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## Black Books and Southern Tours: Tone and Perspective in the Travel Writing of Mrs Anne Royall

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'The works of Madam Royall are we grant an exception, for her style is so highly seasoned, her love of country so predominant, she gives so much of local topics & applies the lash so unsparingly to her enemies, that her books like her manners are resistless.' So commented the reviewer in the *Boston Commercial Gazette* on the publication of Mrs Anne Royall's second travel book.<sup>1</sup> Frequently repetitious, often limited in their scope, and highly opinionated, Mrs Royall's travel books provide an insight into American society during the 1820s from a very particular viewpoint. It is this particularity that this paper seeks to explore. A number of scholars have examined the works of female travel writers and have begun to analyse the ways in which gender affects their writing. They argue that there is an identifiable feminine perspective in the writing of many women who utilize this genre, and that their gender affects the subjects they choose and the tone in which they write. As the 1828 reviewer suggested, however, Anne Royall's works fit uneasily into such a pattern. Though, as this paper argues, there are aspects of Mrs Royall's books that have a recognizably feminine perspective and tone, her writings do not readily match the criteria suggested by these scholars and consequently raise questions about the existing paradigms concerning female travel writing.

Mrs Royall (her own preferred designation) set out 'with a view [...] to note every thing during my journey, worthy of remark, and commit it to writing, and to draw amusement and instruction from every source. In doing this, I shall not imitate most journalists, in such remarks as "cloudy, or fair morning," and where we stop, dates, &c. This is all the preface I deem necessary' (*Sketches*, p. 2). These opening sentences, written during the mid-1820s, highlight some of the features of travel writing at this time, as well as Mrs

<sup>1</sup> 'Posthumous papers. facetious and fanciful of a person lately about town', *Boston Commercial Gazette*, 26 June 1828, p. 1. The volumes of travel writing were, in order of publication: *Sketches of History, Life and Manners in the United States by a Traveller* (1826); *The Black Book*; or, *A Continuation of Travels in the United States*, 3 vols (1828-29); *Mrs Royall's Pennsylvania*; or, *Travels Continued in the United States*, 2 vols (1829); *Letters from Alabama on Various Subjects: to Which is added an appendix containing remarks on sundry members of the 20th and 21st congress and other high characters, etc., etc., at the seat of government* (1830); *Mrs Royall's Southern Tour or Second Series of the Black Book*, 3 vols (1830-31). These volumes were published by the author and funded by subscription.

Royall's own reaction to contemporary literature. Mrs Anne Royall was one of a growing number of her sex who journeyed in the United States in the early nineteenth century and who wrote about, and even published, their observations and experiences during their trips.<sup>2</sup> Many professed to be writing only for their private journals, although Anne Royall, as this passage suggests, always aimed to publish hers. They also wrote to amuse and to pass on what they had learned, as male travel writers had been doing for a long time. None the less, it was sufficiently rare for a woman either to write for publication or to write travel books in the early nineteenth century, that Mrs Royall's friends advised her to adopt the pseudonym of 'a traveller' in order to disguise her identity.<sup>3</sup> She did so for the first volume, but published under her own name thereafter.

Though becoming increasingly acceptable by the 1820s, writing for publication was still an unusual career for women. It did, however, allow a single or widowed woman to support herself financially at home, without entering the public sphere of work. Many scholars have assumed that the strictures of domesticity meant that women writers of this period concentrated on writing novels, and that most aimed at a female audience.<sup>4</sup> Recently it has been suggested that early-nineteenth-century female authors were much less restricted in the form they chose to write in than has been recognized. They did not confine themselves only to celebrating the domestic sphere through novels, nor did they aim only at a female audience. Rather, they wrote in a variety of genres, for a wide range of audiences, serving diverse purposes. Many asserted their right to enquire about and comment on the world outside their homes, and to publish their opinions and knowledge for a wide audience. Women writers can thus be found addressing all forms of writing, both fiction and non-fiction, and among these by the early nineteenth century was travel writing.<sup>5</sup>

Until the nineteenth century, travel writing had been a predominantly masculine genre. According to Charles Batten, during the eighteenth century it had been based on rigid conventions, widely recognized by contemporaries, with the aim to instruct and please. In keeping with these conventions the travel writer should not talk of himself, nor should he include anecdotes or

<sup>2</sup> Other women who were travelling and writing in the United States at much the same time included the Englishwomen, Frances Wright, Mrs Basil Hall, Frances Trollope, and Harriet Martineau.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Mrs Royall to William Cary, dated New York, 16 September 1826, Container 1, Cary-Mathews Family, Correspondence, 1825-1830, Feamster Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress; Entry for 13 June 1826, *The Diary of Isaiah Thomas, 1805-1828. In Two Volumes. Volume II*, ed. with introduction and notes by Benjamin Thomas Hill, *Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society*, x (1909; repr. 1971), p. 237.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Coultrap-McQuin, *Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Patricia Okker, *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-Century Women Editors* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Nina Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790-1860* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), pp. 1-4.

trivial information, since these would detract from the main purpose of the literature.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the century these conventions had become more flexible, to the extent that travel writing became an elastic genre both in form and content. Thus it was an inviting vehicle for women. As Mrs Royall had acknowledged in her opening words, for many women the travel book equated with a journal — a form that was both informal and commodious and with which women had long been familiar. It allowed them to include a wide variety of material and note everything that caught their attention, while also informing and amusing their audience.<sup>7</sup>

There were practical reasons why travel writing had previously been a predominantly male genre. Prior to the nineteenth century, conditions for travelling around the United States were difficult. The roads were poor, settlements scattered, public transportation unpredictable and accommodation on the road of uncertain quality. Only those with considerable financial resources could afford to own or rent a horse or carriage, and hire a guide. Consequently women rarely travelled, and when they did so it was usually to visit family. In the early nineteenth century with improvements in roads, and the establishment of regular stagecoach and steamship lines, as well as more regulated lodgings, travel became easier and more predictable.<sup>8</sup> These improvements meant that women were able to participate more easily in travel, and they could do so for a wider variety of reasons — among them, pleasure. Most women, however, were too tied to their homes and families to enable them to do so, except as part of a family expedition. Travel therefore often meant something different for women than it did for men. It frequently represented an escape from the confines of domesticity, and gave them a chance for a freedom of action and thought that was unthinkable at home. Free of their male-dominated, household existence, travel offered a sense of adventure, independence, and a degree of control that few women enjoyed in other aspects of their lives.<sup>9</sup>

Mrs Anne Royall, like many other nineteenth-century female travel writers, did not begin to travel until she was freed from her domestic duties. The death of her husband William, in December 1812, left her a wealthy widow, but his will was quickly disputed by his relatives. The court cases dragged on for the next few years, but in November 1817, Mrs Royall decided that they

<sup>6</sup> Charles L. Batten, Jr, *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth Century Travel Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), passim.

<sup>7</sup> *Telling Tales: Selected Writings by Nineteenth-Century American Women Abroad*, ed. by Mary Suzanne Schriber (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995), p. xxiii.

<sup>8</sup> Patricia Cline Cohen, 'Safety and Danger: Women on American Public Transport, 1750-1830', in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History*, ed. by Dorothy O. Helly and Susan M. Reverby (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 112-14; Patricia Cline Cohen, 'Women at Large: Travel in Antebellum America', *History Today*, 44 (December 1994), 44-50.

<sup>9</sup> *Ladies on the Loose: Women Travellers of the 18th and 19th Centuries* ed. by Leo Hamalian (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1981), pp. x-xi; Laura A. Day, 'The History of Every One of Us': A Gender Study of America's Antebellum Travel Writers' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, 1988), pp. 3-4.

would not be resolved quickly and she set out to explore the new territory of Alabama. The letters she wrote home to a friend in western Virginia during this time gave her the idea that she might be able to become an author, and when in 1823 the court cases were decided against her and she was left virtually penniless, it was to writing that she turned in order to make a living.<sup>10</sup>

Travel writing was not an obvious genre for a woman lacking financial resources and who had no companion to accompany her on her journeys. Mrs Royall was dependent on commercial transportation — stagecoaches and various forms of water transportation — in order to explore the United States. She had been encouraged by friends to believe that she had the necessary qualities for travel writing, and it is clear that she also enjoyed travelling and the experience of new places. She may also have been aware that there was a market to exploit, for by the 1820s travel writing had begun to be popular, as Americans eager to acquaint themselves with their own country but unable or unwilling to travel themselves, sought to read about it. Thus, for Mrs Royall, travel writing fulfilled the dual purpose of earning her a living and enabling her to explore the United States.<sup>11</sup> Between 1826 and 1831 she published nine volumes of travel writing, together with the volume of letters written while she was living and touring in Alabama. In the period covered by these books she travelled the length and breadth of the settled areas of the United States, from Maine and Vermont in the North to Louisiana in the South, and from the Atlantic seaboard to the Mississippi River along the eastern boundary of Arkansas Territory. Few travel writers in the 1820s had either the time or the money to visit more than a small part of the United States; Anne Royall was the exception in this.<sup>12</sup>

Mrs Royall set out on her travels with the intention of writing for publication: indeed part of her purpose in travelling was to collect subscriptions for her books. Even the *Letters from Alabama*, which were purportedly written only for the amusement of a friend, had an audience in mind, albeit one with whom Mrs Royall was familiar. She is therefore constantly aware of the need to please her audience: 'Well, Matt, what shall I give you now? It is so long since I wrote to you, that I forgot what I last said. If I recollect right, I have, upon the whole, entertained you with a little of everything, except love' (*Letters*, p. 244). Her need to satisfy her audience, or public, becomes in her later travels the reason why she writes. As she noted: 'It will be asked then, what encouragement I have to write? and how I am able to publish at all.

<sup>10</sup> *Letters from Alabama, 1817-1822 by Anne Newport Royall*, ed. by Lucille Griffith (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1969), p. 224. All references are to this edition.

<sup>11</sup> Letter to Messrs Carey and Lea, dated 19 June 1824, Case 7, Box 20, Notable American Women: Anne Royall, Gratz Collection, Pennsylvania Historical Society; letter to Thomas Jefferson, dated 20 June 1824, Washington City, Reel 54, Series 1, 20 September 1823 to 12 March 1825, Thomas Jefferson Papers Microfilm, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

<sup>12</sup> Day, "The History of Every One of Us", p. 19.

To the first, I answer, I do not write for profit or for fame. I write for the benefit of my country, and to please my friends. The books are read and have done good; thus my object on this point is realised' (*Southern Tour*, II, 229). Her choice of subject matter and the route she took through the United States are consequently dictated by her need to answer her audience and encourage the sale of her books.<sup>13</sup>

Other factors too shape the subject matter and perspective of Mrs Royall's writing. Her gender clearly had some influence but how much is not always clear. A more obvious factor is her patriotism and the fact that she is writing as an American about her native country for an American audience. She also writes from a regional perspective. But Mrs Royall also had a partisan political objective that increasingly dominated her work and manifested itself in a variety of ways. Her partisanship complicated her gendered perspective, prompting her to comment in ways and on subjects that women usually avoided.<sup>14</sup>

Critics have pointed to a number of ways in which a gendered perspective is evident in the travel writing of nineteenth-century women authors. Among these are the apology or disclaimer by which female writers self-consciously situate themselves and their accounts in the realm of the literary and the constructed.<sup>15</sup> Mrs Royall makes use of this kind of apology to make her own claims to be part of the literary enterprise. Thus she observes how difficult it is to describe the Niagara Falls: 'The subject of describing the falls was not only above the power of language, but one so hackneyed, that nothing was left for me to say', but shortly afterwards notes: 'Most writers, indeed, all that I have met with, when speaking of these falls, never fail to say what is not correct, which is "that it is surrounded by immense woods," because it once had woods, and Mr. Heriet said so, every one must copy Mr. H.' (*Black Book*, I, 52-53). Again, in describing the countryside around New Orleans, she apologizes for the limits in her literary abilities: 'It is understood I never have, nor am I capable, of dressing out my subject in learned phrases [*sic*] or bold images or any of the elegances of style.' However, she makes a virtue out of these limitations: 'Judging of others by myself, I seek only to give such description of things as may bring them as near as possible before the eyes of those who have not an opportunity of seeing them, and that in my own homespun way without regard to style or rules of composition, which I know nothing of, and care as little as I know' (*Southern Tour*, III, 60). While acknowledging the convention of the apology, Mrs Royall pays little heed to the need for self-effacement in order to demonstrate her femininity.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This is particularly clear in the prefatory remarks to both *Mrs Royall's Pennsylvania*, I, 3 and *Mrs Royall's Southern Tour*, I, frontispiece.

<sup>14</sup> Shirley Foster, *Across New Worlds: Nineteenth-Century Women Travellers and Their Writing* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp. 173-74.

<sup>15</sup> See the introduction in *From Beacon Hill to the Crystal Palace by Lorenza Stevens Berbineau*, ed. by Karen L. Kilcup (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002), pp. 32-33.

<sup>16</sup> Foster, *Across New Worlds*, pp. 19-22.

A number of scholars have pointed to other ways in which women approach travel writing and offer a feminine perspective that is different from that of men. They suggest that there is a clear feminine voice in many nineteenth-century travel texts written by women, particularly in the subjects they chose to comment on and the style in which they wrote. For a woman to write 'factual' material was to run the risk of being regarded as unfeminine and presumptuous.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, women's texts frequently included details of domestic and family life, as well as descriptions of women's manners and costumes, which were not usually found in male writing. Mrs Royall did occasionally offer such a recognizably feminine perspective in her books, but her writings do not easily fit these criteria.

Mrs Royall deemed all areas of American life to be within the remit of her travel books, and showed no reluctance to discuss or comment on matters that would not normally be seen as the province of women. She did not, however, entirely ignore those aspects of American life considered to be part of women's realm. This is most noticeable in her observations of other women and her comments on the domestic arrangements in some of the taverns she stayed in. Her tone in talking about other women is almost always one of superiority — both in terms of her social class and her education. She sees herself as one of the 'better sort' with a knowledge of correct behaviour and the most suitable dress for women. She comments on the distinctiveness of women in the different cities she visits. 'The ladies of New-York, like the gentlemen, are affable, modest, and domestic; the better sort are easy in their manners, plain in their equipage and dress, and are seldom seen in the streets. Upon inquiry whether those ladies who are daily on parade, in Broadway, were of the first distinction, I was told they were not, and that the first ladies, from motives of delicacy, were never seen in the streets on foot, that they always took a carriage be the distance ever so small' (*Sketches*, pp. 260–61). The ladies of Boston, however, had a more important attribute in Mrs Royall's eyes: 'But the excellence of the Boston ladies is found in the improvement of their minds, which gives ease to their manners, and an intelligence of countenance, which forms a striking contrast to the vacant stare of the ladies of New York. The pleasure of the former is intellectual, that of the latter is sensual' (*Black Book*, 1, 7). This tone of superiority and condemnation for those women who spend more time in thinking about their dress than in utilizing their minds is also apparent in her comments on the ladies of Baltimore: 'What man of sense wishes to marry a bundle of silk and lace? If they would expend a tenth part of their dress in improving their minds, they would enjoy life, and receive the applause of the world — knowledge is the only thing which can give to life its relish, or beauty its charms. What is more disgusting than an ignorant female? Pride and

<sup>17</sup> Foster, pp. 18–19. However, Laura Day seeks to show that American travel writing is not gendered in any obvious way.

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affectation is a certain consequence which all the silk and lace in the world cannot conceal' (*Black Book*, I, 107-08).

Mrs Royall's tone of superiority becomes ever more apparent as she travels around the United States. She is appalled by the ignorance of many women and their lack of education, and she mocks what she sees as their lack of propriety. The dress and manners of women attending the debates on the Virginia constitution in the legislature at Richmond are a particular source of derision for her: 'I have once before remarked that the people of Richmond were amongst the most ignorant people in the Union, and these silly women, whose minds were empty, thought to captivate by outside show, and when the Convention was about to meet, fabricated these large umbrella bonnets, which they named *Convention* bonnets. These were made of white silk, with feathers stuck in them of one yard in length — all this was to draw attention, and if the *bonnet* failed, the feather could not; this lack of learning and want of sense defeated their object' (*Southern Tour*, I, 36). However, she is capable of displaying considerable sympathy and appreciation of those women she considers worthy examples of American womanhood: 'She is a widow, and is without the means of support; and 2d. because she is a worthy, plain, sensible, and kind honest woman, and has a large family. It is a pity those missionary ladies do not help their own sex — how laudable, then, would be their efforts to obtain money' (*Pennsylvania*, I, 165).

Mrs Royall takes an interest in the manners and dress of the women of the United States in a way that it is unlikely a male traveller would, but her tone is largely unsympathetic, indeed she is frequently impatient with her sex. In other areas too, where critics have suggested women travel writers venture but which men largely ignore, Mrs Royall does not display a characteristically feminine perspective. For instance, whereas many nineteenth-century female travel writers made lengthy observations about family life and domesticity, these are not subjects explored in any depth by Mrs Royall. Nor does she try to create her own sense of home while she travels as critics have suggested that other female authors did.<sup>18</sup>

Unusually for female travellers at this period, Mrs Royall deliberately did not stay in private houses, but made a point of staying in taverns. She thus had little opportunity to comment on the domestic arrangements or the kind of 'servant problem' that pre-occupied Mrs Trollope.<sup>19</sup> While she does occasionally comment on her accommodation in taverns and the quality of the service, she rarely gives much detail. She describes a tavern in Lebanon Springs as being the best in New York, but hardly elaborates: 'The table excels, the servants are attentive, and the house is large, airy, and convenient' (*Black Book*, II, 43). Similarly, the taverns in Connecticut receive only brief attention: 'The chamber-maids and waiting-maids, are perfect ladies;

<sup>18</sup> See Kilcup, *From Beacon Hill to the Crystal Palace*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>19</sup> Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832; New York: Vintage Books, 1949), Chapter 6.

the charges low; the tables good; the rooms neat, and the most assiduous attention' (*Black Book*, II, 81). By contrast, some of the southern taverns are not well run, and they are run by men rather than women: 'The women here are too proud or too lazy, or too something to attend to public houses. In the North, woman is the life and soul of a tavern' (*Southern Tour*, II, 107). Mrs Royall speaks as the experienced traveller guiding other travellers when she describes the taverns she stops at. Her chief concern is how polite the landlord is and whether he recognizes her as the important personage she perceives herself to be, but occasionally she describes her accommodation with great enthusiasm, as in Columbia, South Carolina: 'in the largest and most splendidly furnished parlor I was ever in in any part of the Union. It wanted little, if any, of being equal to the east room in size or beauty! More costly or more highly finished furniture I never at any time saw in a public house, and it is the first time I ever found the owner and house equally matched' (*Southern Tour*, II, 53).

Thus Mrs Royall does not display an overtly female voice either in her perspective or in the subjects she chooses to write about. This may well suggest that she was aiming at an audience that was predominantly male, and one that wished to be informed about their country rather than simply be entertained.<sup>20</sup> The subjects she writes about are not confined to those that might be defined as feminine, nor does she avoid factual information. Her description of Salem, Massachusetts suggests little of the feminine and concentrates on the economic sphere, an area usually considered outside the private female sphere: 'Salem is the oldest town in New England except Plymouth, and second in trade. It is finely situated for commerce, having one of the best harbors on the Atlantic; it is likewise strongly fortified both by art and nature. It is the wealthiest town, for its population, in the United States, and carries on an extensive trade with Canton and the East Indies' (*Sketches*, p. 356). Likewise, her description of Pittsburgh gives considerable detail about the industries, crafts, and commerce of this town, with no apology for stepping outside the boundaries of female interest: 'I am now come to the most difficult, but by far the most interesting portion of my description of Pittsburgh, and without which, the city would have little weight. — This is its trade and manufactures, in which last, it excels any city in the union, either in the quantity, excellence, or variety of the articles' (*Pennsylvania*, II, 89). Indeed, she is clearly oblivious to any sense of feminine propriety in explaining her methods of gathering information: 'But nothing was farther from them than the thought of receiving a visit from a female, and though

<sup>20</sup> Her frustration at her own sex's lack of interest in reading has already been noted and appears in all her books, though clearly some women did buy her books. See for instance, Royall, *Black Book*, I, 117; *Black Book*, II, 118–19. On female reading in the early nineteenth century, see Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700–1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

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sometimes accompanied, I mostly stole a march upon them, much the best course for those who aim to give accurate descriptions' (*Pennsylvania*, II, 90).

Much of Mrs Royall's travel writing is factual in its nature. She gives facts and figures she has gleaned from books and from local sources of information, but she is also keen to see things for herself in order to give accurate descriptions. She is also little concerned about appearing unfeminine. There is thus no clear feminine voice or perspective in her writings, but she does have other perspectives. The clearest of these is her national self-awareness — as an American writing for an American audience. This manifests itself as patriotism and a belief in 'American liberties', but also as an identification with a certain region. It is very patent from Mrs Royall's writing that while she has a strong sense of the United States of America as a nation, with national institutions and a national government, she also expects to find local and regional characteristics with distinct physical types. This is especially noticeable in her first published book: 'In their appearance, they [the Philadelphians] are rather taller than those of Baltimore, well made, and of delicate conformation; nor are they so active in their movements as the people farther south. Both men and women are very handsomely featured and have fair complexions' (*Sketches*, p. 229). Mrs Royall's own regional identity and the perspective from which she writes is somewhat ambiguous. It also modifies slightly over the course of her writing as she loses some of her identity with the West.

Though she was born in Baltimore, Mrs Royall spent her formative years and her adult life, until she began travelling, in the West — first on the Pennsylvania frontier and then on the western edges of Virginia. Her western background and backwoods upbringing is often to the forefront in her writing. In her early works it colours the way in which she describes her first encounters with the cities of the Atlantic states: she claims to be overawed by them — the number of people, the wealth, and the bustle, are a matter of amazement to her. As she notes:

A host of wonders burst upon me at once, the vast number, height and density of the houses, the massy public buildings, the Washington monument, the Baltimore monument, the great expanse of water, the quantity of shipping, the number of well dressed people in the streets, overwhelmed me with astonishment.

She does not wish to appear to be an unsophisticated traveller, however, as she goes on to explain:

I have not the least doubt but this remark may excite a smile, particularly in those who were never out of a populous town, but they must remember that till now I was never in one, and that those things which are matter of so much indifference to them, are as gratifying to me, as our long, deep, smooth-flowing rivers, our endless prairies, our solemn forests, our wild mountains and deep caverns, our flowery plains, rude hamlets and fertile fields of bending corn would be to them. (*Sketches*, pp. 187-88)

Thus her awe at seeing a large city for the first time becomes a chance to promote the West. However, while she extols the natural beauties of the

West in contrast to the man-made wonders of the eastern cities, she draws no moral conclusions about the advantages of the rural life over the urban as other writers had done. She appreciates the improvements made in the cities, and the markets they provide for her books, but is clearly also proud of her frontier upbringing and the persistence of the frontier.

The superiority of the frontier and the pioneer life is seen in a number of forms in Mrs Royall's writing. There is the nostalgia for her childhood that she expresses when visiting the areas she grew up in on her travels. This is evoked by the names of the places she remembers, and the images and sounds of her childhood that certain places conjure up. She also recalls the difficulties of life in frontier settlements, but in a tone that suggests that these times were in a sense simpler and nobler than the present:

The presant [*sic*] generation have scarcely any idea of the privations and trouble of settling the country — no such thing as salt had we for three months at one time, and as for sugar we could make enough of that from the trees, but for tea we drank the johnsworth and pinned our clothes (when we had any) with thorns, and I have had a great love for thorns ever since. I do not recollect of seeing a *pin* to know what it was till I was nearly as large as I am now, and as I did not know the use, I did not know the want of them. (*Pennsylvania*, I, 223)

Overwhelmingly the scenes of her childhood are cause for delight and rapture, as she recalls the woods, the log schoolhouse, and the homestead where she stayed when there were Indian attacks (*Pennsylvania*, II, 197–220). A similar sense of nostalgia pervades her writing when she describes visits with her mother and her brother, each of which is tinged by a sense of loss.

It is not just in nostalgia for her childhood that Mrs Royall reveals her belief in the superiority of the West. Even as she becomes more familiar with the eastern seaboard, she continues to see the West as the source of American virtues. Thus, aspects of the West, such as the log cabins on the shores of the Mississippi, are for her symbols of true American independence: 'But the dear little new log cabins on the shores, were my delight. The still independence and rural simplicity they brought to my mind from having spent my early days in them overpowered my feelings' (*Southern Tour*, III, 132–33). The largely unsettled state of Illinois is a country where she can breathe more freely. It is also a great state for the poor man, where land and wildlife are bounteous, and crops of all kinds grow well (*Southern Tour*, III, 163–64). But whereas the northwestern states evoke admiration, it is the southwestern states of western Virginia, Alabama, and Tennessee that have shaped her perspective.

Mrs Royall travelled widely in the slave-holding states of the South, but she does not comment extensively on slavery. Her only lengthy description of slaves at work is of Andrew Jackson's cotton plantation in Alabama in 1818, in which she says little about either the institution of slavery or the conditions of work. It is coloured by her admiration for Jackson and her unwillingness to criticize him. She merely comments that the slave cabins were warm and

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comfortable and the slaves well provided for, since General Jackson is 'one of the best of masters' (*Letters from Alabama*, pp. 138-40). Her attitude towards the institution is frequently ambivalent, but she generally views it from a southern perspective — as an integral part of southern life. Her husband had owned a small number of slaves, which she inherited, and this clearly affects her attitude towards slavery. While, like many southerners at this time, she seems to have viewed slavery as a necessary evil, her true feelings about the institution are not fully articulated. Consequently, her very occasional emotional outcries against slavery are somewhat at odds with her more general acceptance of it: 'Oh, slavery, slavery! nothing can soften thee! thou art slavery still! Is there no hope high heaven?' (*Letters from Alabama*, p. 140).

Mrs Royall does hint that she does not care for some of the effects of slavery on either whites or blacks. In Alexandria she observes the varying colours of the black people, some of them almost white, and she is appalled that a freeborn American can impose slavery on his offspring (*Sketches*, pp. 100-01). On the other hand, during her southern tour she observes how well the slaves are treated in Georgia: 'Many of our northern people who cry out against the south, for slavery, I fancy would be glad to swap situations with these slaves. I have been told it is the pride of those southern people to treat their slaves with kindness and lenity, it is their interest to do so, and the looks of the slaves prove it' (*Southern Tour*, II, 80-81). She does not see slavery itself as either immoral or cruel, since she believes that slaves are generally well treated, but she does castigate slave owners for not teaching their slaves morals and kindness. She sees slavery as an institution that does little to civilize either the slaves themselves, or, frequently, their owners (*Letters from Alabama*, pp. 248-49). Moreover, she does not support the idea of liberating the slaves in the District of Columbia, then under discussion. Her reasons for this are less to do with support for slavery, than because she believes liberating the slaves will not solve the real problem in Washington, which is that of poverty among poor white widows and their children: 'But what relief to the evil complained of is to be effected by liberating the slaves? are they to be sent off? or are they to flock here? We are now devoured with them. Their number is dangerous and a serious evil, inasmuch as the bread and clothes they devour would go to the relief and comfort of the suffering poor' (*Black Book*, III, 184-85).

Mrs Royall's regional perspective is apparent in much of her writing. It informs her attitude towards certain aspects of American life and also influences the subjects she chooses to write about. Of still more importance is the perspective she gains from her political and partisan views. Mrs Royall was a political woman and an active participant in the politics of the time, at a period when politics was generally considered to be outside women's sphere. While she was not the only woman to express political views or to act in a political manner, few female travel writers did so and her writings are particularly unusual in the extent to which partisanship pervades her work.

Despite her denials, Mrs Royall was clearly a Jacksonian in politics.<sup>21</sup> She was virulently anti-evangelical and believed that the agents of the evangelical revival were trying to overturn American liberties, particularly the separation of church and state; she was an ardent supporter of the freemasons at the height of anti-masonic feeling; and she believed the Bank of the United States was undermining the freedom of the press and enslaving the American people. Mrs Royall's animosity towards those she calls the 'presbyterians', 'missionaries', and 'blackcoats' — the agents of the evangelical revival — is a pervasive theme of her travel books. She sees their influence everywhere she goes in the United States, and at one point breaks off from her travel narrative for seventy-two pages in order to provide a diatribe on the dangers posed by the 'presbyterians' (*Black Book*, 1, 163–247).

The evils of the presbyterians forms the subject of many of Mrs Royall's observations, but it also informs her perspective and tone in describing other aspects of American life. She judges towns according to their attitude towards the missionaries: 'Northampton, notwithstanding the orthodox, can boast of as much taste and hospitality, as any place, of the same population' (*Black Book*, II, 61). Similarly, people are condemned as ignorant or praised depending on whether they have been 'converted' or not: 'There are few in Pittsburg of accomplished and liberal manners: for the mass of the females being under the control of the religious societies. I saw but few enlightened females' (*Pennsylvania*, II, 87). Institutions, too, are viewed from this perspective, so that if they are run by a 'Presbyterian' Mrs Royall considers them to be poorly run (*Pennsylvania*, II, 130; *Southern Tour*, I, 93–94). Much of the purpose, indeed, of her later travel books is to expose the plots of the missionaries and warn Americans against them. After several years of travelling and publishing her observations on the United States, she despairs that even the men of the West she admires will fall prey to the missionaries: 'When I left the western country some years back, I left them a brave, virtuous, industrious, and independent people. What are they now since they began to spread the gospel?' (*Southern Tour*, III, 216). In her final volume of travel books, Mrs Royall's whole perspective has been so coloured by hatred and fear of the 'presbyterians', and by that time too the United States Bank, that her comments on towns and people are all filtered through this lens. Abandoning other perspectives and with a tone that becomes increasingly accusatory and angry, she charges Americans with becoming slaves to the 'presbyterians': 'So ends the chapter on Cincinnati — the handsomest, the poorest, and the wickedest town in the western country. It is literally slave and master; and all the difference between the citizens of Cincinnati and a negro quarter in the south, is this: the former are white, but pay their own taxes, find themselves,

<sup>21</sup> Mrs Royall denies her partisanship on a number of occasions. See, for instance, *Black Book*, II, 4–5; *Pennsylvania*, I, 270.

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and work for nothing; while the colored slaves are found in every thing' (*Southern Tour*, III, 243).

It is clear that Mrs Royall's travel writings do not fit easily into the existing paradigms established for analysing travel texts by women authors. Undoubtedly, as the 1828 reviewer suggested, her works are in many respects an exception, but this is too dismissive. Certainly neither her perspective nor her tone is obviously feminine. Her tone is neither apologetic nor self-effacing, and she is not concerned to limit her subject matter to that generally considered to be part of women's sphere. Nor does she write from a strictly feminine perspective — her patriotism and regional perspective are considered by many critics to be more masculine than feminine, and her partisanship clearly lies outside the nineteenth-century construction of the female sphere. Scholars of other genres have recently argued that women asserted their right to enquire about and comment on the world outside the domestic sphere, and to publish their opinions and knowledge. This might suggest that those critics who analyse women's travel writing have been too limited in their analysis and that, perhaps, Anne Royall's works were not as exceptional as her contemporary reviewer claimed.