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Gillian Beattie-Smith

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5909-1400>

The Open University, UK

A Highland Lady Abroad: The Journeys of Elizabeth Grant

Abstract

Elizabeth Grant began writing as a young girl, and, with her sisters, wrote short stories which were published in well-known journals of the period. Her writing provided a necessary income throughout her life. She kept a journal, wrote sketches, travel articles, and short stories, but in Scotland, her best-known work is *Memoirs of a Highland Lady*, which was first published in 1898 and after several editions remains popular. This paper considers her writing about the Highlands, Ireland and France to examine the creation and performance of her identity as a Highland Lady.

Keywords: Highlands, travel writing, identity, gender

1. Introduction

Elizabeth Grant was a 19th-century travel writer, a short-story writer, a member of the Scottish landed gentry, a commentator on, and a recorder of, Scottish and Highland life. Her identity was created by means of her place in Scotland and she became known as the ‘Highland Lady,’ offering allusions to her gender, social status, and cultural heritage. Elizabeth’s father, John Peter Grant, was a Scottish laird, whom *Blackwood’s Magazine* recorded as “one of those brilliant men who are not born to succeed” (“Review of *Memoirs of a Highland Lady*” 537). The Grant family owned, and still do own, 5700 acres of land forming the Rothiemurchus estate near Aviemore, Scotland. Her father had been born into wealth, and into privilege, which extended further during his terms of office as a Member of the UK Parliament. But he was a hopeless estate manager, and so, although Elizabeth Grant was born into the social position associated with estate ownership and family history, money was frequently absent, and she wrote, not simply for pleasure, but for income needed to support the family. She wrote about life in Scotland, and about her life and experiences in England and Ireland, France and India. This article reflects on her writing, drawn from her everyday life in the countries in which she lived and travelled.

2. Elizabeth Grant: Her Body of Work and Its Reception

Elizabeth Grant was “an inveterate writer” (Tod x). Writing, for her, was a life-time pursuit and, as she lived to 88, there was a considerable body of work. In her youth, she wrote for the purpose of raising money for her father’s Highland estate, Rothiemurchus, and later, after her marriage to Colonel Henry Smith, she wrote to supplement the income from her husband’s estate, Baltiboy in County Wicklow, Ireland. She was published in well-known and popular journals of the period, including Chambers’ *Edinburgh Journal*, *The Inspector and National Magazine*, *Fraser’s Magazine*, *Ackerman’s Forget Me Not* and *Howitt’s Journal*. Chamber’s *Edinburgh Journal* published her short stories of the Highlands, her travel writing about France, and her ten Irish narratives, told in the personae of Hannah White, and in an assertion of personal opinion, as Mrs Wright. *The Inspector and National Magazine* published the eight short stories in the series, “The Painter’s Progress.” Other articles, sketches, reflections were published widely. Her journals are extensive and have yet to be published in their entirety. She began writing a journal in 1814 while a girl at Rothiemurchus, and, although she did not take it up as a daily record until 1840, she kept a journal until her death in 1885. Her Irish journals illuminate 19th-century life on an Irish estate, the effects of the Great Irish Famine on the tenant farmers, and provide a personal, and historic insight into land management in Ireland (Grant 1991). But in Scotland, it is her *Memoirs of a Highland Lady* that have remained popular since their first publication by John Murray in 1898.

Memoirs of a Highland Lady relates the narratives of the people and life in the Highlands in the first quarter of the 19th century, before her family’s move to India in 1827 and her marriage to Irish Lieutenant Colonel Henry Smith in 1829. It was Elizabeth Grant’s niece, Lady Jane Strachey, who published the first edition of *Memoirs*, under the title *Memoirs of a Highland Lady. The Autobiography of Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, afterwards Mrs Smith of Baltiboy, 1797–1830*. However, as Peter Butter notes, Lady Strachey, “the Victorian lady imposes some censorship on the Georgian one” (208–215). Murray’s 1911 edition further reduced the text by omitting much of the record of the time in the Netherlands and India, and the Albemarle Library edition of 1950, edited by Angus Davidson, further emphasised her writing about Scotland by editing the content of her travels abroad. But, in 1988, Canongate published Andrew Tod’s comprehensive edition of *Memoirs*, drawing on the original manuscripts held by the Grant family, which have recently been lodged with the National Library of Scotland. All references in this article to *Memoirs* are to Andrew Tod’s 1988 Canongate edition.

Two further members of Elizabeth Grant’s family were involved in the editing of her work. Patricia Pelly, the great-great-grand-daughter of Elizabeth Grant, worked with Andrew Tod to edit Elizabeth Grant’s journals of Ireland

and France. The Irish journals were first edited in 1980 by David Thomson and Moyra McGusty, Elizabeth Grant's great grand-daughter. Such retention of editorial control of her work illustrates a continuance of the features of women's writing as personal, private, and familial, and of women's writing about their lives remaining the property of the family, ensuring the location of the woman in domestic context.

David Daiches regards Elizabeth Grant's *Memoirs* "as vivid," but asserts that it is "one of the lesser Scottish diaries of the second rank" (76). Nonetheless, as an historical record of her times, her journals have been compared with those of Henry Cockburn (1856). In a review of the first edition of *Memoirs*, her style is described as having "charm [...] not in literary style or in the relation of stirring events, for the Peninsular War and the Battle of Waterloo make as little impression on her as the Great Plague did upon Pepys, but in the absolute lack of pose, and the candour with which she states her opinions" (Lang 404).

The Irish journals have received the greatest attention for their historic content and Janet TeBrake argues they have "historical value" (52). However, she suggests caution is needed in interpreting personal narratives. TeBrake argues, "[h]er journal is not only a personal view of her times, it also offers interpretations of events, people and the world around her that reflect her elite status. She speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves, but we will never know the exact feelings or opinions of those for whom she spoke" (53–54). TeBrake also observes the difficulties of gender with regard to women's historical records, and reflects that "like other journals and diaries compiled by women, it has been primarily read for pleasure or its literary value and has not yet received the scholarly attention from historians that it deserves" (55).

The record, however, is becoming adjusted and Elizabeth Grant's work is cited frequently as a historical source. For example, in his study of *The Geography and Implications of Post-Famine Population Decline in Baltiboy's, County Wicklow*, Matthew Stout examines changes in tenancies on the Baltiboy's estate which was the home of Elizabeth Grant, Mrs Smith, and her family (15–34). Stout draws on her very detailed record of the Irish famine and suggests that the estate used it to precipitate the eviction of tenants. As a result of the Poor Law of Ireland, landowners whose tenants were on land which was valued at under £4 were to pay the rates of their tenants, and the change in legislation affected thousands of tenants.¹ On one estate alone, for example, there were over 3000 tenants on land valued at under £5 (Fitzpatrick 585–588). Eviction and transport to America were seen to be the solution for landowners. Elizabeth Grant wrote: "The beggars are the small holders, entitled to no relief, and so we shall gradually get rid of them; they must give up their patches and take to labour [...]. It will bear very hard upon us who do our duty but we must make the best of it. Some will be ruined; we shall rise again, it is to be hoped in a year or two" (1991, 313). Patrick J. Duffy cites her record when he refers to "[m]any smaller properties [which] were also

involved in migrating groups of tenants, like Elizabeth [Grant] Smith who migrated a small number of tenants from her Baltiboys property in Wicklow” (79–104).

3. Style, Genre, and Interpretation

TeBrake has identified Elizabeth Grant as “a very opinionated woman who was also a member of the land-owning *élite*” (51). Her sense of privilege is evident throughout her writing. However, Grant’s journal writing has the purpose of educating her children in their genealogical, social, and cultural heritage, and such purpose requires a performance of self by the author, which engenders confidence and affiliation with Grant’s matrilineal identity. In order to impress upon her readers the importance of their place, hyperbole is used, which, may be interpreted as being ‘very opinionated.’ Elizabeth Grant was an educated woman and her understanding and knowledge of politics, both in Scotland and in Ireland, are extensive. She does not evade offering opinion on political, as well as social conditions wherever she travels. Indeed, she emphasises it in the style of the genre, as explored by Chloe Chard’s study of hyperbole, which shows that the technique is used by both men and women travel writers to impress upon readers the veracity of the record and personal perspective (84). TeBrake’s argument that Grant is ‘opinionated’ may arise out of gendered perspectives of social norms. For example, heredity is historically transferred through patrilineal lines, and yet Elizabeth Grant hands status and place to her children through her own, feminine, opinions and oppositions. This view is shared by Margaret Elphinstone, who argues that “travel by women is a challenge to a hierarchy which is constructed out of gendered, as well as imperialist, oppositions” (327). Elizabeth Grant’s writing therefore “transgress[es] a hierarchy of gender that imposes silence upon women’s excursions into a psychic space unknown to patriarchy” (330). Elizabeth Grant’s social position, education, and opportunities to travel, and to write, enable a performance of an identity which crosses gender boundaries.

Elizabeth Grant writes in an informal manner which, through its similarity to conversation, is engaging. Daiches argues the “we become familiar with the diarist’s personal voice, so that it is almost as if we were hearing [...] her speak” (76). *Memoirs of a Highland Lady* was originally written for her children. According to Peter Butter, her personal narrative writing written for her family has “a spontaneity and sparkle” and “*Memoirs* is much her best work” because it “has the advantage of dealing with her times of most intense experience in youth and of that experience having been matured over the years without losing its freshness” (209).

Elizabeth Grant began writing a journal while still a girl, in 1814, and living at the Rothermurchus estate.² It was intended as “a regular history of our doings, great and small” (1988, I, 329–330). She sent her work to her Aunt Lissy, who,

although she had left Scotland, remembered the Highlands well and preferred them, as Grant writes, “as she had known them – primitive, when nobody spoke English, when all young men wore the kilt, when printed calicoes had never been seen, when there was no wheaten bread to be got and the Laird worshipped as a divinity by every human being in the place” (1988, I, 329–330). But Grant also wanted “to convince her [aunt] of her error” of her preference for the Highlands of the past (1988, I, 329–330). Elizabeth Grant wrote “[t]o prove to her [aunt] that life could still be happier among the mountains than elsewhere, progress notwithstanding” (1988, I, 329–330).

The early journals were addressed to her aunt to persuade her of the importance of change in the Highlands, but also to reassure her that Highland culture and society still continued, and that some aspects of place were still as she remembered them. The reassurance that cultural heritage survives is created by extensive descriptions which, at times, are hyperbolic in their emphasis. This addressivity, achieved through the shared understanding of cultural, geographical, historical, and social allusions was an early feature of Elizabeth Grant’s writing. Evidence that her aunt valued the writing is recorded in her reception of the journals, and in conversations about the Highlands with Aunt Lizzy’s husband and his brother. The value of the journals for Elizabeth Grant was not only in the record of moments, but also in the conversation with the reader, using allusions to Highland life, which were shared and understood, and which formed a personal and private bond with her readers, thus consolidating family and social ties. But, the journals and the memoirs, the private writing of Grant, while originally written for her aunt, her children, and her niece, were also written for her unnamed “descendants” and, as such, form part of a discourse on the Highlands with an unknown and not yet living readership.

4. The Performance of a ‘Highland Lady’ Identity

The names by which she is known as author differ. Elizabeth Grant’s sketches about Ireland centred on the fictional characters of Hannah White and Mrs Wright. The texts are not attributed to her by the name of Grant or Mrs Smith, as she was then, nor to “a Highland Lady,” but she is identified using “by the Author of My Father the Laird,” thus identifying her as an author with a place in public space, but not by name. The Irish sketches were published between 1848 and 1850 in Chambers’ *Edinburgh Journal*, the periodical which had also published “A Highlander of the Last Age” and her three-part study of the changes in Highland life: “My Father the Laird,” “My Brother the Laird” and “My Nephew the Laird.” The three-part study of the Lairds introduces the writer and the texts in a parenthetical paragraph and states Elizabeth Grant to be “a lady advanced in life, the daughter of a Highland proprietor of ancient name.”³ Her relational

identity to her father is emphasised by the publishers of her work in her literary identity, even though at this time in her life, in terms of the social norms of the period, her relational identity as a woman would have been to her husband. But it is her Highland identity which is foregrounded, even when she is writing about Ireland, or France, or India.

Memoirs provides vivid descriptions of childhood on the Rothiemurchus estate, where the children had freedom to roam outside, and freedom to study, read and write inside. In the season, the family held, and Elizabeth Grant attended, balls in Edinburgh. It was British custom until the end of the first half of the 20th century for élite families to hold balls, known as ‘rouths,’ during the ‘season.’ Grant explains, “[a]ll the Beaux strove for tickets because all the Belles of the season made their first appearance there” (1988, II, 11). The season for balls began in January and lasted until Easter, and it was at such social gatherings that marriage matches were made. She describes one ball held at their house in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, which led to the appointment of a guard following an attack on the house. Prior to the Great Reform Act of 1832, John Peter Grant, Elizabeth Grant’s father, had a purchased seat in Parliament, as the Member for the ‘rotten borough’ of Great Grimsby, where he spoke in favour of the agronomist, not the labourer in the run up to the 1815 Corn Laws.⁴ His position caused so much resentment that their Edinburgh house was attacked in a response to his political views, and the family had to be given a guard (1988, II, 11). The attack on the house came the evening of a ball. Elizabeth Grant wrote:

Our first intimation of danger was from a volley of stones rattling through the windows, which had been left without closed shutters on account of the heat of the crowded rooms. A great mob had collected unknown to us, as we had musick within, and much noise from the buzz of the crowd. A score of ladies fainted by way of improving matters. Lady Matilda Wynyard, who had always all her senses about her, came up to my mother and told her she need be under no alarm. The General, who had some hint of what was preparing, had given the necessary orders, and one of the Company, a highland Captain Macpherson, had been despatched some time since for the military. A violent ringing of the door bell, and the heavy tread of soldiers’ feet announced to us our guard had come. (1988, II, 11)

She dramatises the event and the setting, but also shows her opinion through her characterisations, and provides the reader with a picture of life in an élite family in the New Town of Edinburgh.

In 1828, Elizabeth Grant and her family fled to India to escape the effects of her father’s bankruptcy. He had lost his seat in Parliament, and no longer had parliamentary privileges. The creditors chased the family to the coast of England where they sailed to France and on to India, where they were exiled until the debts were cleared. But with the help of family and the social connections frequently referred to in her writing as of great importance, Elizabeth Grant’s father had

secured a post with the East India Company. On arrival in Bombay, Elizabeth Grant reports her father remark, “if this be exile [...] it is splendid exile,” and her mother’s comments on, “those bowing men” and their “extraordinary deference” (1988, II, 222). A contemporary reader might make judgements of the apparent injustice of a British bankrupt being received with such deference and with “light vastness, beauty, regal pomp, and *true affection*” and be struck by the contemporary irony of Elizabeth Grant’s record that “we were such great people,” but in the historical, political and social context in which she lived, there was no irony, privilege was perceived to be a right by birth (1988, II, 224). Throughout her life, she established herself in a hierarchical position of difference and privilege.

Maria Frawley contends that for women like Elizabeth Grant, “travel writing [...] offered more than an opportunity to participate in a form with great popular appeal; it also offered women the opportunity to establish or solidify their credibility in a public arena shared by men” (33). For Elizabeth Grant, travel writing gave her access to public as well as domestic space. Michael Cotsell considers that women achieved “a marginal sagedom” through travel writing, achieving a liminal identity between masculine and feminine ideologies (14). Deirdre David argues that women who succeeded in establishing a position in the public sphere did so, not only by subverting the private, domestic sphere, but also by employing the dominant masculine culture and adopting and ratifying an ancillary role in it (179). Women, like Grant, might perform “dutiful, daughterly work for [their] political fathers,” but the performance of ancillary roles enabled their personal feminism to be accepted (69). As David points out, language and culture are shaped by “the hegemonic structures of patriarchy,” and, therefore, women’s writing and performance of self can be at the same time both subversive, and “implicitly authorized” by the dominant social structures (144). Such duality can be seen in Grant’s support of her father, as well as in the expression of her social opinions.

It was in India that Elizabeth Grant met Colonel Henry Smith. He owned an estate in Ireland, and, soon after marriage, they moved to the estate, Baltiboy, in County Wicklow. However, the costs of running the estate in Ireland were high and there were political difficulties in the country, including considerable changes to the laws governing tenancies. The high costs of running the estate meant that change was necessary. To reduce their expenditure, the whole family – Elizabeth Grant, her husband, his friend, Colonel Litchfield, their children, her sister Mary, and her husband and children, as well as their governesses – all travelled to France, where they lived between 1843 to 1845. Elizabeth Grant kept a journal of their residency and she wrote travel articles, including “A Month in the Pyrenees”; “A Few Weeks at Cauterets among the Pyrenees”; and five articles entitled “Wintering in Pau,” each of which was published under the identity already established in Chambers’ *Edinburgh Journal* as by “a Lady.” It was in 1845, while resident in France, that she began *Memoirs* as part of the familial discourse with her sister and her children. The entry to her *Journal* for 8 June 1845 reads:

After breakfast and my little walk I write the recollections of my life, which I began to do on my birthday to please the girls, who eagerly listen to the story of their mother's youth, now as a pleasing tale, by and bye it will be out of a wish to feel acquainted with people and places I shall not be at hand to introduce them to [...] the pleasure of talking over these bygone times with my children attaches us the more to one another. As we become more confidential in our intercourse, we make the tale profitable too by the comments we engraft upon it, and the best of all it increases (sic) my content with the present, the contrast between my maiden days and married life being to all rational feelings so much in favour of the latter. (1996, 239)

Identity is a shifting performance of self which is created relational to place, to people, to structures. The context can exacerbate or limit aspects of personal identity. During their time in France, Grant and her family lived in Pau, in the Pyrenees, and later, in Avranches, Normandy. In her writing, she provides detailed descriptions of people and places, and her encounters, but the descriptions are given as parallels or contrasts to Grant's life in Scotland. It is the difference on which she focuses, and Grant's Highlander identity becomes hyperbolised as a result. It is always the identity of the Highland Lady which she foregrounds.

5. A Highland Lady in France

There is a long history of allegiances and alliances between Scotland and France, but there are also nearly 1000 years of rivalry and wars between England and France. For example, in 1295, John Balliol, a Norman King of Scotland, who still had lands in France, formed a diplomatic and military alliance with Philippe IV of France. In 1421, 1200 Scots joined the French at Bauge where they defeated the English. Aubigny-sur-Nère, which lies between Orleans and Nevers, was awarded to Sir John Stuart by Charles VII of France in 1423 in the name of the Auld Alliance, and the town still celebrates its links to Scotland. It is still known as the city of the Stuarts. But during Elizabeth Grant's lifetime, and from 1793 to 1815, Scotland, as part of Britain, had been in effect at war with France and there were consequences on the lives of all, including those who lived in the Highlands of Scotland, distant as they may seem from the battles and revolution. In *Memoirs*, Elizabeth Grant comments on her father's profession at law as a response to the continuing effects of the French Revolution. For example, the fear of the spread of revolution from France across Europe was real, but land-owners and the élite especially feared the loss of title and their land. Elizabeth Grant says it was "necessary to the usefulness of a country gentleman" because the French Revolution "had made it a fashion for all men to provide themselves with some means of earning a future livelihood, should" what she identifies as, "the torrent of democracy reach to other lands" (1988, I, 6). The Napoleonic Wars had also been a threat. Again, in *Memoirs*, she explains the preparations in

Scotland for war and possible invasion, and writes, “we owe Napoleon thanks. It was the terrour of his expected invasion that roused this patriotick fever amongst our mountains, where [...] the alarm was so great that every preparation was in train for repelling the enemy” (1988, I, 109).

Until Culloden, each landowner in the Highlands had had the right to raise a *leddy*, or small regiment, comprising the tenants and workers. Although the right had been outlawed, Grant’s father had retained it on his land at Rothiemurchus, more for pomp and pleasure than for purpose. On occasion he would gather the *leddy* and all the participants dressed up for the performance. Elizabeth Grant considered it to be a “spectacle” which made show of the social hierarchy of laird and tenants and the privilege of private ownership of land, to hold back what she considers the “torrent of democracy”:

It was a kilted regiment, and a fine set of smart well set up men they were, with their plumed bonnets, dirks, and purses, and their lowwheeled buckled shoes. My father became his trappings well, and [...] my Mother rode to the ground beside him, dressed in a tartan petticoat, red jacket gaudily laced, and just such a bonnet and feathers as he wore himself, with the addition of a huge Cairngorm on the side of it [...] the bright sun seldom shone upon a more exhilarating spectacle. The Laird, their Colonel, reigning all hearts. After the ‘Dismiss,’ bread and cheese and whisky [...] were profusely administered. (1988, I, 108)

She lists, she alliterates and she hyperbolises, all to stress the auto-stereotype of the Highlanders and to emphasise what she calls “the persistence of tradition” (1988, I, 108).

The presence and absence of Napoleon is in conversation several times, and his influence on life at the time is evident in her writing. While in Pau, she reads in the *Scotsman* of the death of Sir Hudson Lowe, who had effectively been Napoleon’s gaoler. His confinement by Lowe, some suggest, led to Napoleon’s death, and others have suggested Lowe had Napoleon poisoned. He was a man disliked and considered by Wellington, as Grant records, “a man wanting in education and judgement” (1996, 77). She reflects:

I remember fancying him to be rude in manner, rough in temper, a large coarse soldier, hoping I might never encounter him, sure he must be a monster whom I never could be brought to endure. I was a girl at this time in the Highlands where we were too apt to be shewn but one side of the picture and to take up our opinions rather strongly. After I married, on our voyage home we touched at Ceylon and [...] I was taken to dinner by a military man, a General Officer covered with orders, a little pale elderly person, very quiet, very gentlemanly and very agreeable; he had been everywhere, knew everybody. I thought him very pleasant for our conversation was becoming very interesting when I was startled by someone asking ‘Sir Hudson Lowe’ to do him the honour to take wine. It was a lesson in morals. (1996, 78)

Later, in Avranches, Grant has a lengthy conversation with a young painter, whom she describes as a “legitimist,” someone who supported the Bourbon dynastic succession to the French throne. She records the banter and the teasing – she of his hopes, and he of the end of Napoleon:

We are never to be forgiven for shutting up Buonaparte in St. Helena. “Blame the father-in-law,” said I; “it was to satisfy the Emperours of Russia and Austria and the Bourbons that the troublesome *ambitieux* was chained.” How he opened his eyes. And when I described the beauty of St. Helena which I had seen, the comforts provided for the prisoner who had refused them, the gentlemanly manner of Sir Hudson Lowe whom I had known, he looked as if I were telling fairy tales. (1996, 162–163)

In Pau in 1843, there was a British community of around 400 in a town whose civilian population was 1400. Jane, Duchess of Gordon, who had been particularly influential in Elizabeth Grant’s childhood and education, was one member of that community. The Duchess had bought land in Pau in 1836 and then donated £1000 for the construction of the church. But although there are many English, the Grants do not join their company. At Pau, she calls the English “gossips” and at Avranches comments, “what a horrid set of British have congregated here” (1996, 204). There are times she is exasperated with the management of the household and the difficulties she has in France because people take time to do their work, but she gives the opinion: “The French do everything in earnest – no wonder they seldom fail” (1996, 27). She comments the French have a “total absence of selfishness,” adding, after the shoemaker repaired shoes for free, the tailor gave her buttons at no charge, and a young girl gave her own umbrella to save Elizabeth Grant’s silk dress, “I am getting quite fond of these obliging people” (1996, 36).

Her descriptions of the country around her are extensive, and she draws further parallels with Scotland. For example, following a long description of the town, its open spaces, hills, and narrow streets, squares filled with trees, and what she describes as “the jewel of the little town [...] the old castle on its rock with the river flowing round one side and the arc stretching along its bank for a mile beyond the Basse Plante. Edinburgh in miniature as to situation without those hideous barracks to spoil a picturesque old building” (1996, 21–22).

She draws cultural parallels between France and Scotland from her observations of the dancing. For example, she notices “heeling and toe-ing, shuffling and double-shuffling, cutting, entrechatting, and swinging round with an air of audacity altogether like our highlanders” (1996, 105). Other comparisons between the French and the Scots are in the women’s headwear. In Pau she describes “headwear of starched muslin, full of quills frills close to the face and a crown like a drum” (1996, 35). Outside La Rochelle, she records: “A new kind of cap began to present itself, quite as big as the drums and the pillow cases but carried out behind like the flags of the lancers or the old prints in Froissart’s chronicles”

(1996, 139). She tells the readers: “The caps of the women though invariably immense [...] [were] something like the highland mutch” (1996, 142).

At the end of 1844, they were in Avranches, after finding Pau too expensive, but Elizabeth was ill and had been advised to rest. Her journal records that on 17 July 1845 they were all back at Baltiboy in Ireland. The journals of France, the Highlands, Ireland and India are each a personal reflective account of not only her life as a member of the landowning élite, but of the lives, cultures and social conditions of those she encountered, but always from a Highland perspective.

6. Conclusion

Ruth Perry argues that “narrative is a universal human response to dilemmas about the metaphysics of existence” (5). She considers that although narratives are used by both readers and writers “to face the exigencies of their lives,” through an examination of the “anxieties and pleasures” which the author illustrates, readers can “trace the configuration of forces operating on people” (5). In Grant’s writing what gives her pleasure is described at length and the pleasure extended, but the anxieties are skimmed over, alluded to, abbreviated. But Grant writes about her life in her *Memoirs* in order to provide her intended reader, her children, with a means of contextualising their own lives with hers. Elizabeth Grant’s *Memoirs* provides a guide on “how to manoeuvre materially and morally in the world” by means of direction through first person focus on home and family (Perry 6). The text points to the domestic as a contextualising space for identity and for making progress through life, not as a delineating or confining space of gender (6). Drawing on David’s arguments of how 19th-century women negotiated space and relational identity, Grant adopted and ratified an auxiliary domestic role, which enabled her opinions to bear weight in her social hierarchical context (David 179). She directs her readers to follow her example in her narratives as a means of facing life’s exigencies.

Elizabeth Grant’s *Memoirs* ends with a marriage as a signifier of improvement, and possibly of 19th-century redemption. However, in the closing passages of her *Memoirs*, Elizabeth refers to the loss of her former identity and to the onset of a new one. She writes, “and then indeed I felt I was gone out from among my own kindred, and had set up independently – a husband – a baby – an end indeed of Eliza Grant” (1988, II, 320). And yet, throughout her writing she retains the identity of the Highland Lady. Elizabeth Grant highlights, what Perry refers to as the “exigencies” of her life with the effect of indicating the reader’s own (5). The narratives which illustrate the exigencies, also serve to create a relational identity of Elizabeth Grant to her familial, genealogical, and social locations. In the locations through which she travels – France, Ireland, India – Elizabeth Grant provides images of other people and other places, different from those

which are familiar. Those images and narratives are offered in objective opposition, and in an assertion of her subjective locus in family, in Highland culture and society, and in her 19th-century place in a Scottish social hierarchy. Grant remains throughout, a Highland Lady.

Notes

- 1 Poverty was widespread in Ireland in the first half of the 19th century. Around one-third of all Irish land tenancies were between 0.4 and 5 acres, which could only feed a family if the main crop were potatoes. Poor relief was only available to those in workhouses. In 1838, the Irish Poor Law was passed as an Act of the British Parliament in Westminster. Its aims were to make provision for the poor in Ireland. A system of financial support was raised by a levy of local rates on the value of land. Under the new legislation, landowners were to pay the rates of tenants whose land was valued at less than £4. The financial impact on landowners led them to reduce the numbers of tenancies, which was achieved by eviction or by combining small holdings. The wider social impact was significant. The population in the workhouses quickly doubled and many people left Ireland for England or America. Elizabeth Grant's journals record that the Baltiboy's estate encouraged families to leave for America.
- 2 The Rothiemurchus estate, on which Elizabeth grew up, remains in the ownership of the Grant family. It is a well-established business which includes forestry and agriculture, as it did in her lifetime. However, it is also a tourist destination where visitors can select from a range of outdoor activities, one of which is to take the 'Highland Lady Safari' which encompasses a tour of the Doune and locations on the estate to which she referred in her journals. It is interesting to see, therefore, that the Home Tour and the literary tour of Scotland, which increased in popularity in the late 18th century, have increased in their commercial nature to the extent of making the residence of the Highland Lady a tourist destination and an idealised representation of the Highlands of Scotland.
- 3 See the introductory paragraph by the editors to "My Father the Laird" in Chambers' Edinburgh Journal, 119, April 11, 1846. The text reads: "It may be well to state that this piece – the first of a short series in which, as it appears to us, domestic life is sketched with singular spirit and fidelity of pencil – is really what it appears to be, the composition of a lady advanced in life, the daughter of a Highland proprietor of ancient name. This first paper depicts the north-country gentleman of the conclusion of what we may call the age of old-world things – the time when there was no symmetric agriculture, no struggling activity, and only a simple and antiquated kind of refinement.

A second paper shows a transition state of things in the middle of the last war; and a third, we believe, will set forth the contrast afforded by the present state of society.”

- 4 When the Napoleonic Wars came to an end in 1815, the price of corn fell. This reduced the price of bread to the benefit of the working classes, but also reduced profits for landowners. The Corn Law of 1815 increased corn and bread prices, and this led to riots. Reforms took place during the 19th century, but the distrust of landowners remained. A call for reforms to the franchise, to constituency boundaries, and to representation of the people grew in response to the development of industrial cities which had no representation, and to the so-called ‘rotten boroughs’ in which small numbers of landowning voters could elect two Members of Parliament, thus providing disproportionate representation. A bill was presented to Parliament in 1831, but its defeat gave rise to many serious riots across Britain, including Scotland. Parliament records the riots in Edinburgh, which Elizabeth Grant describes, and refers to there being only one cavalry regiment in the whole of Scotland which could contend with them. In 1832, Reform Acts became law in Scotland, and in England and Wales, which extended part of the franchise, and introduced changes in constituency boundaries. Further reform bills were introduced across the 19th century.

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