suggested that Simpson was the inspiration for Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, suggesting a degree of success for Simpson in this regard, Newman, *Caesars of the Wilderness*, 230.

self-image Simpson wanted to project, and how powerful the Passage was in generating the emotions of prestige at this time.

FIGURE 6: "Sir George Simpson".[113]

Ian MacLaren has demonstrated the ways in which Simpson's *Narrative* also shows him comprehending landscape through the 'perceptual habits' of the Sublime and the Picturesque.[114] Indeed, in his letters with editor Adam Thorn, Simpson and Thorn discussed their attempts 'to

[113] Stephen Pearce and James Scott, *Sir George Simpson*, 1857, Mezzotint, 1857, National Portrait Gallery, London, https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw124206/.
[114] MacLaren, 'Touring at High Speed', 78. In fact, MacLaren argues, Simpson's text is so structurally reliant on aesthetic responses that when he travels through mundane grasslands the reader receives so little information as to be unsure what route is being taken, 83.

rationalize every particular fact by referring it to some general principle'.[115] North of Vancouver Island, for example, the narrative described 'some of the wildest scenery in nature', with rivers best described as 'torrents, which, being fed in and in winter by the summer by the melting of the snows, untiring deluges of this dismal climate, plunge headlong in deep gulleys between the contiguous bases of precipitous heights of every form and magnitude'.[116] While Simpson evidently enjoyed the emotions of, and the projection of a self-image inherent to, traversing Sublime landscapes, his text shows far more interest in the Picturesque.[117] When describing Grand Calumet Portage, for example, Simpson provided an almost textbook example of Picturesque aesthetics:

> Our encampment would have formed a rich and varied subject for a painter's brush. The tents were pitched in a small clump of pine, while round a blazing fire the passengers were collected amid a medley of boxes, barrels, pots, cloaks, &c., and to the left, on a rock above the foaming rapids, were lying the canoes; the men flitting athwart their own separate fire as actively as if they had enjoyed a holiday, and anxiously watching a huge cauldron that was suspended over the flames by three poles. The foreground consisted of two three magnificent trees on a slight eminence, and the background was formed by dense woods and a gleaming lake.[118]

These picturesque scenes were undeniably Romantic, but fundamentally they were landscapes that could be controlled and therefore ones from which his business could be operated. Indeed, his discussion of the Sublime landscape north of Vancouver Island ultimately concluded with the evaluation that 'a level site for a fort can hardly be found'.[119] Simpson's *Narrative*, therefore, in both its aesthetic preferences and in its origin as a vehicle through which to generate prestige, demonstrates in action how the emotions of Romanticism could be manipulated as business.

The first Northwest Passage expedition that Simpson would interact with, slightly before his ascendent to power, was John Franklin's ill-fated journey of 1819-22. Franklin and his small

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[115] HBCA D.5/15, ff. 590v. Adam Thorn to George Simpson, 23 December 1845.
[116] George Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842* (London: Henry Colburn, 1847), I, 208.
[117] 'Like Vancouver, Simpson absolutely loses interest in the region once picturesque properties disappear', MacLaren, 'Touring at High Speed', 85.
[118] Simpson, *Narrative of a Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842*, I, 17–18.
[119] Ibid., I, 208.

company of Britons – John Richardson, George Back, John Hepburn, and Robert Hood – intended to trek overland from York Factory to the mouth of the Coppermine River, where Hearne had been in 1771, then map the coastline eastwards for the benefit of Barrow's maritime Northwest Passage expeditions – or, as Franklin put it to his guide Akaitcho, for the glory of 'the greatest chief in the world'.[120] 'The success of the Expedition', recognized Franklin, would 'mainly depend on the mutual aid of both Companies'.[121] Governor William Williams promised Franklin that 'every means that can be suggested, or that I am empowered to order, shall ever be devoted with the most zealous and ardent cooperation, not only attaching to myself, but every officer under my Command belonging to the Honourable Hudsons Bay Company', beginning with the shipment of Franklin's men, instruments, and provisions to York Factory in the HBC's supply ship.[122] Simon McGillivray made the same promises on behalf of the North West Company.[123]

The fulfilment of these promises, however, would be severely hampered by the ongoing Pemmican War, in which relations between the HBC and NWC had grown so hostile as to constitute nigh-warfare. In the words of another famous fur trader, Colin Robertson, this was 'a most unfortunate juncture for an undertaking of so much hazard'.[124] Despite McGillivray's

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[120] Franklin also told Akaitcho that a Passage, 'if found, would enable large vessels to transport great quantities of goods'. It seems Akaitcho recognized that the prestige issue was the more paramount motivation of Franklin's party, as he responded by asking 'why a passage had not been discovered long ago' if it was so important to trade. John Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea: In the Years 1819-20-21-22.* (London: John Murray, 1824), 202–3.

[121] John Franklin to Henry Goulborn, 6 September 1819, John Franklin, *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The First Arctic Land Expedition, 1819-1822*, ed. Richard Clarke Davis (Toronto: Champlain Society, 2013), 319.

[122] William Williams to John Franklin, 4 September 1819, ibid., 309–10. Williams duly sent a letter to the commanders of all HBC posts commanding that Franklin be supplied with 'every possible facility to pursue their Journey', William Williams to Commanders of Posts, 8 September 1819.

[123] Simon McGillivray to the NWC Agents, 21 May 1819, ibid., 289. Alexander Mackenzie, now of the NWC, also offered Franklin his veteran advice, Alexander Mackenzie to John Franklin, 21 May 1819, Ibid., 289.

[124] Robertson was specifically referring to Franklin's ability to recruit men, considering that 'men of known fidelity accustomed to the manners and habits of the natives are so necessary in the present contest'. Colin Robertson to George Moffatt, June 5, 1820, Colin Robertson, *Colin Robertson's Correspondence Book, September 1817 to September 1822*, ed. E. E. Rich (London: Champlain Society, 1939), 116–17.

assurance to his agents that 'Franklin's object is one of a purely Public and Scientific nature, and has no connection whatever with any disputes or territorial claims in discussion betwixt us and the Hudson's Bay Co' and Franklin's promises to 'most scrupulously refrain from entering into this or any other Cause of dispute', the explorers found themselves caught up in the war's maelstrom of bitter vendettas and severe supply issues.[125] Provisions, arms, and men promised to the expedition repeatedly failed to materialize in their promised quantities or at all, payments promised by Franklin to indigenous hunters were not honoured by fur traders, and rumours that the party were agents of the NWC proliferated through indigenous bands trading with the HBC, injuring their ability to recruit hunters and interpreters.[126] In desperation, Franklin wrote to Fort Chipewyan imploring its factor and the NWC to cease limiting their aid to narrow bounds. 'What', he asked, 'would be the Sentiments of the World, your Countrymen in particular on learning that these evil results were produced by an unexpected alteration in the Conduct of men who had not only repeatedly promised their best assistance?'.[127] Just as the public reputations of fur companies could be bolstered by associating themselves with the emotions of the Romantic hero-adventurer as he overcame the dangers of Sublime landscape, so too could they be severely damaged by preventing him from doing so. Both the prize and the threat for the fur trade of Franklin's expedition were emotional in character.

Simpson, then the head of the Athabasca District, stationed at Fort Wedderburn, also assured Franklin that he would render the expedition any assistance in his power.[128] However, when George Back, staying with the NWC at the nearby Fort Chipewyan, unexpectedly

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[125] Simon McGillivray to NWC Agents, 21 May 1819, Franklin, *Franklin's Journals and Correspondence (First Expedition)*, 292. Memorandum from John Franklin to His Officers, 3 September 1819, Ibid, 304.
[126] John Franklin to Edward Smith, 24 November 1820, ibid., 388–89, John Franklin to the Partners of the NW Company, Athabasca, May 1821, ibid, 409.
[127] John Franklin to George Keith, 27 November 1820, ibid., 390.
[128] George Simpson to John Franklin, 29 September 1820, ibid., 379.

approached Simpson for aid, he was refused due to a chronic lack of supplies.[129] As Back grew desperate, he made the same implied threat as Franklin, writing 'I trust you will comply with my desire were it only for the reputation of the Honble. H.B. Coy'.[130] This, of course, was particularly inflammatory to Simpson, who vociferously defended said honour, with special attention paid to how it would be depicted in the published narratives that would emerge from the expedition:

> Under all the circumstances of the case, I do not see that the' reputation of the Honble. Hudson's Bay Coy stands in any danger of being tarnished, nor can the imputation lay against them of not evincing the most lively interest in the objects of the Expedition, and without desiring to cast any invidious reflections on the N.W. Coy. it must be admitted that we have done more towards it's success than they have notwithstanding all their specious professions, nay more than was either expected or required by Lieut. Franklin; if those Gentn. aspired to be put on an equallity with the Honble. H.B. Coy. in their good offices towards the prosperity of the Expedition they should evince it by administering with equal liberality to it's necessities. Your Journal will no doubt however give a candid and ingenuous statement of their conduct.[131]

Simpson knew that it was in these books that glorious reputations could be created through portrayals of Romantic gallantry and prestigious geographic success, as with Parry, or destroyed through depictions of cowardice and self-preservation, as with Ross. Simpson and Back's relationship deteriorated as Back repeatedly petitioned for goods.[132] That these requests were perceived as brazen impertinence by those themselves going hungry in the HBC fort can be seen in a parodical satire of Franklin's narrative that later circulated between Company posts, in which Back's demands were depicted as decadence: 'during our residence at Fort Wampoom. My Brother Officers… expressed a strong desire to add a Giblet Pie to the comforts of our table'.[133] Simpson

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[129] George Simpson to George Back, 4 January 1821, Simpson, *Athabasca Journal*, 208.
[130] George Back to George Simpson, 15 January 1821, ibid., 225.
[131] George Simpson to George Back, 16 January 1821, ibid., 226.
[132] Peter Steele, *The Man Who Mapped the Arctic: The Intrepid Life of George Back, Franklin's Lieutenant* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2003), 112–13.
[133] Margaret Arnett MacLeod and Richard Glover, 'Franklin's First Expedition as Seen by the Fur Traders', *Polar Record* 15, no. 98 (1971): 675. Similarly, Willard Ferdinand Wentzel of the NWC, who had accompanied Franklin's party in 1820 and 1821, told his governor that the explorers had 'left in the country impressions not altogether very creditable to themselves amongst both the trading class of people and the native inhabitants', Willard Ferdinand Wentzel to Roderick Mackenzie, 10 April 1823, "Fifteen letters from Wentzel at Mackenzie River to Roderick Mackenzie, 1807-1824", In Pursuit of Adventure: The Fur Trade in Canada and the North West Company, https://digital.library.mcgill.ca/nwc/data/Mftp/0012/5_tei2web/Pg001.html [accessed 29 January 2024].

himself ruefully noted in his journal that Franklin 'must have three meals p diem [and] Tea is indispensible'.[134] Simpson was personally angered to discover that Back had already taken so many supplies – albeit still inadequate for the expedition's needs – from Robert McVicar at Fort Resolution as to entirely clear out his stores of certain important goods.[135] Simpson's letter of rebuke to McVicar revealed his souring view of Back:

> I therefore regret exceedingly that you have given Mr. Back such a liberal supply as I fear it will expose you to very serious difficulties; that Gentleman seems to think that every thing must give way to his demands, he sent me a most extraordinary requisition with which I could not comply, it must however be perfectly understood that altho' the Company are anxious to meet the views of those Gentlemen, their necessities are a very secondary consideration to our own difficulties.[136]

Simpson was also particularly piqued by Back's choices to lodge with the NWC – he even accused Back's servant of being an NWC spy – and to mock the business practices of the HBC with those he encountered, thereby 'injur[ing] us very much in the Eyes of the Indian'.[137] Many have argued from this that Simpson resented the explorers and was happy to see them struggle, but under such conditions it is easy to understand how difficult it was for Simpson to give Back what he wanted and how easy it would be for animosities to thusly emerge, and it is important to note that Simpson was repeatedly remorseful of his inability to help more in his correspondence.[138] Indeed, when the

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[134] 8 February 1821, Simpson, *Athabasca Journal*, 261.

[135] George Simpson to John Franklin, 6 February 1821, ibid., 259; Back recorded in his journal that McVicar had given 'in many articles... the whole of what he had', George Back, *Arctic Artist: The Journal and Paintings of George Back, Midshipman with Franklin, 1819-1822*, ed. C. Stuart Houston (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 103–4.

[136] George Simpson to Robert McVicar, 26 January 1821, Simpson, *Athabasca Journal*, 243.

[137] 2 April 1821, ibid., 313–14; 8 February 1821, ibid., 261.

[138] Such an argument is made for example in Neatby, *In Quest of the North West Passage*, 63; Chalmers, *Fur Trade Governor*, 30; Fleming, *Barrow's Boys*, 153; Lahey, *Blaze of Glory*, 62; Most appear to take their interpretation from a prediction Simpson made that 'there is little probability, of the objects of the expedition being accomplished, not so much on account of any serious difficulties to be apprehended, but from a want of unanimity amongst themselves; indeed it appears to me that the mission was projected and entered into without mature consideration and the necessary previous arrangements totally neglected'. However, nowhere in this passage does Simpson state that this would be a good thing, nor was it a particularly harsh judgement; the expedition did turn out disastrously, having failed to make the necessary pre-arrangements, just as he, or any sensible observer might have, predicted. 8 February 1821, Simpson, *Athabasca Journal*, 261; Examples of Simpson's remorse over the situation include: George Simpson to George Back, 5 January 1821, Steele, *The Man Who Mapped the Arctic*, 108; George Simpson to John Franklin, 6 February 1821, Franklin, *Franklin's Journals and Correspondence (First Expedition)*, 397.

explorers returned to York Factory 1822, by which time the HBC and NWC had ended their conflict through a forced merger, Franklin noted that they were 'received with every mark of attention and kindness by Mr. Simpson'.[139] This, combined with Simpson's open and generous engagement as governor with similar overland expeditions launched in 1825 and 1833, demonstrates that he recognized how valuable cooperating with Northwest Passage explorers could be and that he had only temporarily been held back by extraordinary circumstances.

Upon Franklin's return to England in 1822, Barrow, in Franklin's words, was 'quite hot for an early publication of our journals', which he considered to be 'the most painfully interesting of any he had ever read'.[140] Indeed, it was in many regards the perfect text for Barrow's conception of the Romantic Arctic. Franklin had certainly understood the Arctic he encountered in Romantic terms, as evidenced by his letters to the Colonial Office during the expedition. Tasked with reporting the expedition's progress, Franklin repeatedly chose to devote lengthy sections of his letters to the aesthetics of the landscape, such as in this passage, from May 1820:

> The same cast of Scenery prevails beyond Isle a la Crosse, an unvarying line of level country including Swamps Lakes & Rivers. Indeed the proportion of Water is so much greater than of Land, that I conceive the Country would appear to be nearly inundated from any great eminence. The Land however produces a Sufficiency of Trees to enliven the scene, and fortunate it is, that the Firs & Pines preserve their Colours during Winter, and throw an air of Cheerfulness over what would otherwise seem a cold and Comfortless wild.[141]

The trees, as Franklin pictured them, were not useful in their capacity as sources of shelter, firewood, or potential food, but rather in their ability to contribute to a Picturesque scene. Franklin even informed Goulburn that his party had selected the location of their winter encampment, Fort Enterprise, because of its 'pleasant & picturesque view', seeking a refuge from the heightened

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[139] Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea*, 399.
[140] John Franklin to John Richardson, 24 October 1822, Franklin, *Franklin's Journals and Correspondence (First Expedition)*, 428.
[141] John Franklin to Henry Goulburn, 24 December 1819, ibid., 330. His letter continues with reports of mountains, to much the same effect. See also John Franklin to Henry Goulburn, 18 October 1820, ibid, 379.

emotions generated by the Sublime landscapes of his journey, largely irrespective of the (un)suitability of the location in practical terms.[142] The published narrative, *Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea*, reflected the importance of emotional geography to the expedition, especially in the portions drawn from the journals of George Back and in the engravings based on field drawings by Back and Robert Hood.[143] That Franklin had been reluctant to publish because he feared he could not 'equal the stile and language of most of the Modern travellers' also demonstrates that he recognized what society understood to be the principal duties and characteristics of the contemporary explorer.[144] Furthermore, the explorers' perseverance through unimaginable hardships – the expedition had endured starvation and extreme cold, losing 11 from its party of 19, but courageously, nigh-miraculously, emerged alive – was archetypal Romantic imagery.[145] Just as Byron and Shelley had faced physical exertion in the Alps to emerge breathless onto summits and into their contemplations of the Sublime, so had Franklin emerged from starvation and the endless tundra to tell a tale of equal parts horror and beauty. The poets had worked their boots,

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[142] John Franklin to Henry Goulburn, 8 May 1820, ibid., 359–60; For more on Franklin's aesthetically driven choice for the location of Fort Enterprise, see MacLaren, 'The Aesthetic Map of the North, 1845-1859', 90–91.

[143] Back effortlessly combined the picturesque and sublime in passages such as the following: 'The scenery was truly romantic. Every winding displayed some picturesque view of craggy rock, wood, lake or river; at other times the roaring of the rapid breaking over huge fragments of fallen rocks and rushing between confused heaps of trees laying in all directions. And the solitary Fishing Eagle high perched on some tall pine gave an indescribable wildness to the scene. The rocks of which the country seemed formed were high and broken, primitive', Back, *Arctic Artist*, 76; For a thorough discussion of Back's aesthetic contributions to the Coppermine Expedition, see I. S. MacLaren, 'Commentary: The Aesthetics of Back's Writing and Painting from the First Overland Expedition', in *Arctic Artist: The Journal and Paintings of George Back, Midshipman with Franklin, 1819-1822*, by George Back, ed. C. Stuart Houston (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 275–310; For a discussion of Franklin's own Romantic prose, and the ways he 'elaborated' this 'to tally with the taste of his cultivated readership' in both of his narratives, see Lanone, 'Arctic Romance under a Cloud'; and MacLaren, 'The Aesthetic Mapping of Nature in the Second Franklin Expedition'.

[144] John Franklin to Sarah Sellwood, 10 October 1822, Richard C. Davis, '"…which an Affectionate Heart Would Say": John Franklin's Personal Correspondence, 1819–1824', *Polar Record* 33, no. 186 (1997): 203. Franklin also had a 'strong dislike... to appear in a conspicuous station before the public', ibid. In 1818, when he had featured in a public panorama of David Buchan's expedition he had told his sister, 'I shall not venture to approach very near... for fear the passers-by should say, "There goes the fellow in the panorama"'; John Franklin, quoted in, G. F. Lamb, *Franklin: Happy Voyager: Being the Life and Death of Sir John Franklin* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1956), 56.

[145] Ted Binnema has described Franklin on the Coppermine as 'the most compelling example of the arctic variant of the Romantic scientific traveller as hero', Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 138.

Franklin had gone one further and eaten them.[146] The reading public devoured the book, which became both a best-seller and a critical darling.[147] The *Gentleman's Magazine*, for one example, opened its review by stating that 'the noble and enterprising spirit which the British Government has manifested in the promotion of science and useful discoveries, will reflect, to the latest posterity, immortal honour on our native land'.[148] It had been, to quote Barrow, a 'beautiful example' of 'the enterprize, zeal, and energy of British seamen… that cool and intrepid conduct, which never forsakes them on occasions the most trying'; the deeds and prose of Romantic masculine explorer-adventurers at their most archetypal, measured at such a pitch as to make a nation proud, a direct line between Romantic aesthetics and a sense of national prestige.[149]

But did it reflect any public honour on the HBC? The narrative, which reached perhaps the biggest audience of any Northwest Passage expedition thus far, opened with effusive praise:

> From Joseph Berens, Esq, the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the gentlemen of the Committee, I received all kinds of assistance and information, communicated in the most friendly manner previous to my leaving England… I most cheerfully avail myself of this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to these Gentlemen for their persona; kindness to myself and the other officers, as well as for the benefit rendered by them to the Expedition; and the same sentiment is due to the Gentlemen of the North-West Company.[150]

Regarding Governor Williams personally, Franklin promised that 'I shall ever remember with gratitude' his kindness and attention.[151] Gracefully, little of the squabbling that Back and Simpson

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[146] 'The Man Who Ate His Boots' became a lasting reverential sobriquet for Franklin. It is still associated with him to this day, see for example the title of Brandt, *The Man Who Ate His Boots*.
[147] For details on the critical reception of the narrative, see Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*, 107–15. Regarding its sales, John Richardson remarked that it had shipped copies at an 'almost unprecedented' rate. Second hand copies resold for as many as 10 guineas each, 107.
[148] 'Review – Capt. Franklin's Narrative', *The Gentleman's Magazine* 93 (1823): 428. It also threw praise upon the 'the perseverance and dauntless courage of our countrymen', which 'must also excite the admiration of the civilized world'. 'Franklin's Journey to the Polar Sea', *The Monthly Review* 102 (1823): 1 This was, of course, a frequently echoed theme in reviews. The Monthly Review, for instance, wrote that Franklin's narrative, especially when 'viewed in combination with the series of national efforts to explore the arctic latitudes, and to ascertain the existence of a communication between two great oceans, cannot fail to awaken the most lively and patriotic sensations'.
[149] John Barrow, 'Franklin's Journey to the Polar Sea', *Quarterly Review* 28, no. 56 (1823): 373.
[150] Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea*, xii.
[151] Ibid., 96.

engaged in at Fort Wedderburn made it into the published text.[152] Simpson, it was concluded, 'had proffered every assistance in his power'.[153] That this depiction not necessarily the entire truth, but rather probably a white lie told by Franklin and Barrow to maintain the good graces of the HBC in anticipation for another overland expedition, was largely academic. This was exactly the kind of public tribute that the Company thirsted after, and it had achieved it by association with a Northwest Passage expedition defined by its dramatic emotions.

The outlook for the HBC in the nation's literary periodicals, however, was varied. Some, like the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *Eclectic Review*, in their reviews of the narrative, made only passing mention of the Company's involvement, or made no mention at all.[154] The individuals of the fur trade most prominent in the expedition, the voyageurs in Franklin's party, were often deployed as a counter-example to the Britons' spiritual and physical fortitude.[155] Worse, the *British Review and London Critical Journal* placed special attention on the hindrances faced by the expedition stemming from 'the serious and vexatious difficulties… thrown in [the expedition's] way by the jealousies of the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies, towards each other', and

[152] An extract from Back's hand was included, which stated that after he petitioned the NWC and HBC for supplies at Fort Chipewyan, 'The answer from the North-West gentlemen was satisfactory enough; but on the Hudson Bay side I was told "that any farther assistance this season entirely depends on the arrival of supplies, expected in a few weeks hence from a distant establishment". I remained at Fort Chipewyan five weeks, during which time some laden sedges did arrive, but I could not obtain any addition to the few articles I had procured at first', ibid., 253–54.
[153] Ibid., 227.
[154] 'Review – Capt. Franklin's Narrative', 428; 'Franklin's Journey to the Polar Sea', *The Eclectic Review* 19 (1823): 521–38; Likewise, reports of the expedition's return to England often failed to mention the HBC, such as 'North-West Expedition by Land', *The Gentleman's Magazine* 92 (1822): 364, which did however refer to 'liberal aid and reinforcement from the N. W. Company'.
[155] Such as in the *Eclectic Review*, according to which the voyageurs were 'a great annoyance…The high sense of duty, and the hope of reward and fame, which actuated the Commander and his officers, did not exist for their subordinate agents; and it must have required a continual exercise of firmness and temper, to over-rule their tendency to resist, and to keep their spirits from absolute despondency', 'Franklin's Journey to the Polar Sea', 1823, 531; Barrow deployed the voyageurs for a similar purpose but did concede that 'it is due to them to say that their general conduct throughout this perilous and fatiguing expedition was highly praiseworthy', Barrow, 'Franklin's Journey to the Polar Sea', 394–95, 384.

more damningly, 'towards the object for which the expedition was undertaken'.[156] However, there was some praise too. The *Monthly Review* made sure to mention the expedition's use of Governor Williams' invitations, advice, and resources, took the time to describe for its readers York Factory and its hospitality, and generously claimed that Franklin had entirely avoided the quarrels of the fur companies.[157] Most importantly, John Barrow's, the period's foremost taste-maker – the conflict of interest hidden beneath his veneer of anonymity – rapturous review of the narrative in the *Quarterly* made time to praise the HBC in his review. 'We are glad to observe', he wrote, 'that every possible assistance was afforded by the governor and servants of the Hudson's Bay Company'.[158] Considering how events had transpired in North America, and that in 1816 Barrow had regurgitated the old accusation that the HBC had 'thwarted by every means in their power' attempts to discover the Passage, this could be considered a genuine success.[159] Imagine therefore, reasoned Simpson, the benefits that could be attained by wholeheartedly supporting the efforts of a visiting Passage explorer, unburdened by the weight of the Pemmican Wars.

Franklin, for his part, was eager to return to the shores of the Polar Sea and proposed another expedition to Barrow only a month after returning to England. What would be different this time, he proposed, was that 'The nature and resources of the Country are now much better understood, the Rival Companies have united, the Directors here are desirous of the prosecution

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[156] 'Franklin's Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea', 7. 'That any suggestions however of a mercenary policy, and fear, that the expedition might throw open the frozen barriers of the Northern Ocean, and bring the ships of Britain to the mouths of the Mackenzie or Coppermine should tempt men, and especially Britons, to throw obstacles in the way of its success, is a suspicion, that we would not willingly entertain, however painfully it many be sometimes forced upon our notice', continued the review, before outlining an incident wherein HBC boats refused to carry some of the expedition's cargo from York Factory despite promises from Governor Williams to that effect.

[157] 'Franklin's Journey to the Polar Sea', 1823, 5, 7. Regarding Back's struggles with Simpson, the Monthly Review simply wrote that 'The result was not very successful, but partial supplies were obtained', ibid., 15. The London Magazine similarly referred to the HBC's hospitality on a few occasions, but did not dwell on the matter, 'Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea', *The London Magazine* 7 (1823): 573–79.

[158] Barrow, 'Franklin's Journey to the Polar Sea', 374.

[159] Barrow, 'Lord Selkirk, and the North-West Company', 144.

of the inquiry; and its Agents abroad will be [more properly] prepared by their order to assist and respect those who may be appointed'.[160] Tellingly, almost all of the changes that engendered hope were changes in the fur trade. Overland Northwest Passage expeditions, it seemed, lived or died on the graces of the HBC. With Simpson now instilled as Governor-in-Chief of Rupert's Land and the HBC's foremost voice, those graces would be forthcoming. Indeed, as he told Franklin:

> There is but one feeling towards yourself individually in this Country, that of the highest respect, regard, and esteem, and laying aside every other Consideration, you would find sincere and attached friends in every post thereof, but the business you are now about to undertake, having for its object the securing a valuable District of Country to Great Britain, is so important both in a political and Commercial point of view, that there is not a man in the Company's service from the Governor downwards who would not be happy to form a member of the Expedition and share your dangers. I need, therefore, scarcely add that we are all anxious to meet your views, and to render you our most cordial assistance and support.[161]

To avoid the reoccurrence of situations such as those seen at Fort Wedderburn, the Company agreed to proactively prepare provisions depots along the planned route of the expedition, including the construction of a winter lodging at Great Bear Lake.[162] Wherever Franklin and his men travelled from 1825 to 1827, they were met with ready stores, and at Fort Resolution their old friend Robert McVicar even laid on a dance to celebrate their arrival.[163] 'It was impossible', remarked Franklin, 'not to be struck with the difference between our present complete state of equipment and that on which we had embarked on our former disastrous voyage'.[164] The result for

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[160] John Franklin to John Barrow, 26 November 1823, Otto Klotz, ed., *Certain Correspondence of the Foreign Office and of the Hudson's Bay Company: Copied from Original Documents* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1899), 3.

[161] George Simpson to John Franklin, 8 August 1824, John Franklin, *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The Second Arctic Land Expedition, 1825-1827*, ed. Richard Clarke Davis (Toronto: Champlain Society, 2013), 334.

[162] John Franklin to John Henry Pelly, 27 February 1824, ibid., 293–95; George Simpson to John Franklin, 8 August 1824, ibid, 335. The site at Great Bear Lake would be supervised by Peter Warren Dease, who would go on to lead his own expedition overland towards and along the polar shore. Neil MacDonald, of Franklin's advance party, informed him that Dease's operation had been running smoothly as he began his journey, DRO D8760/F/FSJ/1/113/10, Neil MacDonald to John Franklin, 28 May 1825.

[163] John Richardson reflected on the differences in receptions he received on the two expeditions in correspondence with Back, SPRI MS 395/60/2, John Richardson to George Back, 21 December 1826. McVicar's genuine joy at reuniting with the men can be seen in SPRI MS 395/55;D Robert McVicar to John Franklin, 5 March 1827.

[164] John Franklin, *Narrative of a Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Sea, in the Years 1825, 1826, and 1827* (London: John Murray, 1828), 95.

Franklin and Barrow was the successful, crisis-free mapping of more than 1,000 kilometres of coastline, the most successful return from the trident of Northwest Passage expeditions that had been launched concurrently by the Admiralty.[165]

The rewards for the HBC were maps that allowed it to expand into the lower Mackenzie River region and combat Russian expansion, and, of course, further association with the prestige of exploration.[166] Franklin was again eager to praise the HBC in his narrative for its 'unremitting endeavours to promote the welfare of the expedition', with special mention given to Simpson.[167] He even made space to argue that the HBC monopoly materially improved indigenous lives.[168] Their support of Franklin, therefore, had earned them not just praise for exploratory zeal, but also notable public defence against some of its most pressing criticism. That such a comment was vanishingly rare from high profile explorers can be seen in John Rae's later bitter complaint that:

> These self sufficient donkies come into this country see the Indians sometimes miserably clad and half starved, the causes of which they never think of inquiring into, but place it all to the credit of the Company quite forgetting that 10 times as much misery occurred in Ireland during the last few years, at the very door of the most civilized countries in the world, than has happened in the Hudsons Bay Cos. Territories during the last ¼ of century.[169]

The outlook in the press, however, was disappointing. Indeed, the cultural impact of Franklin's relatively staid second expedition, despite its cartographic successes, was much smaller than that of its predecessor. Romance, not maps, sold copies and generated prestige. While the *Monthly Review* praised the Company for its role in preparing provisions depots for the expedition, the

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[165] The others being Parry's third expedition, which suffered in the Gulf of Boothia so badly as to lose a ship, and an expedition led by George Francis Lyon which foundered in Roe's Welcome Sound before limping home.
[166] Franklin and Simpson discussed the implications the expedition would have regarding Russian encroachment a year before his departure, Franklin, *Franklin's Journals and Correspondence (Second Expedition)*, 295–96; For more on this subject, consult Glynn Barratt, *Russian Shadows on the British Northwest Coast of North America, 1810-1890: A Study of Rejection of Defence Responsibilities* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983).
[167] Franklin, *Narrative of a Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Sea, in the Years 1825, 1826, and 1827*, xxii.
[168] Franklin referred specifically to the cessation of the trade of spirits into the northern department, the trade of clothes to indigenous traders, and evangelistic efforts, ibid., 304–5.
[169] SPRI MS 274; BJ OS, 16, f. 3. John Rae to George Simpson, 23 April 1851.

Edinburgh Review and the *Literary Gazette* made no mention of the HBC's role in the expedition.[170] The *Eclectic Review*, *Gentlemen's Magazine*, and *London Magazine* did not review the book at all. Perhaps most disappointingly, Barrow failed to mention the HBC in any of his glowing review's 23 pages.[171] In the parody of Franklin's first narrative that circulated the HBC posts after the second expedition's departure, Franklin was depicted bumbling around the North, making minor corrections to Company maps so as to re-name their features in honour of the uninvolved British aristocracy.[172] Credit, it seemed to fur traders, was being directed to all the wrong places.

In 1833, when George Back returned to North America to search for the missing John Ross and map the remaining unknown coastline, Simpson and the HBC played the game once more. The Company was eager to engage in such an emotional combination of charity and exploration, lucrative in potential public credit. Governor John Henry Pelly and his Deputy Nicholas Garry both took roles in the committee assembled to organize the expedition, and the Company solicited public subscriptions to raise funds for it – ensuring that they were seen to nobly support the endeavour while also avoiding having to spend too much of their own capital on it.[173] Their advertisements both reflected and played upon the Northwest Passage's established associations with the national character and Back's attributes as an archetypal Romantic masculine explorer-hero:

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[170] 'Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Sea', *Monthly Review* 9 (1828): 3; 'North West Passage', 423–50; 'North American Expedition', *Literary Gazette* 11 (1827): 458–59.
[171] John Barrow, 'Franklin's Second Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea', *Quarterly Review* 38, no. 76 (1828): 335–58.
[172] 'In sailing along the Union Coast a number of errors have been rectified as to the real position of particular situations,—for example we found the entrance of Owl River a quarter of a mile nearer the Stone Fort than it is laid down in the Chart of the Honble Hudsons Bay Company; we also discovered many shoals and islands unnoticed by former Navigators, in particular an extensive sand-bank which at low water forms an Island, lying two degrees North East of Broad River. This Island I have named Brown-Bottom-Island in honour of my Friend and relative Lord Brownbottom', MacLeod and Glover, 'Franklin's First Expedition as Seen by the Fur Traders', 674.
[173] Ross, *Polar Pioneers*, 131–32.

> The Committee therefore earnestly exhort the public to complete the maximum subscription for thus search as originally proposed, the sum required being deficient about £1,000. In pressing this they are governed by an ardent desire to rescue Captain Ross and his companions, to maintain the character of the country, and, though subsidiary to the main enterprise, to further the interests of science… They feel it their duty to add that [Back] has made considerable sacrifices in order to conduct the party, and that he can derive no possible pecuniary emolument from it, could such in any way recompense him for the risks and privations he must encounter.[174]

The expedition committee's official plans made sure to state that the HBC had 'in the handsomest manner' decided to furnish the expedition with everything it might require, charging only for anything over its 'truly liberal subscription' of 120 bags of pemmican, two boats and two newly built canoes.[175] The early press was positive. The *Times* expressed hope that the HBC's call for subscriptions would be met and the *Literary Gazette* reported that 'we have much pleasure in adding that the Hudson's Bay Company have acted in the most liberal manner, adopting every precaution to promote the success of the expedition', an expedition to which it attached an interest 'superior to any within our memory'.[176] Simpson enthusiastically welcomed Back, telling the explorer:

> [Your] humane and philanthropic views… cannot fail to excite and command the eympathies of all… For my [part] allow me to say that in my individual as well as official capacity, I am exceedingly anxious to further your benevolent views; and I cannot but rejoice that the conduct of the enterprise is entrusted to one whose experience character and abilities have been already so well appreciated by the British public.[177]

He was keen to emphasise the emotional aspects of Back's expedition as it was these that made it generate prestige for both his nation and, through its cooperation, the HBC. James Hargrave, Chief Factor at York, privately remarked that while the chance of finding 'the spark of life after 5 winters among the icebergs' was 'almost a million to one', the expedition was 'more calculated to procure

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[174] HBCA E.15/2, ff. 15-16. Correspondence, instructions for the expedition, and other papers.
[175] HBCA E.15/2, f. 15. Plan of the Arctic Land Expedition under Captⁿ Back.
[176] 'The Arctic Land Expedition', *The Times*, 7 November 1833, 6; 'Captain Back's Expedition', *Literary Gazette* 17 (1833): 59.
[177] SPRI MS 395/78;D, ff. 3-3v. George Simpson to George Back, 7 June 1833. Simpson originally planned to welcome Back in person at Norway House, SPIR MS 395/78;D, f. 1v. William Smith to George Back, 7 February 1833, but was forced to return to England for medical treatment and thusly extended this welcome via correspondence.

Capt. B. a step [promotion] than to save the lives of British Subjects'.[178] The same could be said of Simpson. When Ross returned to England alive, he lost the potential to be associated with a noble and daring rescue mission but remained eager to share in the prestige of Arctic discovery and continued to support Back as the expedition headed towards the Arctic coast. As he had said to Back in his welcome, even if Ross could not be found, 'still the expense and fatigue of the expedition' – and, reading between the lines, also those of the HBC – 'will be compensated abundantly in the valuable acquisitions which discovery and science will acquire collaterally in its prosecution'.[179]

Back certainly upheld his responsibility as a Romantic explorer-author, producing a narrative of his travels perhaps unparalleled in its evocative use of the Sublime. Indeed, Leslie Neatby has written that 'no other man has viewed the scenery of the Canadian North with so appreciative an eye, nor has been able to give such full and vigorous expression to that appreciation in prose'.[180] In this regard, Back's was a terrific text to be associated with. Indeed, Back offered frequent, enthusiastic praise for the HBC in his narrative, despite the lingering fears regarding credit that existed in the Company, as expressed by the clerk at Norway House who wondered whether Back would 'have the brass to say that the Comp^{y} did not supply him with every thing necessary most liberally, as his Expedition would have been at an end if they had not supplied him with Pemican much to their own detriment as provisions are very scarce this year'.[181] Since, Back

[178] James Hargrave to J. G. McTavish, 8 February 1834, Hargrave, *Letters from Rupert's Land, 1826-1840*, 257.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Neatby, *In Quest of the North West Passage*, 57–58; M. J. Ross has described the narrative as 'one of the best travel books of the nineteenth century', Ross, *Polar Pioneers*, 196; See MacLaren, 'The Grandest Tour' and; Pelly, 'Treasures of an Arctic Artist' for a thorough discussion of Back's use of Romantic tropes.
[181] 'Like all the other Expeditions', he continued, Back 'will do little & speak a great deal... You'll hear what a fine story they'll make out of this bungle, they will you may be sure take none of the blame to themselves', William MacTavish to Letita Hargrave, 16 July 1834, James Hargrave, *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, ed. G. P. de T. Glazebrook (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 145.

told readers, 'the success of an expedition like that I had the honour to command must necessarily have depended on the aid and co-operation' of the HBC, he felt it was incumbent upon him 'to acknowledge, as I now do, with sincere and fervent gratitude, the prompt attention, the ready assistance, and the provident care of our wants, manifested by all and each of them in their respective departments'.[182] 'The frank and hospitable kindness which was shown by all to myself', he concluded, 'will never be forgotten by men, and is entitled to this public acknowledgement'.[183] Back even demonstrated considerable respect for the work force of the fur trade, including in his narrative a long list of factors, traders, and clerks that he believed warranted special mention, and published a collection of voyageur songs, with which he had become enamoured, upon his return to England.[184] Simpson's welcome letter to Back was reproduced for the public eye it had presumably always had one eye fixed upon, described by Back as being 'so creditable to him, as regards his capacity as Governor and his feelings as a man... If [his promises] excite in others only a small part of the admiration with which I regarded them, Mr. Simpson will have no reason to complain'.[185] This was the prize that Simpson had sought when doing so much as to 'literally identif[y] himself with the expedition', as Back phrased it.[186] The Company had made a valuable (Back would remain a prominent figure in northern exploration for the rest of his life, becoming an admiral and the vice-president of the Royal Geographical Society) and long-lasting ally, one

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[182] George Back, *Narrative of the Arctic Land Expedition to the Mouth of the Great Fish River: And Along the Shores of the Arctic Ocean, in the Years, 1833, 1834, and 1835* (London: John Murray, 1836), 25. See also 4, 18. Pelly and Garry, as the governor and his deputy, also received a lot of praise that stood in for the HBC as a whole, such as mentions for their 'disinterested zeal in the cause of polar discovery, and undeviating kindness to all connected with it'. Back also, in contrast to the parody Franklin, extended this honour to naming lakes in their honour, 344, 352.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.; George Back, *Canadian Airs: Collected by Lieutenant Back, R.n. During the Late Arctic Expedition Under Captain Franklin, with Symphonies and Accompaniments by Edward Knight Junr. ; the Words by George Soane, Esqr. A.b* (London: J. Power, 1823). Back also planned to release a novel centred on characters from the fur trade, but he only drafted the first four chapters before seemingly abandoning the project. SPRI MS 395/27; BL George Back Novel Manuscript.
[185] Back, *Narrative of the Arctic Land Expedition to the Mouth of the Great Fish River*, 44–45.
[186] Ibid., 45.

who would ardently defend their conduct towards indigenous peoples before Parliament in 1857, a textbook example of the HBC translating the prestige associated with Romantic exploration into political benefit.[187]

However, Back was also forced to conclude that any further expeditions to the Arctic coast down the river that now bore his name 'would be as rash as its result would be fruitless' and that 'insurmountable obstacles' stood in the way of attempting again to map by canoe the coast westward to Port Turnagain.[188] With scant geographical progress, and the blockbuster rescue of Ross having transpired entirely without Back's involvement, the book, for all its flair, received only modest interest in the press compared to Franklin's vibrantly Romantic exploits, with obvious implications for the HBC. While Barrow remarked in the *Quarterly* that 'nothing could exceed the kindness and exertions of Governor Simpson and all the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company', the only other periodicals to review the book were the *Athenæum*, *Monthly Review* and *Edinburgh Review* – of which only the latter directed praise towards the HBC.[189] Worse, Richard King, the expedition's surgeon and naturalist, released a rival narrative that was highly critical of the HBC, particularly with regard to its exploitation of indigenous peoples, a topic even more sore for the Company as humanitarian concern had by this point grown to include the creation of a Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (before which King appeared to condemn the HBC).[190] One high profile member of the HBC described King's narrative as 'the most

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[187] Parliament, *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index.* (London, 1857), 184–89.
[188] Back, *Narrative of the Arctic Land Expedition to the Mouth of the Great Fish River*, 21.
[189] John Barrow, 'Back's Journey to the Arctic Sea', *Quarterly Review* 56, no. 111 (April 1836): 279; 'Reviews', *Athenæum*, no. 446 (1836): 337–41; 'Back's Arctic Land Expedition', *Monthly Review* 2 (1836): 176–83; 'Captain Back's Expedition to the Arctic Regions', 288.
[190] Richard King, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Arctic Ocean, in 1833, 1834, and 1835: Under the Command of Capt. Back* (London: R. Bentley, 1836), v–ix; Elements of King's testimony were reproduced in the Committee's published report, Aborigines' Protection Society, *Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes (British Settlements)* (London: William Ball, 1837), 8–9; Back, in his narrative, had credited King with all of his expedition's scientific observations (barring geography), an inconvenient point considering King's

venomous thing I have read for a long time'.[191] The *Literary Gazette*, which had not covered Back's narrative, reproduced King's claims, remarking that 'by comparing the value given to the Indians for their furs, and the price they are sold for by the Hudson's Bay Company in London, we may draw our conclusions as to the oppression of these people' – the exact opposite kind of press that the Company had hoped to generate by putting itself in the limelight of exploration.[192]

THE HBC AS EXPLORERS

Throughout his tenure, Simpson sponsored an array of HBC expeditions into the northwest of the continent, as outlined by Theodore J. Karamanski in *Fur Trade and Exploration Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852*, but most of these, as patent exercises in the expansion of the fur trade's operations, would never be publicly considered in the same way as the "disinterested" Romantic travels of Parry or Franklin.[193] The commercially useless Northwest Passage, however, was an entirely different matter. As much as the HBC and Simpson benefitted from the prestige associated with Romantic exploration by assisting the expeditions that came to seek it, it stood to reason that actually completing such discoveries themselves would bring rewards at a greater scale.

Simpson's first movements in this direction came quickly after his ascent to power. During a stay at York Factory in the winter of 1822-23, he championed an expedition, to be led by a Mr. Leslie and George Barnston, which would 'explore the Coast, as far to the Northward of Churchill, as any be found practicable', personally adding to its remit a potential journey as far as the mouth of the Coppermine River, the scene of Franklin's recent famous Sublime entanglement,

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evident unwillingness to share the rewards of that with the Company, Back, *Narrative of the Arctic Land Expedition to the Mouth of the Great Fish River*, 22, 475.

[191] Thomas Simpson to James Hargrave, 17 January 1838, Hargrave, *Hargrave Correspondence*, 261.

[192] 'King's Arctic Expedition (Continued)', *Literary Gazette* 20 (1836): 757.

[193] Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852*.

considering it to be a 'an object of great importance in many points of view to acquire some knowledge of the North East extremity of this continent'.[194] Ultimately, however, Leslie and the council at York cooled on the idea, citing 'unforeseen difficulties' and 'obstacles which I [Simpson] cannot yet perceive altho' the subject has occupied much of my attention', and the expedition was postponed.[195] When Simpson lobbied the Committee to order the enterprise's revival, he stated that it belonged to 'a subject which has excited much interest and attention for a great length of time' and that it was 'connected with the public attention altho' not in the way of Trade', evidently tying it to the contemporary Northwest Passage expeditions.[196] Clearly, Simpson's primary attraction to the expedition was not for the trade connections it might forge with the Inuit, but for its utility in public relations, for the rewards in cultural currency that Romantic exploration could provide. Indeed, Simpson's faith in Barnston, who he recommended to be retained should the expedition be revived, emerged not only from his being well 'qualified to take the necessary observations for the purpose of ascertaining the Latitude and Longitude of the Country', but also because he was a man 'high Spirited to a romantic degree, who will on no account do what he considers an improper thing'.[197] The expedition, however, was ultimately cancelled when the Admiralty announced that it would send George Francis Lyon to cover the same ground.[198]

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[194] HBCA D.4/2, f. 6v. Instructions to Messrs Leslie and Barnston, York Factory, 9 September 1822; HBCA A.12/1, f. 19v. George Simpson to Committee, 23 June 1823. Simpson also proposed that the expedition would open communication with far-off Inuit. As we have seen, this was a consistent secondary goal of HBC Arctic expeditions. Simpson's predecessor had also been interested in expanding the Inuit trade, but did not refer to the public interest, HBCA D.1/3, ff. 8-10. Governor William Williams to Mr Snodie [Factor at] Churchill House, 6 December 1818.

[195] HBCA A.12/1, ff. 49-49v. George Simpson to Committee, 8 September 1823.

[196] HBCA A.12/1, ff. 49v, 48v. George Simpson to Committee 8 September 1823.

[197] HBCA A.12/1, ff. 49v. George Simpson to Committee, 8 September 1823; HBCA A.34/2, George Simpson Character Book.

[198] 'the main object of the Expedition projected last year is anticipated and likely to be attained by Captain Lyon', HBCA A.12/1, f. 74. George Simpson to Committee, 10 August 1824. Lyon would ultimately be repelled by ice before reaching the coastline in question.

Two years later, Simpson was eager to not be beaten again by the Admiralty to the prestige of such discoveries. Samuel Black was sent up the Finlay River with instructions that read:

> Capt Franklin is about to undertake another voyage of discovery towards the arctic regions, he comes out next season… for the purpose of coasting to the westward… we however expect that you will have the start on him and throw some light on this interesting subject before he can accomplish the voyage: we are desirous to show the Government that no exertion is wanting on our part to secure the mother country by discovery as much of this vast continent and the trade thereof as possible we therefore expect if any prospect of success remains that you will renew the voyage as soon as the season admits and that the Frozen Ocean will be the boundary of your searches to the North West.[199]

Black's role in the exploration of the Canadian west has been examined, but the fact that his expedition was also pictured as a direct competitor to a more famous Northwest Passage expedition has been hitherto neglected.[200] While Simpson was happy for the HBC to take plaudits for assisting the 1825 Franklin expedition as best as it could, making comparable or even better discoveries (he imagined a river connection between the Pacific and Arctic oceans, running parallel to the Mackenzie) than Romantic exploration's new poster-boy would be even better.[201] Black himself fit the archetypes of the Romantic explorer: a 'vigorous and active' adventurer who passionately engaged with the hardships of the landscapes he encountered.[202] Ultimately, however, Black did not discover the river imagined by Simpson, and any further exploration of the possibility was hampered by chronic personnel and supply shortages in the New Caledonia district.[203]

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[199] HBCA D.4/3, f. 83v. George Simpson to Samuel Black, 25 July 1824.
[200] Black's expedition is recounted in Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852*, 62–78.
[201] Ibid., 62.
[202] The 'vigoous and active' description comes from Simpson's character book, in which he is described as "a Donquixote in appearance, ghastly, raw-boned and lanthorn jawed, yet strong vigorous and active", Glyndwr Williams, ed., *Hudson's Bay Miscellany, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), 193; For Black's Romantic text, see Samuel Black, *A Journal of a Voyage from Rocky Mountain Portage in Peace River to the Sources of Finlays Branch and North West Ward in Summer 1824*, Publications of the Hudson's Bay Record Society 18 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1955).
[203] Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852*, 78.

After years spent supporting external Passage expeditions to only mixed results, the HBC began to face an ominous deadline: the expiration of its Exclusive License to Trade in 1841. It also found itself embroiled in sharp tensions with the Russian American Company in the Stikine River region, a battle that it hoped Government support could resolve.[204] In a political climate where chartered companies found little favour, and in which the HBC specifically faced additional criticism at the ongoing Parliamentary Select Committee on Aboriginal Tribes, the Company knew that it had considerable work to do in generating the public and political support it needed. It is strongly indicative of the potency that Arctic exploration, as pictured as a conduit for Romantic feeling and nationalist zeal, had in generating prestige that the HBC turned to the Northwest Passage as their chosen means of generating good will. Its Charter duty to seek the Passage, once a burden, had aged into a useful justification for its continued prosperity.

The Arctic coastline, the realm of Passage exploration that the Company had resources to partake in, was, however, by this point in time increasingly running out of "gaps" to explore.[205] Furthermore, in 1836 Richard King began soliciting subscriptions for a return to the Arctic coast – an especially dangerous threat considering that King would likely use the high-profile platform of another Arctic narrative to continue his condemnations of the HBC – and the Admiralty also began planning for Back to return and complete his previous work.[206] The Committee, realising that it had to act, lest it lose their chance forever began planning their own expedition to complete the mapping of the Arctic Coast. Governor John Henry Pelly put Simpson in charge of exploratory operations, writing to him:

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[204] Grinev, 'Anglo-Russian Rivalry in the American Arctic, Eighteenth to Mid-Nineteenth Centuries', 181–82.
[205] Three such 'gaps' remained: 280km between Franklin's Return Reef and Point Barrow in the West, 480km between Point Turnagain and Spence Bay that Back had only dented, and between Boothia and Fury and Hecla Strait, Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia*, 5.
[206] Hugh N. Wallace, *The Navy, the Company and Richard King: British Exploration in the Canadian Arctic, 1829-1860* (Montreal: McGill-Queen`s University Press, 1980), 31–37.

> We understand, several Gentlemen in this country have recently proposed themselves or been proposed as leaders of expeditions, both by sea and land, for completing the survey of the Northern Shores of America… This subject continues to excite much interest in the public mind, and it is more than probable the Government may determine on fitting out another Expedition to go inland from York next autumn, or via Canada the following Summer. In the event of Government taking it up, we shall afford the Expedition our usual assistance and support, but otherwise we are desirous that it should be undertaken by the Fur Trade.[207]

The Minutes of Council for the Northern Department, overseen by Simpson, reflected Pelly's concern and priorities. Mapping the unknown coastline, they reiterated, was 'an object that has for a long time excited the most lively interest in the public mind', and a task that had 'called forth the energies of many enterprizing and scientific men' – a category of public legends that it was hoped Company names could be added to for posterity.[208] In mid-1836 King was forced to abandon his plans, having antagonized too many people in the Colonial Office, Admiralty, the fur trade, and the influential body of Arctic veterans to be able to raise the funds he needed, thereby increasing the likelihood that the Company could seize the glory of the Romantic Northwest Passage. Intending to strike while the iron was hot, Pelly officially began proceedings to renew the HBC's license in February 1837.[209] In his letter to the Colonial Office, Pelly referred to the Company's assistance to Franklin and Back, more generally 'the exertions they are making in the causes of discovery and science', and specifically his 'most sanguine expectations' that its forthcoming expedition would achieve the 'complete survey of the coasts of the Polar Sea, not hitherto visited by European navigators, and… secure for England the reputation of having effected this work'.[210]

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[207] HBCA A.6/24, ff. 24-24v. Committee to George Simpson, 9 March 1836. The Committee congratulated Simpson on drawing up plans 'we consider judicious' for an enterprise of 'a very enterprising and arduous character… in which we feel the deepest interest', HBCA A.6/24, ff. 82v-83. Committee to George Simpson, 15 February 1837.

[208] HBCA B.239/k/2, f. 71. Minutes of Council held at Norway House, Northern Department of Ruperts Land, 21 June 1836.

[209] King could only raise £400 of the required £1,000, with support from the Sun, the Atlas, and the Leeds Mercury newspapers. One notable subscriber was Michael Faraday. For more details on his struggle to gather support for his plans, see Wallace, *The Navy, the Company and Richard King*, 32–36; HBCA A.8/2, ff. 40-45v. John Henry Pelly to Lord Glenelg, 10 February 1837.

[210] HBCA A.8/2, ff. 43-43v, 45. John Henry Pelly to Lord Glenelg, 10 February 1837

Evidently the HBC thought that the emotions of Northwest Passage exploration were a powerful weapon.

To lead the expedition, Simpson chose two men. The first was Peter Warren Dease, an experienced pair of safe hands who had been his first choice to lead Black's exploration of the Finlay River and then travelled with Franklin on his Mackenzie River expedition.[211] In his Character Book, Simpson described Dease as 'a man of very correct conduct and character. Strong, vigorous and capable of going through a great deal of Severe Service but rather indolent, wanting in ambition to distinguish himself in any measure out of the usual course'.[212] Accompanying him, to provide dynamism and ambition, would be Simpson's tempestuous, 'hardy & active' nephew, Thomas, thirty years Dease's junior.[213] John Richardson, the Arctic veteran, remarked that the combination of his respected friend Dease and Simpson, who was 'eminently gifted with the hardy spirit of enterprise', meant that 'no expedition fitted out in England, whatever the talents of the officers heading it might be, could promise greater results than the one now on foot… to anticipate the attempt of any foreign power to wrest from England the honour of the complete discovery of the arctic coast of America'.[214]

In George Simpson's design, the men were to take the Mackenzie River to the sea in 1837, explore the coast west to Point Barrow, then retire to winter quarters on Great Bear Lake, before descending the Coppermine River and exploring eastwards in 1838, past Point Turnagain and on

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[211] In offering Dease the command of the Finlay River expedition, Simpson had told Dease that he did 'not know any Gentleman in the Country better qualified for an enterprise of such importance', HBCA D.4/2, f. 50. George Simpson to Peter Warren Dease, 9 February 1822. When Franklin requested that Dease take charge of the construction of his base camp, Simpson heartily approved: 'In selecting Mr. Dease as a Fellow-Traveller you have made a happy choice, as I do not know a Gentleman in the country better qualified for the duty he has to perform', George Simpson to John Franklin, 8 August 1824, Franklin, *Franklin's Journals and Correspondence (Second Expedition)*, 334.
[212] Williams, *Hudson's Bay Miscellany, 1670-1870*, 184.
[213] This description comes from George Simpson's character book, ibid., 228.
[214] John Richardson, 'A Letter on the Subject of the Late Arctic Expedition, from Dr. Richardson', *Literary Gazette* 22 (1838): 279.

to the mouth of Back's River.[215] Supplies for a third year were available if needed. It was an ambitious program, one that aimed to do the work of both of Franklin's expeditions and Back's 1833 remit in one mission, while ignoring both the ill omens of Franklin's experience on the Coppermine and the warning from Back that his river was too dangerous to use. The instructions, later published in the expedition's narrative, opened with another reminder that 'this object has for a great length of time excited the most lively interest in the public mind', but also noted that it had 'baffled the exertions of many enterprising men, among whom the names of Parry, Franklin, Ross & Back have of late years appeared conspicuous'.[216] When Simpson continued that he trusted 'that the honour of its accomplishment is reserved for the Hudson's Bay Company', the competitive comparison was clear – if Thomas Simpson and Dease completed what even those national heroes could not, then the public would have to sit up and take notice.[217] The invocation of Parry, who had sailed through an entirely different area of the Arctic Archipelago to the geography in question, makes it clear that these men had been mentioned more as comparison points for the HBC men's status as masculine Romantic heroes than as cartographic parallels. In a letter to the expedition that winter, George Simpson reiterated that the goal of the expedition was 'the honor of completing these interesting discoveries'.[218] When Back nearly shipwrecked himself in Frozen Strait before limping back to Britain, Dease and Simpson were left with what the latter described as a 'wide field' in which to complete them.[219]

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[215] Simpson, *Narrative of the Discoveries on the North Coast of America*, 6.
[216] Ibid., 3.
[217] Ibid.
[218] George Simpson to Peter Dease and Thomas Simpson, undated Winter 1836-37, Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia*, 52.
[219] For details of Back's mishaps, see George Back, *Narrative of an Expedition in H.M.S. Terror: Undertaken with a View to Geographical Discovery on the Arctic Shores, in the Years 1836-7* (London: John Murray, 1838); Thomas Simpson to James Hargrave, 25 September 1838, Hargrave, *Hargrave Correspondence*, 226.

Dease and Simpson's stay in 'the uttermost parts of the earth' was a highly successful one, described by one historian as 'one of the finest chapters in the story of Arctic exploration'.[220] In three years they more than fulfilled their instructions, leaving the coastline between Castor and Pollux River and Fury and Hecla Strait as the only remaining gap in the Arctic coast, at a fraction of the cost of one of Barrow's maritime expeditions.[221] As a record of their personal prestige, a raft of geographic features in the North now bore their names, with a host more named for senior figures in the Company, including Cape George Simpson, 'as a testimony of sincere respect and regard for the able and indefatigable Governor of all the Company's territories'.[222] George Simpson informed his explorers that 'the exertions of yourselves and gallant little band in the causes of discovery and science merit our warmest commendations, in short, are beyond all praise'.[223] Governor Pelly proudly wrote to the Colonial Secretary, informing him that the HBC had been 'crowned with success' and petitioned for Dease and Simpson to receive financial reward from the Government, as other Passage explorers had done for their 'partial success'.[224]

Perhaps more than any other, Thomas Simpson pictured himself as an archetypal Romantic explorer-hero. 'Winter travelling', he wrote to his brother Alexander, 'is a most healthy and strengthening exercise', as he rhapsodised over nights spent with 'your bed a litter of pine branches spread on the frozen soil; your bedding a blanket and (sometimes) a skin; the starry heaven your

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[220] Simpson described his destination as such in Thomas Simpson to James Hargrave, 11 August 1836, Hargrave, *Hargrave Correspondence*, 241; The historiography in question is Chalmers, *Fur Trade Governor*, 167–68; Barr likewise described the expedition as 'one of the most successful ever attempted in the Arctic', Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia*, 294.

[221] Peter Warren Dease and Thomas Simpson to the Governor, Deputy Governor, and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, 16 October 1838, Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia*, 266.

[222] For features named after the explorers themselves, see ibid., 274–75; Geographical features named after senior HBC figures included Pelly's Mountains, Cape Pelly, and Mount Pelly, for the Governor; Harrison Bay for the Deputy Governor; Garry River for the former Deputy; Point Berens, Cape Halkett, Ellice Point, and William Smith River for Company Directors; and Cape George Simpson and Mount George for the Overseas Governor, Simpson, *Narrative of the Discoveries on the North Coast of America*, 129, 132–34, 138, 295, 297, 383.

[223] HBCA D.4/25, ff. 42-42v. George Simpson to Peter Warren Dease and Thomas Simpson, 17 June 1839.

[224] HBCA A.8/2, f. 124v. John Henry Pelly to Lord John Russell, 22 April 1840.

canopy [in which] more sound and refreshing sleep is enjoyed, than waits upon many an one sunk in cushions of down', before invoking Ovid and reciting John Dryden.[225] Completing the Northwest Passage, he wrote, 'holds out to my imagination the prospect of realizing some, at least, of the romantic aspirations which first led me to the New World'.[226] He was certainly eager to achieve the feat. To his brother Alexander he confided his fear that Back 'may interfere with our eastern voyage', concluding that 'I am uncharitable enough to wish that the same ice which has prevented the Prince Rupert from reaching York, may have also shut out the gallant captain, in which case we shall endeavour to save him all further trouble'.[227] Concerning Back, Simpson kept up a one-way rivalry, frequently criticizing Back's exploratory acumen, writing style, and character.[228] When Back did encounter trouble with the ice, Simpson smugly wrote that 'Back's expedition turned out much as I anticipated. My judgment was however founded more on moral than on physical considerations… his failure is retributive justice'.[229] It was a telling rival for Simpson to have chosen, both in terms of his self-image and in terms of how the period conceived of its Arctic explorers. Simpson did not want to exceed the commercial success of Mackenzie's travels or achieve more for science than Cook; he wanted to endure the elements with more boldness, write his narrative with more substance, and hold himself with more integrity than Back, perhaps the most Romantic of the Admiralty's masculine Romantic explorer-author-heroes. Franklin, Parry, and Richardson, Barrow's other unimpeachable titans, occasionally came under

[225] Thomas Simpson to Alexander Simpson, 10 February 1831, Simpson, *Life and Travels*, 72–73. 'The days march', he continued, 'is one scene of excitement; each man putting his best foot foremost, [with] continual amusement from the dogs; their bells ring a merry lively peal as they jog along', 73.
[226] Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 31 May 1837, ibid., 223. The call to take part in the expedition, he wrote, was 'a ray of light shone, all of a sudden, upon my path', Thomas Simpson to Alexander Simpson, 30 November 1836, 226.
[227] Thomas Simpson to Alexander Simpson, 30 November 1836, Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia*, 40.
[228] Examples of such criticism can be found in Hargrave, *Hargrave Correspondence*, 226, 266; Simpson, *Life and Travels*, 106, 223, 227, 291.
[229] Thomas Simpson to James Hargrave, 25 September 1838, Hargrave, *Hargrave Correspondence*, 226.

similar attack – by ploughing on when they turned back, or playing fair where they had been sly, Simpson proudly declared that he had 'carried my point against them all'.[230]

In general, his self-image appeared to depend on others knowing just how superior of an explorer he was. While Franklin confessed a 'strong dislike... to appear in a conspicuous station before the public', shying away from panoramas of his travels, Simpson seemed to think of little else but others' opinions.[231] After the expedition's western leg, he stressed to George Simpson:

> I have the *exclusive* honour of unfurling the Company's flag on Point Barrow, and of thus uniting the Arctic to the Western Ocean, – which I humbly think entitles me to the second step [promotion to Chief Trader]. Consider, I beseech you, the importance of the geographical problem solves; the able officers whom it baffled; the rewards conferred upon them for what they effected; and do not reject my just claims… I have always (*in despite of harsh treatment*) confided implicitly in your kind sentiments towards me, and feel that they will be fully displayed on the present occasion. Such preferment, instead of cooling my zeal, would animate and inflame it, and at the same time give me the standing requisite to the creditable production of our travels to the world.[232]

'Congratulate me', he likewise wrote to his brother, 'for I, and I *alone*, have the well-earned honour of uniting the Arctic to the great Western Ocean'.[233] When a very favourable report of his progress in the *Literary Gazette* claimed that John Franklin's restraint when dealing with Inuit could be thanked for Simpson and Dease's friendly reception at Point Barrow, he fumed that 'the parag^{h} about Franklin's forbearance at Pillage Point is absurd… That affair about as much affected my reception at Point Barrow…. as Lord Durham's resignation of the Canadian Government is likely to influence the politics of the moon!'.[234] His self-aggrandizement often required denigrating the

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[230] Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 18 September 1838, Simpson, *Life and Travels*, 300–302.
[231] John Franklin to Sarah Sellwood, 10 October 1822, Davis, '"…which an Affectionate Heart Would Say"', 203; In 1818, when Franklin featured in a public panorama of David Buchan's expedition he told his sister, 'I shall not venture to approach very near... for fear the passers-by should say, "There goes the fellow in the panorama"', John Franklin, quoted in, Lamb, *Happy Voyager*, 56.
[232] Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 8 September 1837, Simpson, *Life and Travels*, 256.
[233] Thomas Simpson to Alexander Simpson, 10 September 1837, ibid., 257. After another year travelling, Simpson declared again that 'all that has been done is the fruit of my own personal exertions', Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 18 September 1838, ibid., 299.
[234] Thomas Simpson to James Hargrave, 30 April 1839, Hargrave, *Hargrave Correspondence*, 294–95; Richardson, 'A Letter on the Subject of the Late Arctic Expedition, from Dr. Richardson', 279.

contributions of Dease, against whose presence as co-commander he repeatedly complained bitterly.[235] In the above letter to his uncle, Simpson continued that, 'in everything, even to the plan of our little Fort Confidence, he has adopted my advice, and has left the direction of the march entirely to me'.[236] That winter, when recapping 'our first glorious campaign' for his uncle and brother, Simpson reiterated 'I should say *mine*, for mine alone was the victory', and declared that 'Dease is a worthy, indolent, illiterate soul, and moves just as I give the impulse'.[237] Dease, of course, was not illiterate, and kept his own journal of the expedition, but in a culture where explorers were expected also to be authors, it was an effective way of marking him out as 'the last man in the world for a discoverer'.[238] Simpson, on the other hand, was perhaps *the* true explorer, both in his own mind, and in the early nineteenth century conception of the idea.

In his desire for public laurels Simpson also exaggerated the extent of his already impressive geographical achievements, performing feats of mental gymnastics to claim in his concluding report to the Committee that he had 'secured to our country and the Company the indisputable honour of discovering the north-west passage, which has been an object of search to all maritime nations for three centuries'.[239] He appeared to define, for the benefit of his legacy, the waters between Point Barrow and the mouth of Mackenzie's River as the Northwest Passage and

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[235] 'Though deprived of the command after it had been first held out to me [there is no documentary evidence of this], and was, I think, my due, yet I enter on this enterprise with confidence and alacrity', Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 31 May 1837, Simpson, *Life and Travels*, 222. See also: 'I cannot help regarding him and his followers as a dead weight upon the expedition', Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 18 September 1838, 300; 'hampered with an old man on my back... the apprehensions of my useless senior', Thomas Simpson to Alexander Simpson, 18 September 1838, 304; Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 25 October 1839, 339.

[236] Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 8 September 1837, ibid., 256.

[237] Thomas Simpson to Alexander Simpson, 29 January 1838; Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 29 January 1838, ibid., 276, 271. To his uncle Thomas did not refer to illiteracy, but instead called Dease 'dull'. Earlier in the month, Simpson had likewise wrote to Donald Ross saying that 'every thing which requires either planning or execution devolves upon me', Thomas Simpson to Donald Ross, 18 January 1838, Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia*, 130.

[238] Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 18 September 1838, Simpson, *Life and Travels*, 300.

[239] Thomas Simpson and Peter Warren Dease to the Governor, Deputy Governor, and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, 16 October 1838, ibid., 328.

the other half of the Passage, onwards to Baffin Bay, as the "Northeast Passage".[240] The report, regardless of this misleading phrasing, generated good press for Simpson and the Company, being reproduced verbatim in the *Times*, the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, the *Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle*, the *Penny Magazine*, the *Athenæum*, and the *Albion*, and its claims paraphrased in the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Merchant's Magazine*, the latter of which presented the expedition as the culmination of five centuries of exploration.[241] The nation's press were eager to celebrate an explorer who so ably matched the Romantic expectations for explorers, especially one who could offer progress in the Sublime world of the North. 'The success of the expedition of Messrs. Dease and Simpson', concluded the *Athenæum*, 'adds another wreath to Britannia's crown of glory… where, in the annals of discovery, are to be found such touching examples of enterprise, fortitude, and perseverance?'.[242]

To discover the Northeast Passage proper, and complete his glory, Thomas Simpson wanted to push on and complete the remaining Arctic coast in a fourth season of exploration, and presented proposals to that end to both George Simpson and the Committee.[243] 'I am ready and willing', he concluded, 'to devote not only my life but my means to the achievement of an enterprise that cannot fail to confer new lustre on the Honourable Company's name'.[244] As for his

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[240] He makes this division in two letters to his uncle. Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 8 September 1837, Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 25 October 1839, ibid., 262, 338.

[241] 'Arctic Land Expedition - Realization Of Its Objects.', *The Times*, 20 April 1840; Peter W. Dease and Thomas Simpson, 'Narrative of the Progress of Arctic Discovery on the Northern Shore of America, in the Summer of 1839', *The Journal of the Royal Geographic Society of London* 10 (1840): 268–74; 'Narrative of the Progress of Arctic Discovery on the Northern Shore of America, in the Summer of 1839', *Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle* 9 (1840): 439–45; 'Discovery of the North-West Passage', *The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* 9 (1840): 181–84; 'Arctic Land Expedition', *Athenæum*, no. 652 (1840): 330–32; 'Arctic Land Expedition', *The Albion* 2, no. 21 (May 1840): 169–70; 'Discovery of the Northwest Passage: Dease and Simpson's Arctic Land Expedition', *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* 3 (1840): 52–60; The Morning Chronicle report is referred to in Simpson, *Life and Travels*, 262.

[242] 'Arctic Land Expedition', 1840, 330.

[243] Thomas Simpson to the Governor and Committee, 18 October 1839; Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 25 October 1839, Simpson, *Life and Travels*, 340–42, 338–40.

[244] Thomas Simpson to the Governor and Committee, 18 October 1839, ibid., 342.

own name, he told his uncle George that there would be no space for Dease this time: 'fame I will have, but it must be *alone*… my whole soul is set upon it, and I feel an irresistible presentiment that I am destined to bear the Honourable Company's flag fairly through and out of the polar sea'.[245] The Committee responded positively. Governor Pelly again tasked George Simpson with drawing up detailed plans for the expedition, and officially informed the Colonial Office and Royal Geographical Society that operations would continue next summer.[246] 'We are happy to announce that the Hudson's Bay Company, which has latterly shown itself no less discerning and liberal than fortunate in the prosecution of geographical discoveries', reported the *Athenæum*, 'has resolved to continue its efforts'.[247] Thomas, impatient for a response, never received word of this, having already set off for England to make his case in person.[248] He never arrived, having received a fatal gunshot wound en route, likely by suicide.[249]

Simpson's journal was recovered from the site of his death and returned to George Simpson.[250] The senior Simpson had mandated that Dease and Simpson both keep detailed reports, understanding that prestigious Romantic explorer-heroes were produced as much on paper as they were in the field, as the experiences of Franklin, which they hoped to emulate, attested. Thomas' was the superior text for the task. The resultant narrative, lightly edited by Edward Sabine and

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[245] Thomas Simpson to George Simpson, 25 October 1839, ibid., 339.
[246] HBCA A.6/25, f. 35. Committee to George Simpson, 1 June 1839; HBCA A.8/2, ff. 124v-125. John Henry Pelly to Lord John Russell, 22 April 1840; HBCA A.5/13, ff. 53-54. Hudson's Bay Company to Captain Washington, Royal Geographical Society, 22 April 1840.
[247] 'Arctic Land Expedition', 1840, 330.
[248] Thomas Simpson to Alexander Simpson, 5 June 1840, Simpson, *Life and Travels*, 350–51.
[249] The mystery of Simpson's death has been unpicked in Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia*, 276–77; Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Unsolved Mysteries of the Arctic* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 182–89; Douglas Mackay and W. Kaye Lamb, 'More Light on the Death of Thomas Simpson', *Beaver*, September 1938; Simpson, *Life and Travels*, 352–73; A fanciful theory that George Simpson, jealous of his nephew's forthcoming fame, had Thomas killed, appears in Raffan, *Emperor of the North*, 316; Harper, *Thomas Simpson*, 9.
[250] Thomas Simpson's letters, papers, journals, and charts were passed on to the HBC by the American Fur Company, George Simpson to Governor, Deputy Governor, and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, 20 June 1841, George Simpson, *London Correspondence Inward from Sir George Simpson, 1841-42*, ed. Glyn Williams (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1973), 22.

published by Richard Bentley, depicted an archetypal Romantic adventurer dashing through the Arctic despite counsels of caution, encountering landscapes of exquisite danger and beauty.[251] In such a depiction, Ian MacLaren writes, 'the young fur trader seconded to a survey expedition thus transforms himself into an Odysseus, proceeding undaunted to the ends of the known earth while Penelope [his "indolent" Dease] slumbers back at the base camp'.[252] Simpson had a talent for balancing the aesthetics of the Sublime and the Picturesque when describing landscape, transporting the reader in passages such as the following:

> The mountains stood forth in all the rugged boldness of their outline, displaying their naked rocky peaks and steep descents with such marvellous distinctness that they seemed to touch the coast of which they form the bulwarks. The swell being with us, as long as the calm continued we made some progress with the oars; but a northerly breeze springing up raised such a cross sea that we were in imminent danger of foundering, when we providentially discovered an opening through the ice... incited by the beauty of the weather, I ascended the nearest hill, six or seven miles distant, whence I enjoyed a truly sublime prospect. On either hand arose the British and Buckland Mountains, exhibiting an infinite diversity of shade and form; in front lay the blue boundless ocean strongly contrasted with its broad glittering girdle of ice; beneath yawned ravines a thousand feet in depth, through which brawled and sparkled the clear alpine streams; while the sun, still high in the west, shed his softened beams through a rich veil of saffron-coloured clouds that overcanopied the gorgeous scene. Bands of reindeer, browsing on the rich pasture in the valleys and along the brooks, imparted life and animation to the picture. Reluctantly I returned to the camp at sunset.[253]

The narrative was a feat of grand showmanship from a man who evidently imagined himself as a figure for public consumption.[254] Such a character was a wonderful thing for the Company to be

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[251] 'Evidently, the opportunity was not lost to introduce into the published account all the tropes of the intrepid adventurer: the desire; the imagination to settle by oneself on a course of action, then to persuade others of it; the musketeer-like devotion of all the men; and the handsome consent of the perfect supernumerary', MacLaren, 'The HBC's Arctic Expedition', 469–71. Sabine recognized that Simpson's text unfairly maligned Dease in generated its image of Simpson but admitted to making very few changes to a narrative that he admired.

[252] Ibid.

[253] Simpson, *Narrative of the Discoveries on the North Coast of America*, 178–79.

[254] Ian MacLaren makes comes to this idea as a point of comparison between Simpson and Dease - 'while Dease evidently did not consider the possibility of a public audience for his field notes, it appears that Simpson could not imagine not having one for his journal' MacLaren, 'The HBC's Arctic Expedition', 474 - but that is not entirely true. While Dease's accounts were much more workmanlike than Simpson's, he too, was interested in seeing his text published. In a letter inquiring after George Simpson's health, Dease expressed his eagerness to be actively involved in the publication process: 'I fear that I may be trespassing too much on your time but would feel obliged would you have the Kindness to inform me if it is intended to publish the narrative of our discoveries and whether I could be of any service in the event of its publication by imparting any information I could give', HBCA D.5/8, ff. 46-7. Peter Warren Dease to Sir George Simpson, 23 January 1843.

seen to be associated with. The narrative, of course, also contained explicit praise for the Company, served to a greater audience than any other HBC publication before it. It opened with praise for the HBC's 'zealous and effective cooperation [with Franklin and Back's expeditions] well known to the British public' and an argument that the Company's network of posts, influence with indigenous peoples, knowledge of resources and 'habitude to the hardships of the country' made them 'the most likely to ensure success' in the quest for the Passage.[255] It also took the opportunity to counter the Company's public critics, including a lengthy disposition on the HBC's 'zealous and indefatigable… labours in the fields of export, settlement, education, proselytization, and peacekeeping', for which they had righteously sought no compensation, before recounting the adventures of the expedition.[256]

While press coverage of Simpson and Dease's progress had been active and widespread – Simpson himself had been given a collection of such papers and remarked 'I see that our Expedition is regarded as a national one; and we have every reason to be highly gratified with the manner in which it has been noticed' – the same can not quite be said regarding Simpson's actual published narrative.[257] Unfortunately for the HBC, a succession of underwhelming publications – Parry in 1826, Beechey in 1831, and Back in 1836 and 1838 – had slowly sapped critical fascination and commercial profitability from lavishly published Arctic narratives and generated accusations that Barrow's purpose in pursuing the Passage had become to 'make big books for Mr. Murray'.[258] The kind of cultural success enjoyed by Parry and Franklin's first narratives was

[255] Simpson, *Narrative of the Discoveries on the North Coast of America*, 1–2.
[256] Ibid., 13–25.
[257] Thomas Simpson to Donald Ross, 30 January 1839 Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia*, 217. In April of the same year he also wrote 'we have every reason to be highly gratified by the manner in which our lowly services have been appreciated by a generous public', Thomas Simpson to Donald Ross, 30 April 1839, ibid, 220.
[258] This particular quote comes from *London Magazine*. For more on this critical turn in Arctic publishing, see Cavell, 'Making Books for Mr Murray'.

largely no longer attainable. Thomas Simpson himself had been cognizant of the fact, having fretted to his friend Donald Ross that 'I will no doubt have the honor and trouble of publishing our travels, no doubt, but the subject is so hackneyed and exhausted… little remains to be won in that line'.[259] Indeed, Richard Bentley, the narrative's publisher, did not make the same kind of swing at high-society notability that Murray's volumes had, releasing Simpson's text in modest octavo rather than prestigious quarto format, without illustrations, and at around a quarter the price of Parry's first narrative.[260] The critical attention that the narrative did receive was positive, but it came in much lesser volume than either Simpson might have been hoped for, with reviews appearing only in the *Athenæum* and the *Quarterly*. The former called the book a 'lively history of one of the most remarkable expeditions… remarkable as an example of bold and comprehensive plans, carried into execution with a rare union of consummate prudence and indomitable courage'.[261] Francis Egerton, for the *Quarterly*, wrote that while 'his volume can of course present little attraction in the way of novelty', Thomas Simpson's style was 'remarkable even beyond that of his recent predecessors' and afforded him a place 'on the long list of British worthies'.[262] Usefully for the Company, the narrative had also succeeded in passing on certain elements of propaganda. Egerton continued: 'There is one fact, evidence of which pervades the volume, and which makes us rise from its perusal with peculiar satisfaction, we mean the truly humanising and Christian effect of the operations of the Hudson's Bay Company on the aboriginal tribes', a remarkable development, he declared, in comparison to the recent past, when 'probably in no part of the world had the European invaders set a worse example to the native tribes'.[263]

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[259] Thomas Simpson to Donald Ross, 18 January 1838, Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia*, 130.
[260] Cavell, 'Making Books for Mr Murray', 67.
[261] 'Reviews: Narrative of the Discoveries on the North Coast of America', *Athenæum*, no. 824 (1843): 725.
[262] Francis Egerton, 'Simpson's Narrative of Discoveries', *Quarterly Review* 73 (December 1843): 116, 113, 113–14.
[263] Ibid., 117.

Ultimately, though, the achievements of Dease and Simpson, radiant in the trappings of Romantic aesthetics, made perhaps even more appealing by Simpson's tragic and mysterious death, had been enough. The Company achieved exactly what it had hoped to. Their dedication to the aesthetics of Northwest Passage exploration – in terms of events, morals and presentation – had generated enough good will that their license for exclusive trade was renewed for twenty years on 30 May 1839, while Simpson and Dease still worked on the last season of their explorations.[264] The First Lord of the Admiralty, representing one example of good will generated within the Government, congratulated Pelly on 'the success of an expedition reflecting so much credit upon the public spirit & liberality of your company, and upon the enterprize and intelligence of its officers'.[265] Regarding the trouble with the Russians in the Stikine, Pelly had in 1837 directly referenced the expedition as a reason that the Government should support the HBC, but that problem had disappeared when the HBC and RAC amicably settled their differences.[266] The *Penny Magazine* had also written, when reporting on Dease and Simpson's success, that 'it is not too much to anticipate that they will receive, as they deserve, some public testimony of the sense which the country entertains of their spirit and perseverance', an expectation that was met when the Crown offered them each a yearly pension of £100 and the Royal Geographical Society awarded them both its gold medal.[267] Dease found himself fraternising with the great and the good of Arctic

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[264] Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 2:650; Alexander Simpson, when demanding financial rewards owed to his deceased brother, wrote 'That my brother perished, is surely no reason for withholding from his heirs the rewards which he had won by his past services; particularly when, as is notorious, those services had much influence in obtaining for you, from the British Government, the gratuitous renewal of your grant of trade', Alexander Simpson to HBC, 20 May 1844, Simpson, *Life and Travels*, 390.

[265] Lord Minto to John Henry Pelly, 20 April 1838, Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia*, 153.

[266] John Henry Pelly to Lord Glenelg, 10 February 1837, Klotz, *Certain Correspondence of the Foreign Office and of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 24–25; The Stikine Crisis was resolved when the RAC agreed to lease a strip of coastline to the HBC in 1839, Simpson, *London Correspondence Inward*, lv.

[267] 'Discovery of the North-West Passage', 154; Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 151; The RGS added that in offering these medals, it could not refrain from 'expressing their admiration of the spirited and liberal conduct of Governor Pelly and the Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, so honorable to British commercial enterprise', HBCA A.6/25, f. 35v, Committee to George Simpson, 1 June 1839; There was some speculation that the explorers also expected a knighthood, Letitia Hargrave to Dugald McTavish, 2 September 1840, Letitia Hargrave, *The Letters of*

exploration and expressed himself 'more grateful than I can express and more honoured than I deserve'.[268] Pelly was honoured with a baronetcy and George Simpson finally found the social recognition he had craved in the form of a knighthood and a narrative that espoused his liberality that he could show off amongst noble company.[269] At a cost of only £1,000, the expedition had proven to be a terrific investment for the HBC, and an astute reading of the cultural understanding of exploration.[270]

It had been such a success that George Simpson repeated the trick in 1844, dispatching John Rae to finish the work of mapping the coastline during a flashpoint in the struggles with American expansionism in the Oregon Country.[271] 'We look confidently to you for the solution of what may be deemed the final problem in the geography of the northern hemisphere', read his instructions: 'The eyes of all who take an interest in the subject are fixed on the Hudson's Bay Company'.[272] Indeed, the exercise was once again almost entirely about those eyes. As one of the governor's most trusted men, Donald Ross, explained:

> I really wish to see this long pending question finally set at rest under the auspices of the Company – my own opinion is that we shall soon require the assistance of the "strong arm" of Government, on both sides of the Rocky mountains, and it can only be by the liberal use of the means and power we possess, towards the advancement of religion, knowledge, civilization, science, and Discoveries… that we can hope to receive any sympathy or support from the

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Letitia Hargrave, ed. Margaret Arnett MacLeod (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), 78, but there is no direct evidence of this in the writings of Dease or Simpson. In fact, Simpson seemed resigned to not receiving such an honour, at one point grumbling 'Had I been in His Majesty's service, I should have expected some brilliant reward, but the poor Fur trade has none such to bestow', Thomas Simpson to Donald Ross, 18 January 1838, Dease, *From Barrow to Boothia*, 130. Dease also received a medal from the Royal Geographical Society of Paris, HBCA D.5/8, ff. 46-7. Peter Warren Dease to Sir George Simpson, 23 January 1843.

[268] McCord Stewart Museum, P241, M2715, Peter Warren Dease to John Richardson, undated 1840.

[269] Simpson brought copies of his nephew's narrative with him on his circumnavigation of the globe, Raffan, *Emperor of the North*, 316; He also posed in front of a shelf carrying the narrative for his 1857 portrait, Pearce and Scott, *Sir George Simpson*. Clearly, he believed that the narrative was important in communicating to others his self-image of importance.

[270] This sum comes from Rich, *Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*, 1960, 3:649.

[271] For more on Simpson's role in and understanding of the Oregon dispute, see ibid., 3:721–31.

[272] Rae, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Shores of the Arctic Sea in 1846 and 1847*, 17.

> government or the nation at large, [as] in our true character of "monopolists" we need expect but little favour.[273]

When Rae's narrative was published, it opened with a dedication to George Simpson, 'the zealous promoter of Arctic discovery', who was credited as the sole instigator of the enterprise.[274] The whole expedition was an exercise in image management, one final piece of evidence that in Romantic Britain the most important utility of the Northwest Passage had ceased to be anything tangible – private riches, national wealth, or science – and instead become the abstract *look* of involving oneself in its pursuit. The emotions stirred by exploration as understood in a Romantic culture were powerful enough to guide public perceptions of nation, company, and individual, without the need to actually discover anything of use. The Hudson Bay Company, by cynically exploiting this, make an excellent demonstration of that cultural meaning.

UNDERSTANDING A POST-FRANKLIN ARCTIC

The easy narrative of the Romantic Arctic disintegrated at the mid-point of the nineteenth century. In an individual sense, its greatest proponents retreated from the public eye: Barrow published his final northern article in the *Quarterly* in 1843 then retired from his position of power at the Admiralty two years later, and his ally John Murray concurrently left the business of publishing lavish Arctic narratives.[275] More fundamentally, the British reading public had vastly increased in size over the half-century, alongside an explosion in the accessibility of visual culture, greatly reducing the ability of men like Barrow and Murray to dominate cultural conversations regarding

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[273] Donald Ross to James Hargrave, 29 April 1845, quoted in Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal*, 156.
[274] Rae, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Shores of the Arctic Sea in 1846 and 1847*, iii, 2. See also: 'It was named Simpson's Peninsula after Sir George Simpson, the able and enterprising Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories, who projected and planned the expedition, and to whose zeal in the cause of discovery Arctic travellers have been so often and so much indebted', 131.
[275] In the 1850s all but one of the Franklin search narratives were published by other publishers, Cavell, 'Making Books for Mr Murray', 68.

the North as they once had.[276] Equally importantly, the cold, brutal deaths, reported by John Rae in 1854 and confirmed by Leopold McClintock in 1859, of Franklin and his crew, who had departed in a fanfare of glory to complete the Northwest Passage by sea in 1845, dealt an almighty blow to the image of gallant explorers, as strong as the empire that they personified Romantically adventuring through perilous landscapes. The process described by Jen Hill wherein the travails of Arctic explorers were seen to represent the testing of a mythical national male body produced very different emotional responses when that body failed the test – both physically, and with reports of cannibalism that darkly echoed the racist ethnologic reports of earlier explorers, morally.[277] New, complicated emotions, therefore, entered the cultural conversation surrounding the Northwest Passage, and with no one voice able to dominate that conversation, its meaning splintered.[278] While emotion continued to be the dominant factor in understanding the Passage, as it had since the turn of the century, never again would a defining central idea dominate that understanding, as had been the case in the ages of commerce, science, or Romance.

Some voices fought to steady the destabilizing narrative and return to normality. While Franklin's fate was still uncertain, many adopted his plight into the aesthetics of Romantic gallantry.[279] Britain, they envisioned, would once again bravely rally to rescue a hero, as it had

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[276] Richard D. Altick, 'English Publishing and the Mass Audience in 1852', *Studies in Bibliography* 6 (1954): 3–24; Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*, 74; 'The Franklin expedition's most important… passage may have been through the narrowing straits connecting an old elite visual and textual culture - one that was fundamentally anti-egalitarian and for which the image was a private pleasure for the cognoscenti - to a new one, in which the reproducibility of the image would enable the mass production of visual culture on a grand scale', ibid.

[277] Hill, *White Horizon*, 45–46; John Meares, for example had described cannibalistic practices on the Nort West coast, Christon I. Archer, 'Cannibalism in the Early History of the Northwest Coast: Enduring Myths and Neglected Realities', *The Canadian Historical Review* 61, no. 4 (1980): 464.

[278] Indeed, the unraveling of cultural authority regarding the Arctic even opened the door to the highly emotional world of the supernatural. For example, Lady Franklin, the leading voice in the search for her husband, consulted Emma L., "the Seeress of Bolton", when developing her plans, a far cry from the practices of Joseph Banks, the leading voice on Arctic issues in an earlier time. McCorristine, *Spectral Arctic: A History of Dreams and Ghosts in Polar Exploration*, 87–98.

[279] See Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*, Chapter 7.

done when Back set out after Ross, and the whole enterprise would be an emotional adventure that proved the nobility of the nation.[280] 'Hardship, and even repeated failure, do not damp the ardor of our officers in competing for the command of ships sent to the Arctic regions in search of Sir John Franklin's party', wrote the *Spectator* in February 1850, 'those seamen desire to be tested, and they are and yet they still covet the trial of their strength in heart and limb. It is a noble and wholesome desire; it furnishes the occasion for indulging the spirit of adventure which animates all true chivalry'.[281] Jules Verne's *A Winter Amid the Ice* imagined for readers the thrilling adventures of those searching for a missing captain in the far north, and climaxed with said captain found alive.[282] Even after Franklin's death became unavoidable fact, many attempted to stress the Romantic courage and self-sacrifice of the expedition, reinterpreting his dying moments as an ultimate example of noble perseverance. *The Frozen Deep* – written by Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens and rapturously received by audiences that boasted members like Queen Victoria, Leopold I of Belgium, and Hans Christian Andersen – for example, can be read as an attempt to decisively reaffirm the comfortable, old Arctic narrative by rejecting the spectre of cannibalism and the idea that English masculinity could fail Hill's test.[283] Richard Wardour, the play's Franklin – a parallel made explicit in a fourth-wall breaking prologue – was shown feeling the temptations of cannibalism when faced with starvation and death in the Arctic, but, at the climactic moment,

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[280] Ross' story was invoked, for example, by the Royal Geographical Society in its pursuit of Franklin, 'Royal Geographical Society', *The Times*, 13 January 1852, 5; Perhaps the most frequent invoker of this parallel was Richard King, who had served under Back on that expedition. See for example Richard King, 'To the Right Ho. Earl Grey', *Athenæum*, no. 1024 (1847): 621.

[281] 'Arctic Enterprise', *Spectator*, 23 February 1850, 14.

[282] Jules Verne, 'A Winter Amid the Ice [Un Hivernage Dans Les Glaces]', *Musée Des Familles* 22, no. 6 & 7 (1855): 161–76, 209–20; While Verne was of course French, his works can be understood as 'conservatively confident in the zeitgeist of Victorian Britain: confident in progress, enthusiastic about science and committed to imperialism', Richard Phillips, *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure* (London: Routledge, 1997), 133.

[283] A recurring theme in press reviews of the play and in Dickens' correspondence was the phenomenon of audiences reduced to tears en masse. For quotations, see: Heather Davis-Fisch, *Loss and Cultural Remains in Performance: The Ghosts of the Franklin Expedition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 165–66, 180–86.

triumphantly rejected them.[284] He did so in a manner that reaffirmed the Arctic as a place where hardship fortified the English character rather than casting it into doubt: 'I heard the night-wind come up in silence from the Great Deep. It bore past me the groaning of the ice-bergs at sea, floating, floating past! – and the wicked voice floated away with it – away, away, away forever'.[285] Furthermore, Wardour bravely accepted his death, in a manner reminiscent of Dickens' refutation of Rae's reports which stated that Franklin and his men 'lay down side by side, calmly and even cheerfully awaiting their release from this world', and his crewmates even make it out alive.[286] Thusly, Jen Hill concludes, 'Dickens constructs a stable, white national identity… in the melodrama, transgression is recuperated by its conservative mechanics to unify audiences into the reaffirmation of shared values'.[287] Similarly, Verne's *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, published the same year, featured characters who built a ship from the wreckage of a doomed Northwest Passage expedition and used it to successfully reach the north pole, forming a parable in which Franklin's bravery lives on beyond his death as a success, not failure, of Romantic masculinity.[288] Even among these voices, however, change was unavoidable. While the gallant quest for Franklin was pictured as national mission, this mission had become dislocated from the actual state apparatus of the nation. Indeed, a central unifying theme in press coverage of the search was criticism for the Government's handling of it.[289] The character of the nation remained a central concern, but the concerns of that world were being pursued, as popularly imagined, in opposition

[284] "Pause on the footprints of heroic men, / Making a garden of the desert wide / Where PARRY conquer'd and FRANKLIN died', Wilkie Collins, *Under the Management of Mr. Charles Dickens: His Production of 'The Frozen Deep'*, ed. Robert Louis Brannan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 97.
[285] Ibid., 159.
[286] Ibid.; Charles Dickens, 'The Lost Arctic Voyagers', *Household Words* 10, no. 245 (December 1850): 362.
[287] Hill, *White Horizon*, 116, 134.
[288] Jules Verne, *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras [Voyages et Aventures Du Capitaine Hatteras]* (Paris: Pierre-Jules Hetzel, 1866).
[289] Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*, 15, 171.

to the imperatives of the state – a far cry from the state commerce that drove conversations in Dobbs' time, or the imperial rivalries of Barrow's.

For many others, however, the image of the Northwest Passage underwent a dark transformation. As has often been discussed, the Franklin disaster made an indelible impact on the aesthetics of the Arctic, dealing a nigh-mortal blow to the influence of the Picturesque and fundamentally changing the tenor of the Sublime Arctic, which was robbed of its qualities of joy and exaltation, leaving only its terror.[290] Gothic imaginings of frozen latitudes – *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), *Frankenstein* (1818), *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838) – had of course been published before the disaster, but in those tales the ice tended to act as a negative space from which supernatural beings that reflected the self could emerge to haunt the protagonist; in the post-Franklin Arctic, it was the Arctic itself that imperilled the human.[291] In Frederick Edwin Church's "The Icebergs" (1861) [*FIGURE 7*], for example, the established order of the Arctic was disrupted in a twisted version of an archetypal Romantic image of the Sublime North: the colossal iceberg looming over a brave ship, as seen for example in the paintings of George Back [*FIGURE 8*]. Here, the implied threat of the Sublime scene was finally realized, perverting it, the iceberg having come crashing down on the ship, consuming it, leaving behind only a broken mast, tiny in a landscape it was foolish to have ever entered. This was made most literal by Edwin Landseer in his "Man Proposes, God Disposes" (1864) [*FIGURE 9*], in which polar

[290] For examples of such discussions, see: MacLaren, 'The Aesthetic Mapping of Nature in the Second Franklin Expedition'; Loomis, 'The Arctic Sublime'; Atwood, *Strange Things*; David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination*; Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*.

[291] For a discussion of these texts, see Bowers, 'Haunted Ice, Fearful Sounds, and the Arctic Sublime: Exploring Nineteenth-Century Polar Gothic Space'; The prophetic nature of Frankenstein, in which Walton's change in attitude towards the Arctic mirrored that of wider society in the decades that followed, has often been remarked upon. See Loomis, 'The Arctic Sublime', 170; Maurice Hodgson, 'The Literature of the Franklin Search', in *The Franklin Era in Canadian Arctic History, 1845-1859*, ed. Patricia Sutherland (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1985), 2–3; Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer*, 14–15; Fulford, Lee, and Kitson, *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era*, 170; Hill, *White Horizon*, 56–69.

bears, synecdoche for the North, grotesquely devour a British ship and its former inhabitants.[292] Indeed, the image of the Arctic as a malevolent force capable of conquering all humanity foolish enough to enter its maw has continued to wield influence over popular imaginings to this day.[293] The first episode of David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991, 2017), in which an uncanny, supernaturally disturbed town confounds a visiting FBI agent, for example, was titled "Northwest Passage".[294]

FIGURE 7: "The Icebergs". [295]

FIGURE 8: "An iceberg, the HMS Terror and some walrus near the entrance of Hudson Strait".[296]

[292] Potter has also described the way in which bones, such as those seen in Landseer's painting, became a 'metonym of the Arctic' Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*, 142.
[293] Sherrill Grace describes today's image of the Canadian Arctic as 'a North that is cold, snow-filled, silent, deadly, and female. It will drive you mad and destroy/devour you', Grace, *Canada and the Idea of North*, 121; See also Atwood, *Strange Things*.
[294] 'Northwest Passage', *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990).
[295] Frederic Edward Church, *The Icebergs*, 1861, Oil on Canvas, 1861, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas.
[296] George Back, *An Iceberg, the HMS Terror and Some Walrus near the Entrance of Hudson Strait*, 1840, Watercolour, 1840, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

FIGURE 9: "Man Proposes, God Disposes".[297]

Compare these depictions, for instance, to the 1820 pantomime *The North West Passage; or, Harlequin Esquimaux*, in which the Arctic was personified as the "Genius of the North", who presents the Northwest Passage as a playful riddle to be solved; far from devouring the explorers, the Genius intended to 'confound 'em, annoy 'em'.[298] The pantomime and its time's vision of explorers, who travelled 'in spite of danger & contempt of ease' ease' in order to discover a commercially useless passage 'to serve mankind' now seemed profoundly foolish.[299] This sense of folly was reinforced by the discovery of remains from the expedition. What wisdom or gallantry was there, to pick one example, in exhausting oneself dragging a boat full of trinkets across the Arctic?[300] In 1899 Franklin was still an effective reference to turn to for Joseph Conrad when constructing an opening to his scathing critique of imperial folly, *Heart of Darkness*.[301] The patent uselessness of the Northwest Passage, once the engine through which its explorers' risks of life

[297] Edwin Landseer, *Man Proposes, God Disposes*, 1864, Oil on Canvas, 1864, Royal Holloway, London.
[298] Eighteenth Century Drama, LA2190. "The North West Passage; or, Harlequin Esquimaux", 20 December 1820.
[299] Eighteenth Century Drama, LA2190. "The North West Passage; or, Harlequin Esquimaux", 20 December 1820.
[300] Potter, *Arctic Spectacles*, 159.
[301] Joseph Conrad, 'Heart of Darkness [Part 1]', *Blackwood's Magazine* 165 (February 1899): 194.

and limb generated glory, could for many now only generate doubt and scorn. Crucially, however, the Passage, in either conception, continued to be defined by emotions.

The Company willingly participated in attempts to stabilize the Arctic narrative because it had benefited handsomely from its paradigms, its contributions to the emotional quest for national prestige having paid out in endorsements for its continued commercial existence upon similarly emotional grounds. If those paradigms could survive, the Company could continue to reap the benefits. It therefore involved itself in the search for Franklin – to a surprising degree when considering the geographic distance between it and most of that search – often at considerable short-term detriment to its commercial operations.[302] Most famously, the HBC supported the repeated travels of John Rae, but it also oversaw expeditions led by John Ross and James Anderson, and lent support to visiting searchers such as John Richardson and William Pullen. This dissertation will use Ross' expedition of 1850 as demonstration.

Ross, himself a potent symbol of the Barrow era of exploration, now in his seventies, turned to the HBC for support in mounting an expedition after his overtures to the Admiralty were rejected.[303] His proposal to Pelly read:

> In the grateful remembrance of the kind and humane interest, that you and other members of the Honourable the Hudsons Bay Company took in my rescue at a time when with my devoted companions I appeared doomed to end a miserable existence in the frozen Regions; and well knowing that your Sympathy extends also towards my gallant friend Sir John Franklin and his crews of 138 brave men, [I call upon you]… I hold it to the duty of all, who can in any way respond to this imperative call on their humanity to lend… aid; and it is with this feeling I now come forward to offer my humble service, which I tender without fee or reward.[304]

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[302] In the Yukon, for example, particularly at Fort Selkirk and Pelly Banks, the search 'was most inopportune and caused a good deal of hardship' by draining resources to such a degree that not enough remained to support the still-young local trade, Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852*, 259.

[303] Ross' proposal to the Admiralty can be found at SPRI MS 486/8/10 D, John Ross to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 14 January 1850. It is likely that Ross was rejected because of his long-standing disagreements with senior Admiralty figures over the Croker Mountains mishap, which he exacerbated with inflammatory comments in his second narrative. The Admiralty dispatched Horatio Thomas Austin in Ross' place.

[304] HBCA E.15/7, ff. 17-17v. John Ross to John Henry Pelly, 12 February 1850.

In Ross' formulation, the search for Franklin was not a terrifying new frontier, but a direct parallel to the experiences of the 1830s, when he was lost in the ice but emerged alive. His and Back's famed escapades, he proposed, would be replicated in an emotional rescue of Franklin, a proposal in which the rescuers and the rescued alike could be defined entirely by their gallantry and braveness. He also proposed that 'at any rate in surveying the remaining 140 miles [we will] thereby determine the existence of a N. W. passage' – despite everything, the Passage remained a worthwhile goal.[305] Pelly agreed to support the expedition, putting £500 of Company funds toward the cost of the expedition and the weight of the Company behind a drive for public subscriptions for the rest.[306] Pelly placed an advertisement in the *Times*, declaring: 'Feeling, in common with the country at large, that nothing should be left untried that holds out the most distant prospect of relieving the missing expedition, or even of ascertaining its fate; and knowing the eminent qualifications of Sir John Ross for the task' – another attempt to cling on to old narratives: Ross might have proven himself qualified two decades ago, but he was now at a dangerously advanced age for Arctic travel – 'I have great pleasure in recommending his proposal to public attention'.[307] As long as searching for Franklin could be understood as a emotional continuation of the Romantic-era search for the Northwest Passage – the *Nautical Magazine* affectionately called Ross "the ancient mariner", literalizing his connection to the old Romantic narrative – this attention would be welcome.[308] The *Times*, amongst others, continued to supply attention, frequently updating its readership on the progress of the expedition, and when further funds were needed, reproducing a letter from the HBC that reiterated the desired themes: 'I feel confident that a British

[305] HBCA E.15/7, f. 9v. John Ross to John Henry Pelly, 12 February 1850.
[306] HBCA E.15/7, f. 19. John Henry Pelly to John Ross, 15 February 1850; The total cost of outfitting the expedition came to £1880.15, HBCA E.15/7, f. 90. Sloan & Gemmell to Archibald Barclay, 1 June 1850.
[307] HBCA E.15/7, ff. 126-127. "Sir John Franklin: To the Editor of the "Times"", newspaper extract, 16 February 1850. The call for subscriptions was reiterated three times in the following months, with the additional detail that this expedition was not operating in opposition to Austin's, HBCA E.15/7, ff. 128, 131, 137.
[308] 'New Books', *Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle* 20 (1851): 108–11.

public, ever ready to appreciate acts of daring intrepidity and generous devotedness, will not allow a veteran officer who has acted so noble a part in a sacred cause, to add a pecuniary sacrifice to his arduous personal services'.[309] Public commendation also came from Ross himself, who declared that 'the Conduct of the Governor and Committee of the Honorable the Hudsons Bay Company is so much beyond all praise that I feel distressed because no words can do justice either to their liberality or to my feelings'.[310] Upon Ross' return the Linwood Gallery at Leicester Square hosted a "Grand Moving Panorama" depicting Ross' 'thrilling and perilous voyages' and promising to place before the public 'the Sublime Scenery and Phenomena of the Polar World', a continuation of the old imagining, where the Arctic landscape was thrilling enough to be worthy of public presentation but nonetheless implicitly conquerable, able to be contained in a gallery and sold as a curiosity for two shillings.[311]

There were moments, however, in this coverage, when it was clear that the aura of Arctic exploration had been punctured with doubt. For example, despite declaring Ross 'gallant' and 'a man of firm nerve', the *Shipping Gazette* reported that his ship, 'more the appearance of a yacht than a vessel intended for the difficult and dangerous service for which she is destined', had gone to sea 'in a sad state of disorder, from the continued drunkenness of the crew'.[312] More significantly, when Ross returned convinced that Franklin was dead – anathema to the Romantic

[309] "The Arctic Expeditions", *The Times*, 4 October 1851, 1; Updates on the expedition published by the *Times* were "Sir John Ross and Sledging by Dogs", *The Times*, 18 February 1850, 8; "Naval Intelligence", *The Times*, 23 February 1850, 7; "Naval Intelligence", *The Times*, 5 April 1850, 7; "Naval Intelligence", *The Times*, 23 April 1850, 8; "Naval Intelligence", *The Times*, 6 May 1850, 8; "Departure of Sir John Ross", *The Times*, 29 May 1850, 4; "Naval Intelligence", *The Times*, 6 September 1850, 7; "The Arctic Expedition", *The Times*, 1 October 1850, 8; [Untitled], *The Times*, 2 October 1850, 4; "Carrier Pigeons from Sir John Ross", *The Times*, 25 October 1850, 3; "Naval Intelligence", *The Times*, 29 September 1851, 7; "Search for Sir John Franklin", *The Times*, 29 September 1851, 4; "The Arctic Expeditions", *The Times*, 4 October 1851, 6

[310] HBCA E.15/7, f. 7. Speech of Sir John Ross at London Tavern, 10 May 1850.

[311] The Bill Douglas Cinema Museum, 77253, "Panorama publicity handbill: Grand moving panorama of the Arctic regions", 1852

[312] Reprinted as 'Sir John Ross's Expedition', 402–3.

narrative of the Arctic – publications like the *Athenaeum* worked to discredit his character, itself inherently a challenge to the old narrative where noble explorers embodied Romantic masculine ideals.[313] In the confused post-Franklin world, then, the supermen of Barrow's imagining, despite attempts to the contrary, could not be easily sustained as the cultural demands of understanding the Arctic pulled in competing diverse directions.

CONCLUSION

The Northwest Passage of the nineteenth century, therefore, was always one defined primarily by the cultural currency of emotions, both before and after the Franklin disappearance. In the popular understanding, as reflected and moulded by John Barrow, the emotions (passion, perseverance, nobility) felt and performed by the Romantic masculine explorer-ideal – a Parry, Franklin, or the fur trader who should be considered equally as important to analysis as these vaunted figures, Thomas Simpson – were seen to represent the superiority of British emotional values and thereby generated the all-important prize of national prestige, itself an emotion. The inherently emotional act of understanding Arctic geography as a Sublime force, against which the relevant emotions could be tested, formed a vital part of this process. What was important when pursuing the Passage had ceased to be what it could bring people, be that financial returns or scientific discoveries, but had become how it made them feel. That the HBC, particularly George Simpson, believed that engaging in this process – first as partner to Barrow's expeditions, then as a sponsor of exploration itself, and finally as a crucial player in the search for Franklin – would be the most effective way of acquiring the cultural and political capital it needed to secure its continued existence, despite public doubt over its monopolistic practices and treatment of indigenous peoples, speaks volumes

[313] 'there is no end to Sir John Ross's contradictions:- and his opinions shift about in a manner having quite a curious non-relation to the state of the evidence before him', 'The Arctic Expeditions', *Athenæum*, no. 1260 (1850): 1345.

of the power of these emotions. Despite offering less potential for tangible benefits than it ever had before, the Passage had, for half a century, become more culturally important than ever before. The Franklin disaster distorted and dimmed this power, but failed to fundamentally change the fact that the world of the Northwest Passage was now one primarily defined by its emotions, not its resources.

CONCLUSION

'How then am I so different from the first men through this way?
Like them, I left a settled life, I threw it all away
To seek a Northwest Passage at the call of many men
To find there but the road back home again'.

– Stan Rogers, 1981.[1]

LAST ACTS

By 1855 the sun was setting on the story of the Northwest Passage. Franklin's disappearance had turned Britons away from simple narratives of geographic progress and Romantic adventure, and then enthusiasm for expeditions searching for traces of the Passage's most famous face waned in the face of John Rae's 1854 report that 'a portion, if not all of the survivors of the long lost and unfortunate part under Sir John Franklin, had met with a fate as melancholy and dreadful as it is possible to imagine'.[2] As more time passed it only became more clear that the existence of survivors was unlikely, dreadful or otherwise. The *Times*, in November 1854, announced on behalf of the nation that it had 'had quite enough of great Arctic expeditions; since Sir Edward PARRY'S first voyage in 1819-20… they have invariably resulted in disappointment and disaster'.[3] Books continued to be published regarding the Northwest Passage, but these tended to be retrospective

[1] Rogers, *Northwest Passage*.
[2] John Rae to Archibald Barclay, 1 September 1854, Rae, *John Rae's Correspondence with the Hudson's Bay Company on Arctic Exploration, 1844-1855*, 265.
[3] 'The North-West Passage', *The Times*, 24 October 1854, 6; A week later, the Times also wrote 'The Arctic ice is already studded, as it were, with great ships which have been despatched in search of our lost friends, and it is a matter of notoriety that but little benefit has been derived from all the energy and endurance of their captains and crews, and from all the expense which has been lavished upon them', 'The Discovery of the North-West Passage', *The Times*, 2 November 1854, 6. It is interesting to see that 'energy and endurance' were no longer generative of 'benefit' in and of itself.

rather than prospective in nature, implicitly positioning the Passage as an object of the past.[4] Edward Belcher even titled the narrative of his Franklin search, published in 1855, *The Last of the Arctic Voyages*.[5] The HBC-led Franklin searching expedition launched that year under the command of James Anderson, therefore, represented one of the last gasps of a dying world.

The Anderson expedition was not only the final involvement of the fur trade in the story of the Northwest Passage, but also an effective demonstration of how the motivating forces of that engagement had waned, leaving almost nothing behind. Anderson and his second-in-command James Stewart travelled to the mouth of the Back River, following a request from the Admiralty that it be investigated to follow up on reports from Rae that some survivors of the missing expedition had been seen there.[6] In contrast to the deeply committed politics and emotions of the Simpson-Dease expedition twenty years prior, the 1855 expedition had an air of formality about it. Anderson and Stewart only spent nine days searching at the mouth of the Back River and failed to engage in any of the histrionic emotions of the Romantic explorers.[7] Traversing through the

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[4] See, for example, Fanny Mayne, *Voyages and Discoveries in the Arctic Regions* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1855); John Richardson, *Life of Sir John Franklin* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1856); Parry, *Memoirs of Rear-Admiral Sir W. Edward Parry, Kt., F.R.S. Etc., Late Lieutenant-Governor of Greenwich Hospital*; P. L. Simmonds, *The Arctic Regions and Polar Discoveries During the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1860); John Leslie and Hugh Murray, *Discovery and Adventure in the Polar Seas and Regions* (London: T. Nelson, 1860).

[5] Edward Belcher, *The Last of the Arctic Voyages: Being a Narrative of the Expedition in H.m.s. Assistance Under the Command of Captain Sir Edward Belcher in Search of Sir John Franklin, During the Years 1852-53-54* (London: L. Reeve, 1855).

[6] W. A. B Hamilton to Alexander Barclay, 27 October 1854, James Anderson and James Stewart, *Searching for Franklin: The Land Arctic Searching Expedition, 1855; James Anderson's and James Stewart's Expedition Via the Back River*, ed. William Barr (London: Hakluyt Society, 1999), 31–32; Back was consulted for his advice and noted that George Simpson, having worked extensively with his overland expedition, would also be an expert on the matter of traversing the Back River, 'Recommendations of Sir George Back, forwarded to Sir James Graham, First Lord of the Admiralty', 27 October 1854, ibid., 31.

[7] Despite not being intended for publication, a few slightly differing accounts of events exist. John Richardson published for the Royal Geographical Society extracts from a more polished diary of events, compiled by Anderson after the expedition for the eyes of his superiors, which can be found at James Anderson, 'Extracts from Chief-Factor James Anderson's Arctic Journal', ed. John Richardson, *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 27 (1857): 321–28; A copy of Anderson's field journal was published in its entirety a century later by Canadian Field-Naturalist: C. H. D. Clarke, ed., 'Chief Factor James Anderson's Back River Journal of 1855', *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 54 & 55, no. 8, 9, 10 (1941 & 1940): 63–67, 84–89, 107–9, 125–26, 134–36; 9–11, 21–26, 38–44; Stewart also kept field notes, which have been published at J. G. Stewart, 'The Diary of J. G. Stewart, 1855, Describing His

same landscape that had led George Back to rapturous descriptions of the Sublime, Anderson either tempered the imaginings of his lyrical predecessor – for example by noting that Back had 'estimated the heights of the Rocks too highly' and that 'all the rapids mentioned by Back were run without difficulty' – or refused entirely to engage in such rhetoric, such as when he told George Simpson that 'it was useless for me to repeat Back's descriptions of the country and scenery'.[8] The expedition did find evidence that some of Franklin's crew had been to Montreal Island [Nunavut], namely tools, wood shavings, rope, a snowshoe belonging to an officer of the *Erebus*, and a piece of wood with *Erebus* carved into it, but saw no bodies.[9] These findings, the expedition concluded, 'confirm[ed] without doubt Doctor Raie's [sic] surmises as to the fate of Captain Franklin's unfortunate expedition, namely that the ships had been crushed and the survivors had attempted to reach some of the Hudson Bay Forts via the Fish River had perished in the attempt'.[10]

While George Simpson told Anderson that 'the Company & their officers generally were raised in public estimation' by the expedition, it is clear that culture had moved on in such ways that Simpson no longer considered Arctic exploration to be a viable long-term strategy for generating this kind of good will, especially after the mauling Rae had received from some corners of society for his findings.[11] Indeed, in the splintered narrative of the Franklin search, Anderson's expedition had even generated some bad will. Franklin's widow Jane bitterly complained that 'Anderson's sole object, as might be expected, was to confirm Rae's story of their having perished

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Overland Journey in Search of the Franklin Expedition', ed. E. J. Holmgren, *Beaver* 310 (Spring 1980): 12–17; Extracts from each of these, as well as a host of other relevant documents, are reproduced in Anderson and Stewart, *Searching for Franklin*.

[8] Clarke, 'Anderson's Back River Journal', 85, 126. Anderson did admit that the 'Sand Cliffs' described by Back were 'beautiful', but his aesthetic appreciation never went beyond this in his text, 134; James Anderson to George Simpson, 29 November 1855, Anderson and Stewart, *Searching for Franklin*, 182; This comparison between Anderson and Back is also briefly made in a footnote to MacLaren, 'The Grandest Tour', 455n.

[9] Anderson, 'Extracts from Chief-Factor James Anderson's Arctic Journal', 323.

[10] Stewart, 'Diary of J. G. Stewart', 17.

[11] George Simpson to James Anderson, 16 April 1856, Anderson and Stewart, *Searching for Franklin*, 198; The backlash to Rae's reports of cannibalism are well documented. See for example McGoogan, *Fatal Passage*.

in a partr spot, tho' he brings no new proof of it but quite the reverse'; Sherard Osborn and Richard King both published highly critical accounts of the expedition; and a bitter exchange of letters played out in the *Times* debating whether Anderson had turned for home too soon.[12] Closing a chapter of the HBC's history, Simpson informed Anderson that the truncated and inconclusive expedition had 'quite fulfilled all that was expected from it by reasonable people' and, through a spokesperson, released a statement in the *Montreal Herald*, reproduced in the English press in January 1856, declaring that nothing more could be determined about Franklin's fate.[13] Anderson's journey was never considered for a lavish published narrative of the kind it had been envisioned Thomas Simpson would make his name through, and it duly entered such obscurity that when an Inuk guide told David Theophilus Hanbury in 1902 that he had met two canoes full of white men on the Back River as a young boy, the traveller declared for his readers that he had been lied to.[14] The fur trade had quietly slinked out of the game of the Northwest Passage and seemed to have few inhibitions in doing so. Cultural winds had changed, and there were few reasons to continue playing.

Following Anderson's report, the Admiralty also withdrew from the search for Franklin and refrained from Arctic expedition for another two decades.[15] The Government likewise refused

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[12] Lady Jane Franklin to Roderick Murchison, 8 December 1855, quoted in Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*, 224; Robert McClure, *The Discovery of the North-West Passage by H.M.S. 'Investigator', Capt R. M'Clure, 1850, 1851, 1852, 1853, 1854*, ed. Sherard Osborn (London: Longman, 1856), 366–81; Richard King, *The Franklin Expedition from First to Last* (London: John Churchill, 1855), 208–24. King, of course, was a long-standing critic of the HBC. His account of Anderson's expedition was particularly cutting, however. He claimed that the government had neglected a solemn duty in getting the HBC to lead the expedition, and directly compared the worth of the lost 'gallant' sailors to that of 'a commercial company'. For the letters to the Times, see Anderson and Stewart, *Searching for Franklin*, 238–42.

[13] George Simpson to James Anderson, 16 April 1856, Anderson and Stewart, *Searching for Franklin*, 198; "Coverage in Montreal Herald', 24 December 1855, ibid., 189–92.

[14] Hanbury could only assume that he was referring to Back's expedition, which his guide was too young to have encountered, David Theophilus Hanbury, *Sport and Travel in the Northland of Canada* (London: Arnold, 1904), 123–24.

[15] Rae, *John Rae's Correspondence with the Hudson's Bay Company on Arctic Exploration, 1844-1855*, xc.

to entertain a petition calling for another expedition to finish the search.[16] The forces behind this petition later dispatched the 1859 expedition commanded by Leopold McClintock and privately funded by Lady Jane Franklin, which would be the last British expedition into the Northwest Passage. McClintock discovered bodies from the Franklin expedition and the famous Point Victory document that recorded Franklin's premature death at a date before any of the potential unpleasantness. McClintock could not rescue the Northwest Passage from the pallor of death that fuelled a lot of post-Franklin doubt, but he had absolved Franklin as an individual from the spectre of cannibalism and thusly ensured him a legacy flavoured with nobility rather than disgrace.[17] 'The terrible shadow which has darkened for so many years the imaginations of men', reported the *Athenæum*, 'is now removed'.[18] The nation's ghost could rest in peace. And that was it. Thus closed the story of Britain's involvement in the story of the Northwest Passage.

But what of the discovery of the Passage itself?[19] Robert McClure, who had departed in 1850 in search of Franklin's missing expedition, had commanded the first expedition to travel from one side of the Arctic Archipelago to the other. He did so in a ramshackle fashion that involved losing both his ship the *Investigator* and a second which had rescued him, Henry Kellett's *Resolute*, to the ice. McClure discovered, without travelling through, the frozen McClure Strait and Prince of Wales Strait, the final links of two particularly frigid Northwest Passages higher in latitude than

[16] The petition can be found in Francis Leopold M'Clintock, *The Voyage of the 'Fox' in the Arctic Seas* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1860), 319–34.
[17] For a discussion of the way McClintock's expedition reframed the sorrow of the Franklin disappearance, see Cavell, *Tracing the Connected Narrative*, Chapter 9.
[18] 'The Arctic Mystery', *Athenæum*, no. 1665 (1859): 398.
[19] Ken McGoogan has advanced the theory that John Rae, by discerning that King William Island was separated from the North American mainland by what is now called Rae Strait, had effectively discovered the Passage in 1854, but this has been debunked by William Barr and, since this claim was not discussed either by Rae or the presses at the time it is something of a moot point for this study. McGoogan, *Fatal Passage*, 16; John Rae, *John Rae, Arctic Explorer: The Unfinished Autobiography*, ed. William Barr (Edmonton: Polynya Press, 2018), 512. As Barr notes, at the time of Rae's discovery, 240km of Passage remained unmapped.

the expected route along the North American coast.[20] These, more Passages in theory than reality, were enough to earn him a knighthood and a share of a £10,000 governmental prize for completing 'the last link in the chain of discovery to which many intrepid and persevering enterprises have contributed'.[21] Little closure, however, seemed to accompany McClure's achievements, especially with the fate of Franklin still uncertain. The *Times*, for instance, writing two weeks after McClure's return, declared that 'no ship has absolutely accomplished the North-West passage, although such a passage may be assumed as open once or twice in a century during favourable circumstances for short periods'.[22] The *Athenæum*, despite announcing that McClure had added 'fresh glory to the old and famous flag of England', conceded that his discovery was 'clouded by the sad fact, that the intrepid conquerors of this mysterious route have come on no traces of Franklin and his unfortunate companions'.[23] *Leisure Hour* reported that 'the enterprise of ages has at last been *all but* accomplished' and recommended that once Franklin's fate was apparent, 'we shall do well to abandon the arctic seas to whalers and sealers'.[24] This was hardly the triumphant rhetoric of Dobbs or Barrow.

Later, McClintock claimed that Franklin was 'the *first real discoverer of the North-West Passage*', declaring that 'this great fact must therefore be inscribed upon the monument of Franklin'.[25] This wasn't a particularly solid claim, being based on the presence of a skeleton on the southern coast of King William Island (we now know that *Erebus* and *Terror* never sailed through Rae Strait, the only navigable passageway at that time), but it made a tidy and satisfying

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[20] McClure's story was recounted in McClure, *The Discovery of the North-West Passage by H.M.S. 'Investigator', Capt R. M'Clure, 1850, 1851, 1852, 1853, 1854*.
[21] McClure received half of this prize, with the other half divided amongst his crew, Parliament, *Report from the Select Committee on Arctic Expedition* (London: Ordered by the House of Commons, 1855), vi.
[22] '[Untitled]', *The Times*, 21 October 1854, 7.
[23] 'The Arctic Expeditions', *Athenæum*, no. 1335 (1853): 1224.
[24] 'Commander M'Clure and the North West Passage', *Leisure Hour* 2 (1853): 757, 759. Emphasis added.
[25] M'Clintock, *The Voyage of the 'Fox' in the Arctic Seas*, xiii.

end to the story of the Franklin search and the wider Arctic narrative, especially for a culture eager to move on to other obsessions following the slow revelation that the Passage was a hostile barren from which no benefits could be expected to emerge.[26] Retrospective histories published following McClintock's return reflected his claims. P. L. Simmonds' *The Arctic Regions and Polar Discoveries During the Nineteenth Century* told readers that 'Sir John Franklin's heroes, all unknown to the world, discovered the north-west passage in 1848, and, having fulfilled the object of their voyage, they died on the scene of their triumph'.[27] John Leslie and Hugh Murray's *Discovery and Adventure in the Polar Seas*, also published in 1860, likewise declared that 'their work was accomplished. It is to Franklin and his comrades that we owe the discovery of the North-West Passage'.[28] Looking back over half a century of exploration, *Macmillan's Magazine* reflected with satisfaction on 'the close of this great campaign of discovery', stating that 'Whoever wishes to see a great result summed up as shortly and simply as possible, need only glance at an Arctic chart of the date of the Peace of 1815, and then look at one drawn in the last half-year'.[29] In a most literal sense, McClintock's wish for the "monument of Franklin" was fulfilled in 1866 when a statue of Franklin was erected in London declaring that his crew had 'sacrificed their lives in completing the discovery of the North West Passage… they forged the last link with their lives'.[30] This was a note Britain was happy to conclude on. As the *Athenæum* concluded: 'Here we think the history of Arctic enterprise may profitably and honourably close. We have determined the Geographical question. We have recovered the memorials of our naval heroes. We have no further

[26] Ibid., 251, 267; Of course, it made for a slightly less satisfying conclusion if you were McClure, who expressed his anger that Jane Franklin and McClintock were 'so anxious to rob me of the honour' of discovering the Passage, Robert McClure to James Clark Ross, 3 May 1860, quoted in Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth*, 346.
[27] Simmonds, *The Arctic Regions and Polar Discoveries During the Nineteenth Century*, 588.
[28] Leslie and Murray, *Discovery and Adventure in the Polar Seas and Regions*, 277.
[29] Franklin Lushington, 'Arctic Enterprise and Its Results since 1815', *Macmillan's Magazine* 1 (1860): 270, 268.
[30] Matthew Noble, *Statue of John Franklin*, 1866, Sculpture, 1866.

duty to discharge'.[31] When the Passage was finally circumnavigated in 1906, it was by Norwegian hands in an expedition that, rather than travelling with the backing of a powerful company or Government, was so low-profile that it had to sneak out of its port in avoidance of the clutches of its captain's creditors.[32]

THE CHAMELEON PASSAGE

Why though, had the discovery of the Northwest Passage, after all the time, energy, and blood spent in its pursuit, proved to be such a comparative damp squib? People in the 1850s, it seemed, cared less about actually completing the discovery of the Passage than they had about speculations regarding the possibility of discovering it in 1719, 1749, 1776, 1785, 1819, or 1837. The most contemporary reason for this was that the desire to find balm for the cultural wound of the Franklin disappearance had, by the end, overshadowed the search for the Passage itself. A longer-term, and much more fundamental, issue was that the Passage had been slowly but surely stripped of each of the prizes that it had previously promised to enraptured and speculative public voices. Its potential as a route to precious deposits of gold or copper had dissipated as these resources routinely failed to appear as expected. The idea of the Northwest Passage as a nationally beneficial trade route to the East and site for northern trading colonies had buckled as explorers pushed its potential location into frozen latitudes totally inappropriate for such purposes. The motivating forces of the late eighteenth century conception of the Passage as a world interesting to science – specifically the drive for Linnean classification and the notion that this work was a "civilizing" force in the interests of the British Empire – faded as science developed into new forms and as

[31] 'The Arctic Mystery', 399.
[32] For a brief account of Roald Amundsen's circumnavigation of the Passage, see Williams, *Arctic Labyrinth*, 363–69; For a fuller account, see Roald Amundsen, *Roald Amundsen's 'the North West Passage': Being the Record of a Voyage of Exploration of the Ship 'Gjöa', 1903-1907* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1908).

explorers encountered new, seemingly immeasurable landscapes. Finally, the Barrowian idea that the prestige of Britain could be proven by the fortitude of Romantic explorers adventuring amongst the dangers of a Sublime Passage – itself a notion of Arctic geography that etymologically rested on the refutation of each previous Arctic dream – had been dealt hammer blows by the Franklin disaster's high-profile refutation of that fortitude and by the expansion of public literacy beyond the reach of a single Arctic meta-narrative. There was therefore almost nothing left on the table by the time of McClure's voyage for him to supposedly win by completing the Passage beyond personal pride.

This stripping away of reasons to care about the Passage was the almost inevitable result of the centuries spent exploring it. As time progressed, explorers travelled increasingly less into an unknown world full of potential, and increasingly more into a known entity. By the time of McClure almost the entirety of the Arctic Archipelago had been mapped, and in that mapping had become known as a very unrewarding place indeed. While the world of the Northwest Passage had remained largely unknown it had been able to serve as an empty vessel to be filled up with the dreams of those that pursued it and the cultures that they travelled from. The Passage had acted as a mirror on to which Britain had sequentially projected its obsessions with the riches of private trade, the "gospel of commerce" and its promises for national prosperity, Baconian and Linnean science, imperial prestige, and Romantic aesthetics. By the time of the Northwest Passage's completion, however, the mirror had become too fogged up with actual geography to effectively reflect anything. There was no enticing reflection for McClure to chase. In the Passage's place, the Poles, Africa, and Outer Space would go on to fulfil its old purpose. Today, with global warming increasingly wiping away the known parameters of its geography, the Northwest Passage once again presents an unknown future, an imaginary place to be filled with potential prizes – where

men once pictured gold or prestige, they now envision oil reserves or shipping lanes, reflecting their modern concerns and desires regarding issues such as climate change, energy, and globalization. The mirror, for better or for worse, is clearing.

This thesis has proven that a study of the fur trade – particularly the Hudson Bay Company, but also the North West Company, the King George's Sound Company, and the armchair speculators who discussed the roles that those companies should play – can serve as an effective way of demonstrating the ways in which the meaning of the Northwest Passage evolved over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Those running the fur trade were as subject to changes in culture as any in Britain, and, in seeking public support for their continued prosperity or even existence usually had an added incentive for adhering to these changes in their engagements with the Passage. James Knight, an elderly fur trade governor who bore little resemblance to the dashing protagonists of most histories of the Passage, demonstrates better than any other the conception at the turn of the eighteenth century that the Passage was a potential source of immediate riches with no inherent national connotations. The retreat of the HBC from the search for the Passage in the 1720s as its financial situation improved reinforces this conclusion by contrast; without the added "selfless" national obligations of later eras, there was no reason why the "selfish" explorations of Kelsey or Scroggs should continue. The story of the HBC's public battles with and eventual acquiescence to the beliefs of Arthur Dobbs effectively showcases the process through which the Passage was "nationalized" in a manner reflective of how trade in a wider sense was reinterpreted in the mid-eighteenth century through the "gospel of commerce". Through Joseph Banks' influence over the expeditions overseen by Richard Cadman Etches on the Pacific Coast and Samuel Wegg's attempts to use scientific exploration to convince London of the HBC's worthiness as a liberal institution we can observe the growing importance of science in British self-

conceptions towards the end of the eighteenth century. George Simpson's embrace of the aesthetics of Romantic exploration in his quest for personal credibility and emotional reasons for his Company's continued existence against waves of disapproval demonstrate the power that such emotions held in the early nineteenth century. Finally, the pro forma expedition of James Anderson and the HBC's subsequent public retreat from the world of Arctic exploration makes for an excellent demonstration of the Northwest Passage's demise as a tabula rasa upon which Britain could write its cultural dreams. At every stage of this history, therefore, the fur trade, so long neglected in the historiography of Arctic exploration, provides figures and stories strongly indicative of the focuses of their times for the historian to study.

It is high time, then, that we recognized that the history of the Northwest Passage can provide far more than Dads' book club accounts of the adventures of a select group of "great men". By understanding the Passage not as a place, but as an idea, we can understand its history with much greater nuance and help demonstrate the changing contours of the cultures that believed it worthwhile to send those men into the Arctic in the first place. To paraphrase Stan Rogers, when each explorer set out 'to seek a Northwest Passage at the call of many men', what they ultimately revealed was 'the road back home again'.[33]

[33] Rogers, *Northwest Passage*.

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