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‘if female envy did not spoil every thing in the world of women’: Rivalry and Reputation in Lady Elizabeth Craven’s Traveloguesⁱ

Lady Elizabeth Craven (1750-1828) is haunted by other women: her husband’s mistress, the women she encounters on her travels, and her lover’s wife. Her writing is also shadowed by the celebrated woman traveler whose trajectory 60 years earlier maps out almost exactly Craven’s own journey: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762). This chapter examines Craven’s *A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople* (1789), as well as her *Memoirs* (1826). It identifies how Montagu’s *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763) both legitimates Craven’s authorship, and threatens to render her *Journey* less authentic. Donna Landry argues that Craven’s attitude towards Montagu is ‘self-serving’ (Landry, 2000, 60). Efterpi Mitsi identifies the emotional position that Craven takes towards her predecessor as one of rivalry and competition (Mitsi, 2008). Developing this framing of Craven’s hostility, I argue that she performs an individualized and combative identity. More specifically, this self-stylization as pioneering spectacle is forged through denigrating other women, often by casting them as perpetrators of envy, ugliness, low morals, and dishonesty. Significantly, Craven suggests in *Journey* that the real author of the *Turkish Embassy Letters* was a man. In doing so, she situates herself as the original female traveler. Through polarizing herself from other women, Craven appears to her audience as unique, heroic and – as she promises in her dedication to *Journey* – ‘faithful’ (Craven, 1789, Dedication).

Craven is preoccupied with other women's lies. Separated from her husband after 16 years, she suffered the 'insolent deception' of his mistress travelling under her name and using her arms and coronet at inns. Nevertheless, Craven herself led an unconventional life for an aristocratic woman. In addition to having 7 children with her husband, she wrote plays, farces, musical compositions, and travelogues. The *Journey*, like the *Turkish Embassy Letters*, is a collection of letters detailing Craven's travels across Europe and the Ottoman empire. They are also, like the *Turkish Embassy Letters*, astutely stylized in order to generate a narrative structure and to construct a site for the performance of a heroic traveling spectacle. After all, the *Turkish Embassy Letters* was written after Montagu's travels, probably in the 1720s, and the letters do not correspond to the original letters that Montagu sent (Grundy, 1999). Moreover, they were published posthumously albeit with Montagu's permission. The letters in *Journey*, however, are all addressed to Craven's married lover, the margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach (1736-1806) whom she eventually married in 1791, once their respective spouses had died. Craven seeks to preserve her reputation throughout by addressing the margrave as her brother and friend while simultaneously performing herself as a desirable lover and potential wife. Landry points out that the *Journey* could be summed up as: 'love my letters, love me, marry me when your wife and Lord Craven are dead' (Landry, 2000, 62).

Repetitions

Women travelers who wrote could not escape the figure of Montagu. She was, after all, one of the first female travellers to write about – and be celebrated for – her

journeys in Europe and the Ottoman empire. Montagu's legacy legitimated women's own travelogues and also provided a map – both literal and figurative – that enabled their negotiation of a foreign topography. However, this also meant that they needed to assert their authorial autonomy in the context of her influence. Writing 'post-Montagu' meant that they needed to declare an identification or dis-identification with their forerunner; they had to address the obvious comparisons that would be made. Maria Graham (1761-1827), Sydney Owenson (1776-1859) and Lady Hester Stanhope (1776-1839) all mention Montagu in their notes and letters. Indeed, Owenson was encouraged to publish *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) in the style of Montagu's letters (Donovan, 2009, 39). She eventually chose not to, but still honoured Montagu by citing her in her frontispiece for *Italy* (1821):

We travellers are in very hard circumstances. If we say nothing but what has been said before us we are dull and we have observed nothing. If we tell anything new, we are laughed at as fabulous and romantic (Owenson, 1821).

Owenson offers her travelogue in solidarity, acknowledging the complexities of aiming for truth while entertaining readers.

Situating their texts in the context of previous travel writing is a generic convention that both authenticates these women's authorship, but also demarcates their vision as fresh and original. This is particularly so if they cast their forerunners as dishonest. Travelers to Turkey, including John Cam Hobhouse, Lord Byron, Stanhope, and Craven, assert the veracity of their travelogues through questioning Montagu's ability to tell the truth; Montagu's unreliability authenticates their own

writing. Landry maintains that this position is an Orientalist one which privileges the Anglo gaze of the author. Indeed, Montagu corrects previous travelers to the Ottoman empire such as George Sandys, Paul Rycaut, Jean Dumont and Aaron Hill. In doing so, she celebrates her objectivity. Importantly for this chapter, Montagu authenticated her text through emphasizing her gender. She judges previous descriptions of the *hammam* false because they were written by men. Their sex means that their accuracy is in question, not only because of their misogyny but also because they did not have access to women-only spaces. Montagu's privileging of the female gaze is also evident in the way that the book is published and promoted. All editions include the exuberant preface by Mary Astell, who asserts 'how much better purpose the LADYS Travel than their LORDS' and 'a Lady has the skill to strike out a New Path'. The 1767 version is prefaced with an engraving of Montagu in her Turkish dress and holding a book. It is entitled 'The Female Traveller in the Turkish Dress' (CL, 1, 467). References to gender are harnessed to justify a superior reportage.

Montagu's influence on Craven is both enabling and constricting. Craven follows in Montagu's footsteps almost exactly, and uses the *Turkish Embassy Letters* against which to negotiate her own journey. Sometimes she repeats Montagu's observations, but she claims them as her own. For example, Craven's 'I think I never saw a country where women may enjoy so much liberty, and free from all reproach, as in Turkey' (Craven, 1789, 205) mimics Montagu's ''Tis very easy to see they have more Liberty than we have' (CL,1, p. 328.). Craven also reinscribes Montagu's racial hierarchies. Or rather they both consolidate their white aristocratic subjectivities within hegemonic Eurocentric and racialized discourses. By casting non-white and African women as disgusting, monstrous and deformed, they perform themselves as

normative feminine subjects (Nussbaum, 2003). Both Craven and Montagu describe African women as abject. An inability to look outside standards of beauty as articulated by European discourses of the nude is particularly revealed in Montagu's portrayal of North African women in her letter to Abbé Conti where she denigrates the women in Tunisia as non-human, 'baboons' (CL, 1. 427):

We saw under the Trees in many places Companys of the country people, eating, singing, and dancing to their wild music. They are not quite black, but all mulattos, and the most frightful Creatures that can appear in a Human figure. (CL, 1. 425)

In a similar vein, Craven writes of a 'frightful negro woman' that she encounters in Pera (now known as Beyoğlu in Turkey) (Craven, 1789, 223).

Sianne Ngai argues that 'Disgust is an urgent, guttural and aversive emotion', associated with sickening feelings of revulsion, loathing or nausea. However, while it is experienced physically, in the gut, disgust is 'saturated with socially stigmatizing meanings and values' (Ngai, 2005, 11). In the context of Craven's and Montagu's letters these values consolidate their privilege and the authenticity of their traveling eye. This is also articulated by Stanhope who followed in Montagu's footsteps and read her letters. Stanhope addresses and challenges Montagu, particularly in relation to women's bodies. In a letter to her male lover, Stanhope asserts that, 'I can never agree with Lady W. Montague' in relation to the freedom of the women in the harems that she visits: 'Some of them the Georgeans in particular, are beautiful, but a Roman woman, & french woman to my mind infinitely more so, their music is abominable, &

their dancing by far the most disgusting thing I ever saw'. In particular, she is repulsed by their lesbian intimacies: 'I have no idea of passions being excited except by that which God created for the purpose, a *man*.' (Bruce, 1951, 117) Beauty and disgust are two sides of the same coin when it comes to identifying women, as in both cases it is their bodies which are held up to a scrutinizing gaze and which are analysed through classed and raced hierarchies.

Whereas Montagu describes the *hammam* that she visits in Sophia (Bulgaria), Craven chooses the location of Athens. Not only does Craven demarcate herself from Montagu in her attitude towards the Turkish people that she encounters – 'Turks are idle and ignorant' (Craven, 1789, 206) – but her description of bathing women is radically at odds with Montagu's passionate Orientalist vision. Montagu is enraptured by the Sophian women because they adhere to European notions of the 'harmonious body' and its 'shineingly white' skin (CL, 1. 314). In Adrianople she describes 'Turkish Ladys' as having 'the most beautifull complexions in the World [...] I can assure you with great Truth that the Court of England [...] cannot shew so many Beautys as are under our Protection here.' (CL. 1. 327)

In contrast, Craven finds Greek and Turkish women as 'fat': she 'never saw so many fat women at once together, nor fat ones so fat as these'. She identifies the women that she meets through the same racialised discourse as Montagu, but chooses to align them with an inferior race: the women are 'primitive' and few 'had fair skins' (Craven, 1789, 263-4). Like Montagu she remains dressed. Nevertheless, whereas Montagu titillatingly performs a sapphic struggle for her readers as they attempt to force her out of her stays, Craven refuses to eroticise the encounter: 'We had very

pressing solicitations to undress and bathe, but such a disgusting sight as this would have put me in an ill humour with my sex in a bath for ages' (Craven, 1789, 264). In a letter from Pera she describes the women's difference as rendering them defective and 'rather disgusting than handsome'. For her the Turkish women are prematurely aged and disfigured:

The Turkish women pass most of their time in the bath or upon their dress; strange pastimes! The first spoils their persons, the last disfigures them. The frequent use of hot-baths destroys the solids, and these women at nineteen look older than I am at this moment – (Craven, 1789, 226).

By critiquing their feminine dressing, Craven promotes herself as a dignified expert at femininity. By abjectifying these women as deformed and disgusting, she positions herself as a seductive opposite; as looking younger than a nineteen year old woman.

Reputations

Craven aims to set the record straight in a number of domains. She uses *Journey* to reinstate her reputation, and to distinguish it from her husband's mistress who was masquerading under her name. This bid for veracity is inextricably linked to where she travels; to where 'the real Lady Craven has been, and where she is to be found'. (Craven, 1789, Dedication). She sets up an opposition between the real and the fake, and this extends to her perception of the people and topography that she encounters; Craven is empowered with the ability to discern and describe the real. In her *Memoirs*, Craven slut-shames her husband's mistress. She performs herself in

opposition to the frivolous, promiscuous behaviour of her rival who ‘conducted herself at inns in such a manner as to reflect upon and tarnish my character’ (Craven, 1826, 1. 69). Her description of her husband’s relationship with the interloper is constructed in such a way as to assert the purity of Craven’s reputation. She details how her husband:

had formed another attachment to a person whom he had found at the Crown Inn, by chance, at Reading; left there for debt by a gay colonel, whose mistress she was; till, tired by her extravagance, he had left her and her charms in pledge to pay her reckoning. (Craven, 1826, 68)

Craven contrasts herself to this flighty, slutty and superficial character, and by doing so she styles herself through the tropes of chastity and hygiene. Indeed, she recounts in her *Memoirs* that she told her husband:

he must remember the spotless young creature he had married, and who had borne him seven children; and that there was one thing I must insist on, which was, that if he continued to live with that woman, I would order a bed in the next room to his; for her conduct was such that my health might suffer. (Craven, 1826, 70)

Craven must polarize herself from this woman as her own sexual behaviour is unconventional. She does, after all, share the margrave with his wife. After the two years that it takes her to travel around Europe, Craven stays with the margrave and the

margravine, and this proves to mark a 'new epoch in her life'. However, whereas she distinguishes herself from the low and morally reprehensible lover of her husband in order to claim a virtuous character, Craven casts the margravine as sickly and cold; thus justifying her transgression of the boundaries of wedlock:

On my arrival at Anspach, the joy of the Margravine at seeing me was very great, as she knew it was by my desire that the Margrave had returned earlier than usual; for she loved and esteemed him as much as he deserved, notwithstanding her general coldness. (Craven, 1826, I 175)

Here Craven portrays her role in their ménage à trois as one of joy for everyone involved, whereas the margravine is troped through the categories of disgust and deformity. This is developed through the *Memoirs* as the margravine is further abjectified. According to Craven, the margravine was forced to marry the margravine as she was a good match. However, she:

was born with an inward defect of bodily constitution; which made her so unhealthy, that at thirteen years old she became subject to fits. Mental or corporeal enjoyments of any kind she never could have possessed; she was in a continual state of bodily pain. Naturally fair, sickness gave her the appearance of a faded lily when it begins to assume a yellow hue. With the best intentions, she had not the power, even of countenance, to give expression to a feeling. Such was the person given to the most lively, the most ardent, and the most active young man (Craven, 1826, 184).

This self-stylisation in relation to the decaying margravine positions her as a more compatible and desirable match to the 'ardent' margrave, but it also protects her reputation.

The crucial issue of reputation is also one of the reasons why Craven is keen to demarcate her writing, travels and gaze from Montagu. She does not want to be tainted by the same criticisms, especially as both she and Montagu are unusual characters who left their husbands to travel in Europe and both fell in love with foreign men. Montagu's ironic, astute and unique written observations of court life, as well as her travels, provoked much antagonism. In particular, she was subject to misogynist satire by, among others, Alexander Pope, Hobhouse and Horace Walpole who were virulent in their malicious troping of her body as disgusting and deformed. This, according to them, affected the reliability of her writing. The implication of their satire being that a woman who is loose with personal hygiene is also loose with the truth. Craven was – like Montagu – friends with Walpole, and this may have affected her reflections on her predecessor, as well as her own public performance as inscribed in *Journey*. Furthermore, as I discuss below, by casting aspersions on Montagu's reliability Craven also critiques her feminitopian and homosocial networks that were so prevalent and celebrated among women writers in the early eighteenth century (Pohl, 2006). It also, as Mitsi, argues, demonstrates the movement from the Neoclassical era as represented by Montagu to an aesthetics of picturesque (Mitsi, 2008, 30).

Rivalry

Lady Craven's competitive gestures are not merely related to issues of authenticity and reputation. They also permeate her travelogues with passion. Her combative attitude towards other women drives her letters with an eroticized heterosexual charge. Indeed, in her *Memoirs* Craven reveals a sensitivity to the spectrum of emotions experienced when in love, especially in relation to jealousy. She writes: 'The effects of the most inveterate hatred are nothing compared with those of jealousy: history is filled with the disorders it has produced, and the cruelties it has caused.' (Craven, 1826, II. 247) In her discussion of jealousy in her *Memoirs*, she describes how emotions such as jealousy and envy impact on literary, historical and mythological figures; she gives examples of royal personages who have suffered from them. In particular, Craven forges links between the imagination and volatile emotions, noting how 'The stings of jealousy' can 'tear the sensibility of the heart.' (Craven, 1826, II. 247) According to her, 'If love is indebted to the imagination for all its charms, it owes to it, also, all its misfortunes, its jealousies, its fury, and its torment.' (Craven, 1826, II. 246) If these letters to the margrave are love letters, then jealousy, envy and rivalry constitute the subtext that is revealed in her hostility towards other women.

Craven does not explicitly refer to her own experiences of jealousy. On the contrary, she is keen to portray herself as a rational – if spectacular – observer. She is much more likely to position other women as suffering from emotional excess. For example, she dismisses Turkish and Greek women as suffering from 'female envy' which functions to 'spoil every thing in the world of women'. Envy drives the women to exaggerate their dress to the extent that they transform a graceful ensemble into a monstrosity:

what spoiled the whole was a piece of ermine, that probably was originally only a cape, but each woman increasing the size of it, in order to be more magnificent than her neighbour, they now have it like a great square plaster that comes down to the hips – and these simple ignorant beings do not see that it disfigures the tout ensemble of a beautiful dress.

Unfortunately for them – and fortunately for Craven’s self-dramatisation as potential wife – cosmetics are disfiguring and are ‘ill-applied’; their teeth are ‘black by smoaking’, and they suffer from ‘an universal stoop in the shoulders’. (Craven, 1789, 223)

By dis-identifying with other women and by portraying herself as superior, Craven creates a ‘contact zone’ that is suffused with the emotions of rivalry (Mary Louise Pratt, 1991). This has the striking effect of suffusing her address with desire. Cynthia Lowenthal (1994) notes how Montagu draws on the dramatic gestures of the Restoration theatre in her epistolary performance. She argues that Montagu positions herself in relation to her correspondents as if they are an audience and this opens a space for self-reflexive gestures and declarations. But it also allows Montagu a site for masquerade and the performative dispersion of multiple selves into queer and tribadic roles (Aruvamudan, 1995; Landry, 2001; Winch, 2012). Marilyn Morris suggests that understanding of early eighteenth-century subjectivity should be broadened to include emotional, sexual and intellectual flexibility, instead of hard and fast definitions. She suggests we should situate the subtleties of sexuality in the larger context of all affective relationships. This distinction between early eighteenth-

century configurations of sexuality and the ones emerging towards the end of the century is crucial in understanding the difference between Craven and Montagu. Thinking ‘more broadly in terms of a queer sensibility based on emotional and intellectual flexibility’ is relevant and pertinent when reading into Montagu’s sapphism (Morris, 2006, 597). However, Craven’s individualized self as it is written for the margrave reflects a different shaping of sexual identity.

Although Craven emulates Montagu’s theatrical postures as traveling heroine, she exploits the social relation of rivalry to much greater heterosexual effect. Many eighteenth-century plays gained their emotional volatility through representing women locked in combat; for example, Nathaniel Lee’s *The Rival Queens* (1699), William Congreve’s *The Mourning Bride* (1697), John Dryden’s *All for Love* (1677) and *The Indian Emperour*, as well as Nicholas Rowe’s *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714). As Felicity Nussbaum notes, this dyadic and hostile relation between women was a staple of the genre. Furthermore, the affects of rivalry continued beyond the drama on the stage to give the actresses an emotive and fascinating celebrity status. Whether or not the rivalry was real or gossip, exploiting it was a potent technique for self-promotion. Nussbaum argues:

In fulfilling the audience’s abstract desires, the paired actresses furthered their careers and promoted their self-commodification into the cult of celebrated individuality as they repeated their battles afresh (Nussbaum, 2010, 91)

Craven mimics and appropriates the public/private combats of Restoration actresses, and thus dramatizes her *Journey* – and herself – for the margrave. Craven cannot

explicitly write herself as a sexually desiring subject. However, as Michel Foucault (1979) points out, sexuality exists in the silences along things said. In Foucault's framing, we can understand Craven's competitive superiority over other women as both marking her desirability and signifying her commitment to her beloved. By successfully competing with the women around her she inscribes a poetics of rivalry through which to legitimately reveal her passion within a public discourse.

Spurious Letters

According to Craven, other women are pretending to be something or someone else. This also holds true for her imagining of Montagu. It is from Vienna that Craven chooses to reveal to her readers that Montagu was not the author of the *Turkish Embassy Letters*. She writes, 'I am arrived here at last, through a very beautiful country; but must observe, that whoever wrote L.M---Letters (for she never wrote a line of them) misrepresents things most terribly –' (Craven, 1789, 104-5). Craven puts this extraordinary accusation in brackets as if she is asserting a commonly held truth. Through this gesture, she universalizes what is a personal antagonism or an Orientalist anxiety of influence. Craven has some justification in making this accusation because there were numerous spurious letters attributed to Montagu and which were being published up until 1861. The 1767 edition of her works includes an additional volume with spurious letters, apparently written as a bet. These, along with the satirical attacks leveled at Montagu's reputation, worked together to cast aspersions upon her authorship.

Crucially for this chapter, are three spurious letters which were apparently sent from Vienna. One was published in the 1767 additional volume (and replicated in Wharncliffe's 1861 edition of Montagu's letters), while the other two were printed in *The London Museum of Politics, Miscellanies, and Literature* in 1770. Perhaps Craven chooses Vienna to discredit Montagu's authorship because these letters are so obviously counterfeits. Indeed, it is poignant that in her letters from Vienna, Montagu professes anxiety over being criticized for truth-telling. One of the spurious letters that is included in the 1861 Wharncliffe edition is nestled between two letters where she insists on her truthfulness as she chastises a female correspondent for complaining about the lack of exciting stories: 'tis my regard to Truth and not Lazynesse that I do not entertain you with as many prodigys as other Travellers use to divert their Readers with.' (CL. I. 292) In the letter succeeding the spurious letter she tells her sister about this accusation: 'She is angry that I won't lie like other travellers.' (CL. I. 296)

One spurious letter, addressed to Montagu's friend, Sarah Chiswell, is bawdy, satirical, and its heterosexually titillating content is in marked contrast to Montagu's own sapphic erotic gaze. Rather than relish in the pleasures of female-only spaces and the romantic visions of beautiful women so typical to Montagu, the letter depicts a scene where 'both sexes float promiscuously in the same water, and divert themselves with eating sweatmeats, or making love.' The letter lazily references Montagu's observations in the *hammam* and transposes them onto this representation of Viennese baths. It mentions 'a kind of coffee house conversation' enjoyed between the bathers. It also discusses the women's dress in order to hint at nakedness: 'the bathing cloaths are linen and cover the whole body, - and some so truly fine, as even to reveal, what decency would wish to hide: those of the women have lead at the bottom to keep them

down, and prevent buoyant revelation' (1770, 40). This and such salacious phrases as 'brazen Virgin' indicate quite clearly that this letter is not authentic. The letter is appended with the comment that, '*The gentleman to whom we are indebted for the above Original Letter, has promised to favour us with more; which, he says, are in his possession, in her Ladyship's own hand writing.*' (1770, 40) This is obviously a humorous attempt at satire, but Craven does not take the letter – if indeed it is this letter that she is alluding to – as mere amusement. She complains to the margrave that the writer 'misrepresents things most terribly' and that, 'I do really believe, in most things they wished to impose upon the credulity of their readers, and laugh at them –' (Craven, 1789, 104). It appears that Craven lumps all the letters together – the spurious and the (artfully constructed) authentic.

Viennese Romance

Although she does have male respondents (Pope and Abbé Conti in particular) and the letters are meant to be read by a wider public, Montagu creates an intimately female epistolary space. Montagu performs herself as gossiping in a social relation with curious, intelligent and witty aristocratic women. The scene that she offers her readers is not just of herself and her traveling experiences, but also of her friendship network as it is forged 'at home'. These homosocial connections are particularly manifest in her letters from Vienna. Montagu arranges the *Turkish Embassy Letters* so that out of the ten letters that she sends from Vienna, three are addressed to men and the remaining seven to women: three to her sister Lady Mar, and the remaining to Lady Rich, Mrs T, Lady X, and Lady –. These are the letters where she appears to

draw her correspondents into an intimate conversation about fashion, sex, gossip and female spaces.

Montagu's vision of Vienna – as related to her female respondents – is of a romantic feminitopia. They are primarily women-only spaces where no men are allowed apart from 'the old Grand Master' (CL. 1. 266). To her sister she describes the opulent furniture and 'people of Quality' who have invited her to enjoy the 'Magnificence of their Tables' (CL. 1. 260). She describes her own dress that she was 'squeez'd' into and which, although 'very inconvenient', 'certainly shews the neck and shape to great advantage'. She humorously details Viennese fashion 'which are more monstrous and contrary to all common sense and reason'. These women also wear stays – 'whalebone petticoats [...] which they would not quit for all the World' (CL. 1. 265). Even though she laughs at these women, by dressing in the same fashions as them, she chooses to identify with them to some extent (after all, the *hammam* scene hinges on her ambivalent but stubborn stay-wearing). She ironises her own position within this novel social relation, and is reflexive about the way that she is perceived: 'they laughed very much to see me afraid to handle a Gun' (CL. 1. 269).

She is particularly eager to express her 'great Impatience' to visit the Empress, a Beauty 'that has been the admiration of so many different Nations' (CL. 1. 261). She describes the Princess with great rapture and admiration:

her complexion the finest I ever saw, her nose and forehead well made, but her mouth has ten thousand charms that touch the Soul. When she smiles tis with a beauty and sweetness that forces adoration. She has a vast Quantity of fine

fair Hair, but then her Person! One must speak of it poetically to do it rigid Justice; all that the Poets have said of the mein of Juno, the air of Venus, come not up to the truth. The Graces move with her; the famous statue of Medicis was not form'd with more delicate proportions; nothing can be added to the beauty of her neck and hands. Till I saw them I did not beleive there were any in Nature so perfect; and I was allmost sorry that my rank here did not permit me to kisse them' (CL. 1. 266).

Montagu is often in romantic raptures over the women that she meets, and in doing so she draws on typical classical and aesthetic tropes to describe the women (Bohls, 1995). Nevertheless, there is also an archness to her tone and she interacts with the women rather than merely commodify them for the Anglo gaze of her readers. Because she moves within a social relation with the women and, because they are all changed through this encounter, so Montagu escapes a simplistic reification of women who are different from her (albeit different within an aristocratic and European paradigm).

In these female-only Viennese spaces, toy boys traffic between women. They are objects of humour and sexual play. Montagu describes the women's sexual standards to Lady Rich (a woman whose extramarital affairs made society gossip) (Grundy, 1999, 232) in a playful manner: 'Reputation has quite another meaning here'. According to Montagu, 'Here are neither Coquets nor Prudes' as it is the established custom 'for every Lady to have 2 Husbands, one that bears the Name, and another that performs the Dutys' (CL. 1. 270). Montagu describes *cisebism*:

I can assure that wrinkles or a small stoop in the shoulders, nay, Gray Hair it selfe, is no objection to the makeing of new conquests [...] I don't know what your Ladyship may think of this matter, but tis a considerable comfort to me to know there is upon Earth such a paradise for old Women, and I am content to be insignificant at present in the design of returning when I am fit to appear no where else. (CL. 1. 270)

Indeed, in her 40s she will fall passionately in love with a younger man and leave her husband. Although Montagu denies her involvement in these Viennese practices and describes them from a distance, she does recount how a young man offers himself – and when she refuses, a friend – as a lover. This is, she tells Lady Rich, ‘one of the pleasantest adventures I ever met in my life’ (CL. 1. 271).

Craven's Viennese romance is very different to Montagu's, and it is one that she reveals in her *Memoirs* rather than her *Journey*. Both Craven and Montagu make sense of their travelling selves in an affective social relation with other women. However, whereas Montagu's is eroticized, feminotopic and homosocial, Craven's is competitive, male-centred and heroically individualist. This, in part, mirrors the movement from a queerer and unlabeled sexual positioning at the beginning of the century to the consolidation of more atomised and rigid sexual categories. Craven grudgingly accepts that the German women are:

handsome, accomplished, and civil to a degree you have no idea of; several of them, besides possessing many other languages, read, write, and speak English

well; and I was surprised to find my connections, and other circumstances flattering to my pride, better known here than they are by half my acquaintances in London- (Craven, 1789, 106).

Nevertheless, they are ‘more handsome than pretty’ and are certainly not the romantic beauties that Montagu is so enraptured by. (Craven, 1789, 107).

In striking contrast to the *Turkish Embassy Letters*, the *Journey* focuses on the meaner side of life. Craven rejects Montagu’s opulent romance to discuss stoves. Indeed, she chooses the subject of the stove in order to disprove the veracity of the *Turkish Embassy Letters*. It is not clear where Craven retrieves this reference to stoves from. She may have had access to other spurious letters or is merely referring to Montagu’s description of a frozen Danube where the weather was ‘not to be supported without stoves and furs, but, however, the air so clear almost every body is well [...] I am perswaded there cannot be a purer air, nor more wholesome than that of Vienna.’ (CL. 1. 292) Or perhaps Craven falsifies Montagu’s reference to stoves for her own competitive ends. Whatever the source, Craven is virulent in her exposition of the truth. She complains: ‘The stoves of this country, which she [Montagu] praises so much, are the most horrid invention you can conceive’. She obsesses over ‘the stink and suffocating heat that assails the traveller’s senses when he enters any room, particularly where people are’. The stoves are ‘frightful’:

The difference of the cheerfulness which a good fire gives to a room, to that which reigns in one where there is only a stove, is very visible – I think things

must be very much altered since that lady or gentleman wrote about Vienna.

(Craven, 1789, 104-5)

It is significant here that Craven slips between alluding to 'her' and 'that lady or gentleman'. It seems that although she is keen to assert that the *Turkish Embassy Letters* were written by a man, the figure of Montagu refuses to be erased.

Craven's experience of Vienna, as she recounts it in *Journey*, is taken up by the deception over stoves. Nevertheless, she does briefly mention court when alluding to Prince Galatzin and Prince Par (who take precedence over Viennese women). This is in striking contrast to the way that she relates her experiences of Vienna in her *Memoirs*. Although she is too resolutely individualist and combative to enjoy the sensual company of other women, she does have some indiscrete encounters with predatory men. She enjoys the 'variety of officers' dresses in the antechamber of the Emperor'. In particular, 'the Polish and Hungarian uniforms are very beautiful.' More importantly she and a female friend have the privilege of a private audience with the emperor who is very attentive towards her. Indeed, it is relayed that 'he never saw any woman with the modest and dignified deportment of Lady Craven,' and he orders a house to be prepared for her so that she can 'pass the whole of the winter in Vienna'. Craven recounts how this attention 'terrified' her:

The Emperor had no wife, and the opinion which he had formed of me, and which was repeated all over Germany, terrified me; and, fearful lest injurious reports should be spread of me, which was what I could not bear, - at the risk

of being though ungrateful to the Emperor, I fled like a frightened bird from a net. (Craven, 1826, 1. 132-133)

Craven's description of her encounter reveals herself as a desirable and desired woman. She represents herself as a victim – a bird in a net – to a powerful man. Simultaneously this excerpt reveals her fear of a tarnished reputation.

Craven chooses to exclude this incident from the *Journey* and yet include it in her *Memoirs*. Fear over reputation may have forced her to focus her representation of Vienna in *Journey* as a reassertion of truth after Montagu's deception. She chooses the domestic and mundane stove as the site for this distancing. In order to do this convincingly, she expunges sex, seduction and sexuality from her portraits of Vienna. It may also have been because these are, after all, letters to her beloved and the figure that she puts forward is of the passionate and jousting lover; not one who could be accused of being involved with another man. In *Journey* she portrays herself in a negative social relation with other women where her superiority renders her heroic, unique and faithful – both to the margrave's heart and to the truth.

Nevertheless Craven's affects of rivalry also constitute an aesthetics of passion. Ngai argues that critically engaging with the emotion of envy can be productive because the envied object can be an indicator of certain models of femininity that one has been acculturated into admiring. For Ngai, envy can facilitate the movement from admiration to antagonism and this can aid the negotiation – and resistance – of culturally-constructed gender models. (Ngai, 2005, 163) It therefore offers a position from which to perceive or engage with the culture that privileges the

object as desirable. If Craven wishes to destroy Montagu as a rival traveler, she does so not just to take up a position of desirable pioneer heroine, but also to inscribe a different hegemonic aesthetic; one that is individualist, competitive and heterosexual. Craven's erasure of Montagu indicates a historical paradigm shift in relation to social relations that is in the process of taking shape, particularly at the intersection of sexuality, empire and femininity. Craven's competitive and resolutely heterosexual performance for the margrave is a useful indicator of this shift. Questioning the utopic ideal of a sisterhood is also of critical value. To unpack the so-called 'ugly feelings' as expressed by women onto the bodies of other women is not merely replicating a misogynist framing of women as envious enemies; as incapable of friendship and solidarity. Rather it is to reveal the ways in which, as historically-situated subjects, hegemonic discourses suffuse the affect of social relationships. This means that the emotions of rivalry, disgust, envy, competition, are the result – and perpetrators – of wider political realities. Moreover, the ideal of a sisterhood is necessarily ambivalent, and to explore the nuances and complexities of dis-identification and conflict goes some way towards situating women's writing as diverse and disparate; as marked by the way that gender and sex intersect with race, class, sexuality. In doing so, it perhaps it goes some way towards a more truthful framing of women's writing.

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