

Article

Echoes of Albany: The Transatlantic Reflections of Anne Grant in *Memoirs of an American Lady*

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Abstract: This essay explores the mid-eighteenth-century travel experience of Scottish writer Anne Macvicar Grant [1775–1838]. Grant is perhaps best known for her late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travel writing and anthropological discourse focussed primarily upon the Scottish Highlands. Yet, the majority of Grant’s childhood was spent in Albany, New York. After she had established herself as a writer and published various texts dealing with her more recent experience in the Scottish Highlands, in 1808, Grant published *Memoirs of an American Lady*, a semi-biographical account of her childhood spent in the multicultural contact zone of a British military outpost. There are two key issues that this essay explores. First, I discuss the process of memory. Unlike intentional travelogues of the time, Grant’s text was not compiled with the aid of a diary or ledger. Grant’s entire account comprises memories of events that occurred over forty years in the past. Part of this essay then discusses the potential fallibilities of the fragility of human memory upon the traveller. While it may be anticipated that this first issue is detrimental to the account of the traveller, the second key issue that I explore is arguably advantageous to Grant’s account. The extent to which Grant, throughout her life, immersed herself within various marginalised communities undoubtedly allows for the production of a more nuanced and balanced account of external cultures than was the custom at the time. What complicates this account is the mixing of memory and cultural immersion. In her writing around the Scottish Highlands, Grant frequently relies upon her experience of certain cultures as a child to explain and convey her understanding of the different marginalised communities she encounters as an adult. Integral to this essay is the fact that this mixing of memory and cultural exposure also occurs the opposite way around. In the *Memoirs*, the writer’s recollections of the Mohawk or the Kanien’kehà:ka people and colonial Dutch communities as a child seem to be coloured and subjected by her more recent experience of the Highland people.



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1. Introduction

This essay considers the mid-eighteenth-century travels of the early nineteenth-century Scottish writer, Anne MacVicar Grant (1755–1838). The genres that comprise Grant’s oeuvre vary, but her *Memoirs of an American Lady* (A. Grant [1808] 1846) stands out from her other texts owing to both its subject matter (American landscape and culture rather than a focus upon the Scottish Highlands) and, crucially, because, unlike her other travel writing, it was composed forty years after the actual travel had taken place. This text is historically important as it is one of few extended narratives that documents mid-eighteenth-century New York and unique because it is compiled by a Scottish woman traveller. Two notable

accounts of comparison are J. Hector [St. John de Crèvecoeur's](#) ([1782] 1903) *Letters from an American Farmer* and Cadwallader [Colden's](#) ([1727] 1755) *The History of the Five Indian Nations*. Crèvecoeur was a French nobleman who moved to New York, and his account was published after Grant's time in Albany. Colden was a Scottish-born physician who moved to Philadelphia in 1710, later serving as Governor of New York. Grant's text differs from these not only because it is compiled by a woman, but also because hers is a narrative partly constructed from the perspective of a child.

One aim of this essay is to provide an intervention by way of a revision of the modern scholarly criticism around Grant's time in America, challenging certain interpretations of the writer's work. Writers such as Pam Perkins ('Paradises Lost'), Kenneth McNeil ('Memory on the Margins' and 'The Location of Empire') and Betty Hagglund ('Not Absolutely a Native, Nor Entirely a Stranger') have been instrumental in facilitating a greater understanding around Grant's observations and ideals, yet there are certain caveats to this coalescent scholarly positioning of Grant as both conservative and romantic that warrant further discussion.

In broader terms, I use Grant's *Memoirs* to challenge the orthodox notion of the travelogue, whereby the physical journey is analysed but there is less regard for the extended mental journey. Notably, the perceived limitation of time impedes critical interpretations of Grant as an observer, aiming to fix the writer's philosophical position in one place. Equally, this same perceived limitation of time attempts to confine the experience of the traveller to a particular period. Grant's text shows that travel of the mind can begin long before the commencement of the physical journey and, equally, that the mental journey can continue long after the physical journey has terminated.

Finally, it is important to highlight here that while the first edition of Grant's *Memoirs* was published in London in 1808 (three years prior to the publication of *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland*) and was split into two volumes, for the purpose of this essay I have consulted the single volume 1846 edition that was published in New York. The reason for this is that the 1846 edition includes a useful publisher's notice that helps to contextualise some of the contemporary discourses around authenticity that are integral to the theoretical framing of my approach.

2. Part One: Memory and Retrospection

2.1. Reliability: Defining 'Truth'

In his book *Travel Writing*, Carl Thompson attempts to give a loose definition of what constituted travel writing in the eighteenth century. He addresses the liminality between travel *writing* and travel *fact* by stressing how detailed empiricism must inevitably subject itself to an interesting narrative. He goes on to discuss how these parameters tend to determine that '[...] the narrative offered by a travel book will almost invariably be a retrospective, first-person account of the author's own experience of a journey or of an unfamiliar place or people' (Thompson 2011, p. 14). He supplements this definition by drawing upon Paul Fussel's positioning of the genre as

a sub-species of memoir in which the autobiographical narrative arises from the speaker's encounter with distant or unfamiliar data, and in which the narrative—unlike that in a novel or a romance—claims literal validity by constant reference to actuality. (Thompson 2011, p. 14)

While Grant's *Memoirs of an American Lady* seems conducive with all the above specifications (a retrospectively composed, first-hand account broken down into chapters) the prospect of the text's 'literal validity' is encumbered to some degree by the fact that her memory of the events was inherently flawed. Writers such as Kenneth McNeil and Pam Perkins have previously highlighted specific historical inaccuracies in Grant's *Memoirs of*

an American Lady (McNeil 2020; Perkins 2005) contributing to the interpretation of the text as distinctly unreliable.

Readers of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel accounts had come to demand that the texts they were reading aimed at a faithful depiction of the subject matter they conveyed (Thompson 2011, p. 16). In some cases, formal conventions around travel were initiated by certain institutions, demanding that the traveller record the events and phenomena as near to the time as possible, preferably immediately after they were witnessed. Carl Thompson observes the following:

The keeping of journals was a key directive laid down for travellers by the Royal Society. It was intended to ensure that observations were recorded whilst still fresh in the memory, or even whilst the scenes and phenomena being described were still in front of the traveller, rather than being lazily remembered at a different location or later point in time. (Thompson 2011, p. 75)

Grant's account is entirely polarised from any such criteria. The fact that Grant's account was drawn from memory (forty years after the events) and without any type of journal, diary or ledger to work from perhaps inevitably invited contemporary scrutiny, a scrutiny that has in some ways persisted into modern scholarship.

Before Grant's voice is even heard within the 1846 posthumous edition of the *Memoirs*, a 'Publisher's Notice' defensively anticipates any accusations of romance, embellishment or falsehood:

I thought it proper to present to you a few circumstances *anent* the authenticity of that very interesting history. It is not a romance; nor a novel, nor a fiction, nor a tale partly founded on reality—but it is an authentic detail of facts. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 6)

Apparently, the publisher had little regard for contemporary generic preferences of journal-keeping. However, the assurances of 'facts' offered by the publisher contrast with Grant's own views. In her introduction to the text, just a few pages on, Grant concedes the following:

In the dim distance of near forty years, unassisted by written memorials, shall I not mistake dates, misplace facts and omit circumstances which form essential links in the chain of narration? (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 18)

In private letters that remained unpublished until after her death, Grant reveals her frustration about having to depend upon memory to compile *Memoirs of an American Lady*:

But this retrograde, crablike march over the years that are no more—this tale of other times, where you are neither allowed the liberty of embellishment, nor the collateral lights that in other cases aid research into the past—is a cheerless toil, where all the faculties must needs mount upon the memory. (J. P. Grant 1844, p. 172)

Betty Hagglund suggests that Grant's admission of her fallible memory, rather than undermining her account may, conversely, serve to reassure the reader that the narrative they are about to read is honest, founded as it is upon empirical proofs:

On the one hand, the disclaimer undermines any claims of authority or accuracy. On the other hand, Grant's use of the first person, her specific detailed descriptions of customs and people, and her inclusion of personal childhood memories create in the reader a belief in the truthfulness of the portrayal. (Hagglund 2017, p. 44)

Despite the sentiments imparted by the publisher, the impact of Grant's historical inaccuracies in the *Memoirs* can, at times, be regarded as quite significant. Writing in 1860,

Jane Williams appears meticulous in her scrutiny of the discord between Grant's accounts of certain events in her *Letters from the Mountains* (A. Grant 1806) and how these seemed subject to revision several decades later in the *Memoirs*. Williams notes how, 'The 'Letters from the Mountains' and the 'Memoirs of an American Lady', give totally different accounts of Aunt Schuyler's birth and parentage' (Williams 1861, p. 537). Williams then goes on to illustrate Grant's apparent ineptitude for maintaining good chronology, even within the pages of the same text:

At page 141 in the 'Memoirs' Mrs. Grant states that the old Colonel did not live to witness his eldest son's marriage with Catalina, which took place in 1719. At page 163 of the same volume, she states that this younger pair chiefly resided with the Colonel for two years before his death, which took place in 1721! (Williams 1861, p. 538)

Not all of the contemporary responses to the text were negative, however. An anonymous (presumably) woman writer belonging to 'a society of ladies' considered how the *Memoirs* would appeal to '[. . .] the lover of unsophisticated nature, of historical truth, and elegant description' (*The Lady's Monthly Museum* 1809, p. 99). This reviewer's regard for Grant's 'historical truth' provides stark contrast to Williams's review. Such discord invites a discussion around whether minor historical inaccuracies necessarily detract from the 'truth' of a travel account.

One trope often incorporated in travel writing of the period used to reassure the reader of the truthful nature of the narrative was the inclusion of verbatim dialogue (Thompson 2011, p. 28). In the *Memoirs*, Grant relies upon this trope when she recalls a conversation about a land exchange patent. Suggesting that she has the faculties to recall many such conversations from forty years ago, Grant states the following:

For instance, one that I recollect: 'We exchange with our brother Cornelius Rensselaer, for so many strouds, guns &c., the lands beginning at the beaver-creek, going on northward, to the great fallen plain tree, where our tribe slept last summer; then eastward, to the three great cedars on the hillock; then westward, straight to the wild duck swamp'. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 250)

While the recollection of this conversation may appear detailed enough, the likelihood of it being replicated verbatim (as Grant suggests) is tenuous. This is indicated by Grant's recollection of the Indian Chief's vague receipt of 'so many strouds'. It would have surely been the case that in an exchange of such great importance, the numerical value of the strouds would have been pivotal to the conversation. This omission on the part of Grant suggests that her recollection of the conversation was not entirely verbatim.

2.2. Retrospective Comparisons and Conflations

Throughout her oeuvre, Grant observes various societal similarities between the Highland people and the Native American people, and some of the descriptions of the Mohawk (in their own language, the tribe commonly referred to in the West as 'Mohawk' call themselves the Kanien'kehà:ka) in the text are almost interchangeable with her descriptions of Highland society elsewhere. At the opening of a text purporting to reflect Grant's experience in the Americas, it is telling that her immediate ruminations are upon a connection between the energy of Native American culture and the spirit of the Highlands:

[. . .] the high-spirited rulers of the boundless wild [Mohawks], who, alike heedless of the power of the splendour of distant monarchs, were accustomed to say with Fingal, "sufficient for me is the desert, with all its deer and woods". (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 26)

It is the reference to Ossian's father Fingal here that solidifies the connection between the two communities. This reference suggests that Grant was reflecting upon her more recent experience of the Scottish Highlanders while writing up her recollections of America.

Specifically, the writer adjoins the two societies when discussing the benefits of the common weal, contrasting them with the polite societies of Europe that seem to emphasise the merits of the individual. For example, in the *Memoirs* Grant observes how in Native American society 'every man was proud of the prowess and achievements of his tribe collectively; of his personal virtues he was not proud, because we excel but by comparison' (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 104). A few years later, when writing the *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland* (1811), Grant would make a similar claim about the Highland people:

Amongst these people, even the meanest mind was in a manner enlarged by association, by anticipation, and by retrospect. In the most minute, as well as the most serious concerns, he felt himself one of many connected together. (A. Grant 1811, p. 51)

As Kenneth McNeil has already pointed out, a comparison between the Native American society of Grant's youth and the Highland society that prevailed anterior to the destruction of the clan system crucially underpins the philosophical state that Grant terms 'the reign of the affections':

The overlapping and cross-pollinating influences of both her reading and her transatlantic experiences shaped Grant's ideas on precivilised peoples; these culminated in a full-fledged theory in the *Essays* that she had been developing throughout her career and to which she would allude in the *Memoirs*. (McNeil 2020, p. 113)

McNeil goes on to claim that Grant's rhetorical comparison situates these societies on the 'lower rungs of the ladder of social advancement', and, while this statement is somewhat contentious, he is correct to observe that Grant's more recent experience of the Highlands and the stories and songs to which she was exposed after learning Gaelic, undoubtedly influenced and impacted her retrospective account of the Native Americans, at least to some degree (McNeil 2020, p. 113).

However, the extent of this impact has its limitations. Using one society (Mohawk) to underpin the validity of another (Scots Highland) does not necessarily mean that Grant was ignorant of or unable to discern differences between the two. While, as McNeil asserts, it is important to observe how Grant marks the similarities between the Native American and Highland communities for the purpose of reinforcing a particular rhetorical framework, it is also crucially important to understand some of the ways that Grant differentiates between them. In a teleological sense, Grant notes one major aspect that sets them apart: the possession of property and the feudal structure of the tribe. The Highland Clan system was maintained upon a patrilineal transference of property and inheritance. When recounting her experience of the Native Americans in the *Memoirs*, Grant observes how, in contrast to the Scots Highland people,

Property there was none [. . .] Territory could not be the genuine subject of contention in these thinly-peopled forests, where the ocean and the pole were the only limits of their otherwise boundless domain. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, pp. 78–79)

Grant's phraseology here should by no means be interpreted as an attempt to legitimise European colonisation of Native American land, but simply as an acknowledgment that the nomadic existence of the people she observed adjacent to the Mohawk River contrasted with the settled habitation of the Highland clans in Scotland. Although both societies were patriarchal and both were interpreted by four-stage theorists of the Scottish Enlightenment

as being closely identifiable in terms of civil progress, Grant shows how Highland society had developed along feudal lines while Mohawk society had not.

A less subtle distinction made by Grant is the claim that women were treated differently in the two contrasting societies. In the *Memoirs*, Grant recalls seeing the dejected state of the Mohawk women first-hand:

They were very early married: for a Mohawk had no other servant but his wife [. . .] Wherever man is a mere hunter, woman is a mere slave [. . .] the ancient Caledonians honoured the fair; but then, it is to be observed, that they were fair huntresses, and moved in the light of their beauty, to the hill of roes; and the culinary toils were entirely left to the rougher sex. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 71)

When considering Grant's sentiments about women in traditional Highland society, the contrast becomes clear. Grant had already previously discussed the position of women in ancient Highland society in *Poems on Various Subjects* (1803), where she used other 'uncivilized wandering tribes' (likely the Native Americans) as a point of contrast:

Women among uncivilized wandering tribes are generally in an abject and degraded state, and condemned to the most servile employments. Among the CELTAE this appears not to have been the case. (A. Grant 1803, p. 354)

This comparison can easily mislead the reader, however, for when Grant references the 'Celtae', she does not mean the post-Culloden Highland community of which she had experience, but rather she refers to the pre-Culloden Highlands of which she was familiar only through oral tradition and literature. Thus, while Grant's anthropological assessment of the treatment of women in the contemporary Mohawk community can be said to have a scientific (or at least an empirical) basis, she had no previous experience of observing the ancient Caledonians. While Grant attempts to use this passage to convey a comparison between Native American and Highland tribes, it is ahistorical in that it does not reflect the true nature of gendered roles in the documented history of the Highlands. It is also important to point out here that Grant's in-person observations pertain to the Mohawk alone (a society in which women may well have played a subordinate role) but not, as she states, to 'uncivilized wandering tribes' in general. Other Native American tribes such as the Huron, for example, were not patrilineal but matrilineal, and the position of women was different among them (Trigger 1963, p. 155).

Regardless of such discrepancies and contrary to the body of modern criticism attached to the writer, for Grant, both Native American and Highland societies were superior to the conventional European model owing to their adherence to what she perceives to be an accurate definition of the term 'society'. Grant's disdain is reserved for polite societies where bonds of kinship have been undermined by the disintegration of communities, the breakdown of patriarchal leadership, the process of immigration (the Europeans to the Americas and the English to Scotland) and an emphasis upon capital wealth. We find in Grant's work, then, a more sympathetic approach to marginalised, non-Anglophone societies, and this corresponds with her treatment of the Native Americans in the *Memoirs*, something I explore in more detail in section two.

One way that Grant champions marginalised societies retrospectively, however, is by criticising the impact that modernity, commerce and cosmopolitanism have had upon America. She begins by asserting that the very fabric of a nation such as America, founded upon mixed communities, is destined for disaster. She writes, 'With such a heterogeneous mixture a transplanted Briton of the original stock, a true old American, may live in charity, but can never assimilate' (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 282). And despite the fortitude and intellect of the founding fathers and the aspirations of individuals such as 'the deistical Franklin', and 'the melancholy Cowley', this emerging new nation can, for Grant, never

recreate what she regards to be the happiness of smaller European communities (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 283). Evidently writing with Scotland in mind, Grant observes of the United States the following:

Nothing, however, can be more anti-Arcadian. There no crook is seen, no pipe is heard, no lamb bleats, for the best possible reason, because there are no sheep. No pastoral strains awake the sleeping echoes [. . .] Seriously, it is not a place that can, in any instance, constitute happiness. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 286)

Here Grant's anthropological considerations merge with her notions around landscape. The absence of pastoral farming in the Americas contributes to Grant's negative depiction of the terrain. However, while this retrospective lament is composed with a sense of nostalgia, it is a nostalgia for a land and a people of which Grant, when she was resident in New York, must have had few if any lucid recollections. Thus, the negative imagery here is likely more the product of second-hand reports of New York received by Grant years after she had relocated to Scotland than it is direct empirical recollection.

Grant's use of secondary sources when describing America retrospectively mirrors the method she implemented (by her own admission) as a child when conjuring up descriptions of the Scottish landscape to supplement her lack of empiricism, detailed towards the end of the *Memoirs*. When faced with the prospect of returning to Scotland after having spent most of her life in Albany, Grant concedes that she has 'not the faintest recollection' of her 'native land' yet proceeds to delineate the Scottish landscape based upon the limited sources (folklore and literature) available to her:

Having lulled my disappointment with regards Clarendon, and filled all my dreams with images of Clydesdale, and Tweeddale, and every other vale or dale that was the haunt of the pastoral muse in Scotland, I grew pretty well reconciled with my approaching journey; thinking I should meet piety and literature in every cottage, and poetry and music in every recess, among the sublime scenery of my native mountains. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 271)

What becomes apparent is the that where, for the most part, Grant's recollections of America consist of compartmentalised communities, existing alongside yet independently of one another, by the end of the text she seems to be describing not the first-hand, empirical accounts of the America of her childhood, but rather a monolithic American entity (familiar to her only by way of anecdote), that is corrupt and foreign to her.

2.3. Maternal Bonds: Grant's Biographical Impressions

One particularly memorable yet harrowing scene featured in the *Memoirs* is Grant's recording of a prisoner exchange where European children, originally kidnapped by the Mohawk, are returned to their biological mothers. Intriguingly, Grant, a white, European observer, refrains from criticising the Native Americans for taking the children and, instead, extends sympathy to Mohawk foster-mothers that are relinquishing the kidnapped children. Grant introduces her account by stressing how the gravity of this day is 'engraven in indelible characters upon my memory'. While Grant's account arguably aims for impartiality, it is the distress of the Native American women that is the first consideration in her narrative. Specifically, she observes the predicament of the Native American foster mothers, who

[. . .] by this time were very unwilling to part with them. In the first place, because they were grown very fond of them; and again, because they thought the children would not be so happy in our manner of life [. . .] It was affecting to see the deep and silent sorrow of the Indian women, and of the children, who knew no other mother, and clung fondly to their bosoms, from whence they were not torn without the most piercing shrieks. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, pp. 230–31)

Various writers have commented upon how this passage highlights Grant's refusal to condemn the Mohawk captors for taking the European children, attributing this sympathy to the writer's deep understanding of Mohawk culture. Indeed, it is certainly the case that Grant's writing was motivated by a wish to convey the benevolent nature of a people that had long been portrayed as sadistic and brutal (Fulford 2006, p. 27). Something that has not been addressed in modern scholarship to date, however, is the prospect that the sympathy extended to the captors by Grant, rather than being motivated by her affinity for Mohawk culture, can perhaps be attributed to the complex, retrospective relationship that Grant had with her biological mother.

While Grant's oeuvre is permeated with kind memories of her father, her mother features much less, and the relationship between the two appears to have been strained. In *Memoir and Correspondence* (1844), Grant references the fact that as a child (when her father was in America), she was the subject of little affection from her mother:

I had no companion, no one fondled or caressed me, far less did anyone take the trouble of amusing me; I did not, till the sixth year of my age, possess a single toy. A child of less activity would have become torpid under the circumstances. (J. P. Grant 1844, vol. 1, p. 2)

It is of particular significance then, that, in the *Memoirs*, Aunt Schuyler is a foster mother with no biological children with whom Grant develops a special relationship over a number of years (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 131). When constructing her analysis of the children being returned to their biological mothers (many years after witnessing the event), Grant was arguably motivated by reflections on the benevolence of her own 'foster' mother, which seems a stark contrast to the indifference of her biological mother.

Grant's proximity to fostering prevailed in various ways throughout her life. After she had married and settled in the Highlands, Grant forged a relationship with another foster mother, a woman she refers to in her writing as 'Moome'. Grant states in *Poems on Various Subjects* how the Gaelic appellation 'Moome' translates into English as 'a person who without being actually a mother, performs the duties of one' (A. Grant 1803, p. 272). What is more, in her later years, after removing to Woodend from Laggan, Grant would become a foster mother herself. Nor is the trope of fostering in Grant's writing confined to people alone, but it also extends to place. In *Memoir and Correspondence*, Grant states that America is something she 'always looks back to as a kind of foster-mother' (J. P. Grant 1844, vol. 2, p. 324). Aligning with Native American foster mothers rather than European biological mothers, while perhaps partly indicative of Grant's wish to counter contemporary xenophobic attitudes towards the Mohawk, seems also to be deeply connected to her own personal, retrospective ruminations upon motherhood.

2.4. *Biography vs. Autobiography: The Function of Language*

While the text presents itself as the sentiments of a mature colonial Dutch woman named Aunt Schuyler, the biographical account put forward by Grant often merges into introspections that seem to be as much those of the writer as they are of the eponymous *American Lady*. Betty Hagglund observes that,

Although purportedly a biography of Catalina Schuyler [. . .] The two-volume work also included autobiographical narrative, generalized description of a kind we might now refer to as ethnography, reflections of the origin and nature of 'man', and descriptions of wilderness travel. (Hagglund 2017, p. 42)

While this is entirely evident, it is also true that in the *Memoirs* and throughout Grant's oeuvre, we find sentiments that reflect the wisdom imparted by Aunt Schuyler together with other factors and accomplishments that indelibly tie the biographies of the two women together. Thus, while the text perhaps reveals as much about Grant's observations of the

world as it does about Aunt Schuyler's, the way in which Grant largely viewed the world was hugely influenced by the teachings of her mentor.

One example of the influence of Aunt Schuyler over Grant is the comparable pursuit of both women to acquire new languages and the motivations behind this pursuit. Madame Schuyler, according to Grant's biography of the *American Lady*, was an altogether sophisticated, shrewd, intelligent and diplomatic figure. In the text, Grant suggests that Aunt Schuyler's willingness to experience various cultures together with her attainment of new languages was synonymous with a degree of cultural sophistication:

The Mohawk language was early familiar to her; she spoke Dutch and English with equal ease and purity; was no stranger to the French tongue; and could (I think) read German. I heard her speak it. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 72)

While Madame Schuyler could speak marginalised languages, she also learned English and French. Grant observes how this kind of cultural and linguistic understanding was important to the Schuylers, who every year would send their children to reside in New York where they would endeavour to 'learn the more polished manners and language of the capital' (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 32).

Grant shows in the *Memoirs* that, like Aunt Schuyler, she had demonstrated a proficiency for acquiring new languages at an early age. As a child, not only did she 'hover about the Wigwams' (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 67) exchanging dialogue with the neighbouring Mohawk tribe, but she also learned the language of the Dutch colonial children. Yet, to the writer's dismay, this endeavour did not fully reward her with the social acceptance that she desired:

The children of the town were all divided into companies [...] though I, belonging to none, occasionally mixed with several, yet always as a stranger, notwithstanding that I spoke their current language fluently. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 39)

Even so, the time spent within these communities and the acquisition of new languages meant that Grant's status as a 'dweller' enabled her to give a much more detailed account of the communities in question than if she had been unable to understand them. This liminal neither/nor social status may have been regarded as something negative by Grant in her recollections of childhood; however, it is precisely this liminality that she would advertise a few years later when compiling her *Essays*:

One who, like the writer of these pages, is not absolutely a native, nor entirely a stranger, but has added the observant curiosity of the latter to the facilities of enquiry enjoyed by the former [...]. (A. Grant 1811, p. 10)

It seems that in the three-year interim period between publishing the *Memoirs* and the *Essays*, Grant had time to contemplate how her failure to completely integrate with the Dutch children could be something positive, as it endowed her anthropology with the credentials to accurately portray the marginalised communities she experienced without (she claims) marring her observations with a positive bias.

What stands out most in terms of Grant's liminal cultural and linguistic status in the text, however, is that by occupying such unique roles, both Grant and Aunt Schuyler can assist the marginalised Mohawk by undermining certain negative depictions of them. Grant's childhood observations of how Aunt Schuyler embraced the peripheral and marginalised culture of the Native Americans arguably influenced her own ethos. Grant states that Aunt Schuyler had been 'well acquainted with the language, opinions and customs' of the Mohawk and that she was 'exceedingly partial to those high souled and generous natives'. It is important to note, however, that while supportive of the Native Americans, Aunt Schuyler endeavoured to attain impartiality. Rather than condemn outright any of the

other groups involved in the tensions of the time, Aunt Schuyler contends that not only the British but also the Mohawk had to learn to co-exist:

At the flats [Aunt Schuyler's residence] the high bred and high-spirited field officer [learned] gentleness, accommodation and respect for unpolished worth and untaught valour. There, too, the shrewd and deeply reflecting Indian learned to respect the British character. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 126)

In bringing different groups together for reconciliation, Catalina Schuyler, like Grant, can be regarded as a mediator. Schuyler's liminal perspective served to persuade others of her rational impartiality and enabled groups that were otherwise hostile to commence dialogue. As a woman in the Scottish Highlands, Grant would emulate the manner in which Aunt Schuyler supported the Native American people by herself advocating for the Scottish Highland people. Juliet Shields asserts that Grant 'self-consciously adopted the role of cultural mediator or translator, undertaking to explain Highland culture to Lowland and English readers' (Shields 2012, p. 773).

One interpretation of the text, then, is that the similarities between the philosophies of Grant and Aunt Schuyler may be solely due to Grant's astute observations and tutelage under the wing of the eponymous *American Lady* as a child. It is also possible, however, that, owing to the passage of time, Grant, in recounting the words and actions of Aunt Schuyler (either intentionally or unintentionally) retrospectively imposes some of her own notions, ideals and ideas upon the *American Lady*. One potential reason why Grant may have chosen to convey some of her own views through the vehicle of another figure is that at the time in which Grant wrote, women's intervention on certain topics was treated with disdain and ridicule. Gary Kelly points out the potential pitfalls of perceived female agency in the early nineteenth-century:

Many Romantic social critics saw 'Bluestockings', learned ladies, and women writers as extremes of woman—symptoms of courtly effeminacy, potential Revolutionary feminists, or representatives of new puritanical utilitarianism. (Kelly 1993, p. 176)

Potentially, writing under the auspices of Aunt Schuyler and using the eponymous *American Lady* as a foil, Grant attempted to present some of her own convictions and concerns while attributing them to another woman; retaining her own sense of contemporary womanly credibility in the process and (unsuccessfully) attempting to avoid the label of a revolutionary or a 'blue stocking' (Gottlieb 2010, p. 253).

There is some supporting evidence for the latter interpretation. As previously stated, three years after the publication of her *Memoirs*, Grant would go on to publish her *Essays* (a text configured around political, cultural and social issues). It is notable that many of the views attributed to Aunt Schuyler in the *Memoirs* seem to be in keeping with the views espoused by Grant in the *Essays*. While both of these texts are non-fiction, the *Memoirs*, unlike the *Essays*, is not presented as a direct anthropological intervention. Rather, Grant uses the *Memoirs* to subtly espouse certain views while presenting them as the considerations of a respected historical personage. Thus, it is likely that Grant used the *Memoirs* as a litmus test to gauge public reception to particular views and empirical estimations, and in this way, the text can be regarded as something of a precursor to her *Essays*.

In a letter dated 31st May 1809, sent to her son James, Grant reveals that *Memoirs of an American Lady* had been a success despite her own insecurities around its reception:

I trembled for the fate of this book; but it has gone off with great success: the whole impression of fifteen hundred copies was sold in three months, and the

second edition is now printed, and selling rapidly, I believe. (J. P. Grant 1844, vol. 1, p. 225)

The commercial success alluded to by Grant here, however, jars with the contemporary reception of the *Memoirs* in Britain:

[...] we cannot assign any high degree of literary eminence to Mrs. Grant. Her 'Memoirs of an American Lady', which followed two years after, was deficient in the spirit and the simplicity which characterized her first work; while her last, the 'Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland', was a failure, not because she was unacquainted with the general subject, but because she was unable to bring to it that deep and extensive learning, which such a subject demanded. (Stowell 1844, p. 174)

The reviewer's negative criticism of both the *Memoirs* and the *Essays* implies that Grant's writing style to convey depictions of people and landscape had deteriorated from her depictions in *Letters from the Mountains*. Yet, this explanation necessarily elides the concerns of contemporary critics that both the *Memoirs* and the *Essays* depart from the belles-lettres style of quaint, informal anecdote and attempt to intervene in the serious, masculine business of philosophy and politics. In the *Memoirs*, Grant's travel writing appears more active than passive and her intervention in anthropological, social and political matters more serious and pronounced than it was in her *Letters* (Perkins 2011, p. 223). Grant's adoption of this 'masculine' style was seen as an encroachment of sorts and was at least partially responsible for the negative criticism of the text.

3. Part Two: Dwelling, Mediation and Liminality

While Grant's account of her time in the Americas certainly meets the criteria for it to be regarded as travel writing, the sustained period of her observations perhaps distinguishes it from more conventional temporary and transient accounts of people and place. In his book chapter 'Vertical Travel', Alisdair Pettinger highlights scholarly work that differentiates between 'horizontal' travel, whereby the aim of the traveller is to move from place to place, and 'vertical' travel, where the traveller remains in one place for a sustained period. Pettinger states the following:

To describe 'dwelling' as 'travel' is to transform it into something worth writing about, and vertical travel emerged in the wake of more than two decades of rapidly proliferating accounts of highly circumscribed journeys in which the author hardly travels at all, but brings to familiar surroundings a degree of curiosity normally associated with unfamiliar places encountered for the first time (Pettinger 2019, p. 277).

Modern scholarly criticism has acknowledged the importance of Grant's own vertical, detailed accounts of the people that she lived in close proximity to. Writers such as Juliet Shields, Ina Ferris and Pam Perkins have all commented upon Grant's mediatory and liminal credibility owing to the extent of her first-hand anthropology and dwelling status (Shields 2012, p. 773; Ferris 1997, p. 206; Perkins 2011, p. 230). However, Grant's own estimations of herself as a settled traveller seem to pre-empt the sentiments imparted by modern scholars. In the *Memoirs*, Grant compares her own settled accounts of Albany with what she regards to be the limited and narrow estimations of the mere traveller:

Voyagers who have not their language, and merely see them [Mohawk] transiently, to wonder and be wondered at, are equally strangers to the real character of man in a social, though unpolished state (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 51).

The term 'wonder' included by Grant in this passage is particularly relevant to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century perceptions of travel. Carl Thompson and Nigel Leask have both explored the concept of 'wonder' in relation to the traveller. Nigel Leask unpicks the cultural and political connotations of curiosity, stressing both the 'negative' and the

'positive' contemporary implementations of 'wonder' (Leask 2004, p. 4). Conversely, Carl Thompson offers an interpretation of 'wonder' in the long eighteenth century, motivated by the traveller's own sense of unease in response to unfamiliar customs and aesthetics (Thompson 2011, p. 67). It is important to highlight how, in the *Memoirs*, Grant presents 'wonder' as a distinctly negative reaction by the transient observer to the phenomenon that they encounter. Grant critiques the wonderment of the 'voyager' and attempts to assert her authority (derived from her mode of integrated, sustained observation) over theirs.

Grant does, however, indicate another class of people that possess credentials similar to her own. On page 51, she implores her readers to 'judge from the traders' and listen to their more authoritative observations of 'this class of social beings'. One such trader may have been James Adair (1709–1783), who married a Chickasaw woman and lived among the Chickasaw tribe for two decades (Fulford 2006, p. 60). Adair's account of the Native Americans with whom he resided was, like Grant's, extremely detailed and at odds with some of the inaccurate stereotypes prevalent in literature of the time (Fulford 2006, p. 60). Particularly noteworthy (and anticipating the following section of this essay) is Grant's reaffirmation of the Mohawk as 'social beings (for such indeed they were)' (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 51). This simple sentiment complicates any attempt to align Grant with any of the conventional stadial theories associated with the Scottish Enlightenment.

3.1. Empiricism and Teleology

Fundamentally, Grant asserts the importance of all empirical travel over the anecdotal speculation and conjecture of the non-traveller. For Grant, the process of travelling and experiencing people first-hand was a requisite for anthropological discourse of any kind, and this likely has a bearing on why her own stadial model was somewhat different to the most popular four-stage model of the Scottish Enlightenment. While it is in the *Essays* where Grant directly confronts what she believes to be the misconceptions of enlightenment philosophers, it is the *Memoirs* where, in practical terms, she demonstrates the difference between the sentiments of the philosopher in their 'armchair' (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 105) and the sentiments of the traveller with actual experience. In *A Treatise on Human Nature*, David Hume (1711–1776) states that if a traveller were to return to Britain with an account that undermined the commonly held theory that all societies became happier as technology, education and government expand, then this traveller should not be taken seriously:

Should a traveller, returning from a far country, bring us an account of men wholly different from any with whom we were ever acquainted, men who were entirely divested of avarice, ambition, or revenge, who knew no pleasure but friendship, generosity, and public spirit, we should immediately, from these circumstances, detect the falsehood and prove him a liar with the same certainty as if he had stuffed his narration with stories of centaurs and dragons, miracles and prodigies (Hume [1748] 1900, p. 86).

While Hume had some travel experience around Europe, he had not visited any particularly marginalised societies (Robertson 2004). In the *Essays*, Grant condescendingly rebukes philosophers that comment upon societies of which they have no empirical knowledge as 'silly and cowardly pretenders to science' (A. Grant 1811, p. 42). Her account in the *Memoirs* of the genuine 'friendship, generosity and public spirit' evident in Mohawk society to some extent appears polarised from the position adopted by prominent Scottish enlightenment philosophers such as David Hume and Adam Smith (1723–1790).

Perhaps it is Grant's blatant polarisation to the teleological theories of the likes of Hume and Smith that has mistakenly led to modern critical interpretations of her own ideas around societal development being linked with the romanticist theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). Andrew Todd has suggested that the framework for Grant's *Essays* 'would have been of great interest to those who were still fascinated by the arguments

over the authenticity of Ossian or claims that highland peasants were noble savages, as suggested by disciples of Rousseau' (Todd 2004). Yet Grant's implementation of the terms 'social' and 'society' denote a liminality that puts her at odds with the romantic, primitivist philosophical sentiments of Rousseau as well as the Enlightenment theories of Smith and Hume. For while Grant takes umbrage with the dominant Scottish Enlightenment argument that the Mohawk were culturally immature, she also objects to Rousseau's claim that 'natural man' cannot be a 'social man'. In his *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, Rousseau implies that the nomadic 'natural' or 'savage' man was polarised from the settled 'social man':

Let us conclude that savage Man, wandering the forests, without Industry, without speech, without any fixed residence, an equal stranger to war and every social connection [...] let us, I say, conclude that savage man thus circumstanced had no Knowledge or Sentiment but such as are proper to that condition [...]. (Rousseau [1755] 1762, p. 86)

In his *Discourse*, Rousseau uses the term 'savage' in direct reference to the nomadic Native Americans tribes (Rousseau [1755] 1762, p. 200), the implication being that they are a people devoid of industry, sophisticated language and intimate social connections. In her *Memoirs*, Grant responds to what she regards to be ill-founded and conceited conjecture, with her own empirical, yet rhetorical question:

Were *they* savages who had fixed habitations; who cultivated rich fields; who built castles (for so they called their not incommodious wooden houses); who planted maize and beans and showed considerable ingenuity in constructing and adorning their canoes, arms and clothing? They who had wise though unwritten laws; they whose eloquence was bold, nervous and animated; whose language was sonorous, musical and expressive; who possessed generous and elevated sentiments, heroic fortitude and unstained probity: were these indeed savages? (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 20)

Rousseau suggests that to begin thinking in a sophisticated and intelligent manner, natural man necessarily had to abandon certain customs of their savage past. He states,

At length, the first Improvements allowed man to improve at a greater Rate. Industry grew perfect in proportion as the Mind became more Enlightened. Men soon ceasing to fall asleep under the first tree or take shelter in the first Cavern. (Rousseau [1755] 1762, p. 107)

One of the implications of this sentiment is that 'savage' or 'natural' man, prone to falling asleep at the 'first tree', was necessarily lazy and indolent. It is important to reinforce the fact that Rousseau had no first-hand experience of Native Americans. Thus Grant, in her refutation of him demonstrates how experience gained through travel is requisite to establishing an accurate anthropological or ethnographic assessment. If there is any doubt that Grant's teleology is at odds with Rousseau's romanticised approach, in the *Memoirs*, she responds directly to his insinuations:

[...] those frisking Frenchmen who have given us the most details about them [Mohawk] were too restless themselves to subdue their skipping spirits to the recollection that a Mohawk had no study or armchair wherein to muse and cogitate; his schemes of war and his eloquent speeches, were all like the meditations of Jacques, formed "under the greenwood tree". (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 105)

Grant uses some clever wordplay here as this passage clearly references both Jacques Rousseau and Shakespeare's Jacques, who, in the play *As You Like It*, pokes fun at property holders that dream of a carefree life in the forest (Shakespeare 1994, p. 287). While it is important to bear in mind that Rousseau's development of the concept of the 'Noble Savage'

was not the only model in currency at the time, this passage shows how Grant utilises her empiricism to disrupt Rousseau's sweeping claim that tribes without property (such as the Mohawk) were necessarily devoid of 'eloquence' or an 'enlightened mind'. In her book *Sentimental Literature and Anglo Scottish Identity, 1745–1820*, Juliet Shields arguably distances Grant's interpretation of Highland societal development from Rousseau's by linking her ideas more convincingly with the philosophies of James Macpherson (1736–1796) and Adam Ferguson (1723–1816) (Shields 2010, p. 119). Noteworthy is the fact that both of these writers (unlike most of the renowned names of the Scottish Enlightenment) hailed from within the Gaelic-speaking region of Scotland.

3.2. Mediation

Bearing in mind the scholarly misapplication of Rousseau's romantic lens to Grant's empirical account, it is perhaps understandable that Grant's anthropological and ethnographic sentiments in the *Memoirs* prove to be contentious. Regarded in a positive light by modern critics for her ability to mediate between various cultures (Ferris 1997, p. 204; Shields 2012, p. 773), Grant's mediatory or liminal qualities also pose certain challenges. Some modern writers have interpreted sentiments expressed by Grant in the *Memoirs* that deride British imperialism to be inconsistent with the writer's political ideology. Pam Perkins writes,

The serpent in this American Eden—or the corruptor of this childlike innocence, depending on which metaphor one prefers—is, most immediately, the British Army, something that might seem an odd move in the work of a self-proclaimed Tory who ends her book with a vehement attack on the Revolution and its leaders. (Perkins 2005, p. 327)

While Perkins is not the only writer to frame Grant as a Tory, such a straightforward categorisation ignores the nuanced and fluid political considerations of Grant's politics. Elsewhere, Grant had clearly expressed that the liminalities associated with her persona could be extended to her political outlook, and how she felt that she did not fit neatly into either a liberal (Whig) or conservative (Tory) camp (A. Grant 1811, p. 282). Grant may well (as Perkins states) have taken umbrage with the violent transition of power from the crown to the colonists towards the end of her book, but this is not a categorical condemnation of American independence. Crucially, Grant does not condemn the Republicans for wanting to form their own government, but rather, she suggests that the revolution was part of the nation's destiny:

A contest of sovereignty is a whirlwind that rages fiercely while it continues, and deforms the face of external nature. New houses, however, replace those it has demolished; trees grow in the place of those destroyed; the landscape laughs, the birds sing, and every thing returns to its accustomed course. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 279)

Another critical interpretation related to Grant's sustained observation in the *Memoirs* that would perhaps benefit from greater clarification is her comparison between enlightened European and Native American societies. Betty Hagglund interprets Grant's discussion around King Hendrick as evidence of the writer's belief of the superiority of European culture over Native American culture. This interpretation is arrived at, in part, by employing the orthodox connotations of Grant's terminology. Hagglund writes, 'the king, although 'a princely figure' and a 'generous warrior', is defined by Grant as 'a primitive monarch', and not quite genuine royalty in the European sense' (Hagglund 2017, p. 46). While it is correct that Grant, in her comparison, distinguishes between the extravagance of European monarchs and the more rustic environment of King Hendrick, this does not necessarily

imply European superiority. Grant notes that King Hendrick's abode differed from the European palaces in that it:

[. . .] had the appearance of a good barn and was divided across by a mat hung in the Middle. King Hendrick [. . .] was sitting on the floor besides a large heap of wheat, surrounded with baskets of dried berries of different kinds beside him. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 195)

Yet this experience for Grant is authentic and pleasing. Upon reflection, Grant states, 'Had I seen royalty, properly such, invested with all the pomp of European magnificence, I should possibly have been confused and over-dazzled' (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 195). In her writing, Grant often inverts terms such as 'scientific' and 'polished' to mean the reverse (for examples see: *Letters from the Mountains*, vol. 1, p. 55 and *Essays*, vol. 1, p. 150). Thus, Grant's inclusion of the term 'properly' here can be read as a criticism, rather than an endorsement, of the contemporary understanding of the orthodoxy of European royalty.

What supports this interpretation is that, in Grant's portrayal of Hendrick, we find a figure that has more in common with the Highland Chieftains (so revered by Grant in her *Essays*) than with contemporary European monarchs. Grant's account of Hendrick underpins the notion that he was a different kind of ruler to those in Europe, yet one she viewed as genuinely endeared by Mohawk society:

[. . .] the monarch smiled, clapped my head, and ordered me a little basket, very pretty and filled by officious kindness of his son with dried berries. Never did princely gifts, or the smile of royalty, produce more ardent admiration and profound gratitude. I went out of the royal presence overawed and delighted, and am not sure but what I have liked kings all my life the better for this happy specimen to which I was so early introduced. (A. Grant [1808] 1846, p. 195)

This type of personal connection between monarch and subject, whereby one could be close enough to their king to have their head 'clapped' was, Grant affirms, an aspect familiar to Highland society prior to the destruction of the Clan System. In the *Essays*, Grant informs the reader of how the Highland Chiefs were respected and loved precisely because they made their presence accessible to their subordinates, unlike conventional European monarchs who were aloof and unknown. The Highland chiefs, like King Hendrick, did not preside over splendid courts, and in the *Essays*, Grant compares the Highland Chiefs favourably against conventional European monarchs:

In the Highlands, they knew, or cared very little about their distant monarch. They never saw him, or wished to see him. His existence in them excited neither hopes nor fears [. . .] Everyone venerated in his chief an attached kinsman and kind protector. In Wales, on the contrary, the visible and personal consequence of the chiefs was diminished by the splendour of the court to which they were attached. (A. Grant 1811, p. 17)

The clan chiefs, like Hendrick, made themselves accessible to the people that they ruled over, and this is the quality that Grant values. Hagglund's implication that Grant viewed King Hendrick as not quite 'genuine', by extension, implies that she viewed Native American culture itself as 'not quite genuine in the European sense'. The evidence in the text, however, clearly shows that Grant considered Hendrick not as 'lesser' in any way but rather as the epitome of 'genuine' royalty. Grant consistently stresses that in the worldview of both the Highland and Mohawk societies, it is familiarity and compassion that are the qualities indicative of 'genuine' society.

4. Conclusions

It can certainly be argued that Grant's narrative deviates from accuracy, not only in terms of the fallibility associated with memory, but also because her narrative imposes some generic traits upon both people and place. It must be stressed, however, that the *Memoirs* is distinguishable from some accounts by travellers that romanticise indigenous communities, perceiving them as chivalrous, masculine and sublime and attempting to reduce and commodify these qualities (Thompson 2011, p. 152). The *Memoirs* can, in fact, be regarded as at once 'romantic' and 'scientific' while simultaneously posing challenges to both positions. As well as this, Grant's representations of landscape in the text often converge with certain contemporary aesthetic concepts popular at the time, while her recording of the people that she encounters diverges from the common four-stage teleology of the early nineteenth-century.

In reassessing some of the critical interpretations of Grant's attitude to marginalised societies in the *Memoirs*, I have demonstrated that certain sentiments, words and phrases used by the writer to describe phenomena of people and place can be reinterpreted, recontextualised and viewed as indicative of the potential for the fluidity of human principles. As well as this, I have used Grant's writing to show how travel can induce changes in an individual's attitude, perceptions and philosophies long after the physical journey has taken place, and also how an individual's anticipation and preconceptions of people and place can influence their response to these phenomena.

In analysing Grant's suggestion of how literary depictions of Scotland informed her travel prior to the physical journey and, conversely, by examining how her later experience in the Scottish Highlands evidently informed how she remembered and portrayed certain aspects of Mohawk society, it becomes apparent that attempting to define travel solely according to the linear, physical parameters of the journey is problematic. Instead, when regarding the mental impact of travel (both preconceptions of the traveller prior to the journey and the post-travel processing and rationalisation), it makes sense to understand travel as being something that the traveller has an active role in creating and, also, something that persists indefinitely, functioning not as an isolated, momentary experience, but rather a recurrent aspect of the traveller's life.

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