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Elizabeth Craven : from London to Constantinople, from escape to emancipation.

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Elizabeth Craven (1750-1828) was a British woman of letters who spent several years on the Continent before travelling to the Ottoman Empire and Greece in 1785 and 1786. The narrative of her travel was published in 1789 as *A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople*. Travelling through Europe and going as far as the Middle-East was quite uncommon, unexpected, and even unladylike in those days, especially for a married woman and a mother of seven children as was the case of Lady Craven. The story of this lady-traveller therefore immediately leads one to wonder why she undertook such a potentially dangerous journey almost on her own : what was she looking for ? Was she escaping something and, if so, what was it? Her story also raises the question of her impressions of the Orient : did her journey have any influence on her perception of the Middle East and its populations? Did this experience change her life and in what way ? This article will first try and determine Lady Craven's motives for travelling that far and will then examine her impression of the countries and people she discovered in 1785 and 1786 before finally questioning the ambivalent status of this transgressive lady.

Elizabeth Craven started her tour to the Orient in the Spring of 1785. The first letters she sent to Charles-Alexander Margrave of Brandenburg-Anspach-Bayreuth and which she published three years later as *A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople*, were posted in Paris in June 1785. Elizabeth Craven's trip lasted for about 18 months and took her to very varied and remote places : starting her tour in Paris, she crossed France, stopping in several towns such as Orleans, Avignon, Toulon, before reaching Italy where she visited Genoa, Florence and Venice. She then left for Vienna before undertaking a long tour of Russia through St Petersburg and Moscow in February 1786, which led her to Sebastopol in the Crimea. From there she took a boat to Constantinople, then visited Greece and returned to London across Eastern Europe¹.

There are probably many reasons why Elizabeth Craven decided to undertake this long journey to the East. Some will definitely remain unknown, but, from the content of the letters

¹ See the map detailing the different steps of her journey at the end of this article.

she later on published, the reader easily understands some of this lady's motives. She probably wanted first of all to explore the world, making the most of her young age – 35 years old at the time and a good physical condition—to visit remote places : 'I may never have an opportunity of travelling again' she wrote from Bologna on November 15th 1785².

Undertaking this long journey was then a possibility – in those days the exclusive privilege of men – to visit the Middle East, Eastern Europe and to meet new people : 'I will see courts and people that few women have seen'³. As this quotation shows, Elizabeth Craven was fully aware that her initiative was rather uncommon for a lady and a unique opportunity in her life. Yet this project -- not unlike the *Grand Tour*⁴ -- could appear extremely risky and unseemly in the eyes of many, as shows this extract from a letter sent by Horace Walpole to Horace Mann, then a British Ambassador in Florence, expressing his concern about Lady Craven's general behaviour : 'She is very pretty, has parts and is good-natured to the greatest degree ; has not a grain of malice or mischief (..) and never has been an enemy but to herself', (Walpole, *Letters*, IX, 27).

But, as Horace Walpole's letter subtly suggests, the reasons why in 1785 Lady Craven suddenly left Paris where she had lived for two years, probably also had to do with her past private life. In fact, one and the same reason led Craven to leave Britain in 1783, to settle in France for two years and finally to leave again, for the Middle East in 1785. Indeed, Lady Craven née Berkeley, was born in 1750. She was the third child of the Earl of Berkeley. She was married, aged only 17, to Baron William Craven, and had seven children with her husband. The couple split in 1781, as Lord Craven, who was himself unfaithful to his wife, considered that Lady Craven's extra-marital affairs had become unbearable. Lady Craven was then informed in the winter 1781 that her husband wanted her to leave their house. He nevertheless agreed to ensure her maintenance : '(...) her infidelity could no longer be overlooked even by the most indulgent husband (...) the Peer settled £1500 a year upon his

² Elizabeth Craven, *A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 1789, 89. While in Bologna, where she expected the visit of her brother, Lord Berkeley, Elizabeth learnt that he would not come and spend the winter in Italy as was originally planned. She thus decided to continue her visit of Europe : 'I received about a week since a letter from Lord B---, informing me that he could not pass this winter in Italy ; so I immediately determined my course ; and it is North. Now I am on the wing (...) and I will make the best use of my time ; few as the months are I can allow myself to run about it, I will employ them, I hope, to my satisfaction and your amusement' (*A Journey*, 89).

³ Elizabeth Craven, *A Journey*, 89.

⁴ This journey to Italy, Greece and other countries where young educated people sojourned after their studies to complete their study of humanities. In the present case, this Grand Tour was undertaken by a 35-year-old mother of seven who, being a woman, had not been educated at university. On page 152, Elizabeth Craven considers her journey as a tour : 'Notwithstanding all that has been said to deter me from continuing my tour'.

spouse'⁵. Being utterly repudiated and the news being publicly known and widely circulated⁶, Lady Craven had little choice⁷ but leave her country : 'Lady Craven, being turned away by her husband, and her reputation in England being such as to close society to her, decided to go abroad'⁸. She first moved to France : 'With her youngest son, Richard Keppel Craven, then four years old, she (...) settled herself in a house at Versailles'⁹.

Embarking on a long journey to the Middle East was therefore probably not only due to a desire for freedom and adventure but was also a way of escaping the social stigma of adultery, as even in Paris in 1785, she found that her reputation had been tarnished by rumours : Paris is not far enough from London. Generally speaking, then, moving further to the East was a way of ridding herself of her own past. Abroad, in Italy, Russia or Constantinople, she would be greeted and treated as the member of the British nobility that she was. And indeed, in Vienna she visited Emperor Joseph II¹⁰ and was welcomed by Catherine II in person in St Petersburg¹¹.

Travelling and reporting this experience in letters may also have represented for Lady Elizabeth Craven an opportunity to tighten her bonds with the Margrave of Brandebourg whom she was to marry in 1791¹². The tone of the letters she sent him often suggests that Elizabeth Craven wanted to seduce the Margrave, even though she conspicuously insisted on considering him as a brother : 'If I had possessed the invaluable blessing of having you for my real brother', wrote she¹³. Yet, interestingly enough, and despite the fact that she had an eye on the Margrave, Lady Craven embarked on her journey to the East in the company with Henry Vernon, Admiral Edward Vernon's grand-nephew. It is unsure whether the two travellers became lovers but this situation certainly did not help improve Craven's reputation as proves this cutting remark by Charles Pigott: 'She took up as a companion de Voyage the celebrated and veracious Henry Vernon. They visited divers and distant parts of

⁵ *The Beautiful Lady Craven, The Original Memoirs*, Introduction, xxv.

⁶ Queen Charlotte, George III's consort, was particularly disdainful to Elizabeth Craven : 'Queen Charlotte set her face sternly against the amiable and tolerant hostess' (*The Beautiful Lady Craven*, introduction, ix).

⁷ See also this far less benevolent account of Lady Craven's situation : «Our discarded B-r-n-ss being now at liberty, went beyond seas in search of liberty », Charles Pigott, 1792 part III, 160.

⁸ *The Beautiful Lady Craven, The Original Memoirs*, Introduction xxvi.

⁹ *The Beautiful Lady Craven*, xxvi.

¹⁰ *A Journey*, 108.

¹¹ *A Journey*, 123.

¹² The letters published in 1789 were all sent to the Margrave. Marrying a prince radically changed Lady Craven's situation. The Margrave was a prince and Elizabeth therefore bore the title of Princess Berkeley from then on. The couple remained however somewhat ostracised by some members of the aristocracy like Queen Charlotte, George III's wife who literally imposed a 'social veto' on her (*The Beautiful Lady Craven*, Introduction, ix).

¹³ *A Journey* (Dedication, iii).

the world. Their adventures were wonderful. They breakfasted with the Empress of Russia, they dined with the Grand Signor, and supped with the Great Mogul'¹⁴. Horace Walpole commented on the situation in a rather tactless way as well in a letter he sent to Horace Mann: 'I suppose the adventures of a certain Lady and her cousin Vernon, which I have kept profoundly secret, will be public (...). From St Petersburg the travellers went to Moscow (..) and thence by way of Cherson and Sebastopol to Constantinople where they arrived on April 20 and stayed for a few weeks' (16 March 1786)¹⁵. Leaving Europe and travelling abroad, then may also have represented an opportunity for Lady Craven to have a love affair far from the reproving judgement of the French and British nobilities¹⁶.

Crossing the Continent, Eastern Europe and reaching the Middle-East caused Lady Craven to encounter people she had never met, to discover landscapes she had never seen and manners she was not used to. The accounts she gives of her experience are a wealth of information on her general perception of the unknown and her personal evolution in the course of this journey. As we shall see in the following lines, Lady Craven could have extremely admiring as well as very prejudiced views on what she discovered. The tone of her letters to the Margrave can be quite enthusiastic about her visits. In Hyères, for instance, after visiting the Golden Isles, she sent a letter to the Margrave promising to take him to this place, the landscape of which could have been imagined by a painter : 'I desire, if ever chance should bring you to Hyères, that you will ascend this hill, and examine the scenes around, towards the sea ; the islands of Portecroix and Pourquerolles are beautiful objects, and a peninsula called Gien, which is joined to the land only by a narrow road, forms a landscape worthy of a great master's pencil' ¹⁷.

Turkey is another place of wonders which all astonish Elizabeth : 'The situation of Bursa is very beautiful, in a valley between two hills—and is now a very considerable town' (...) I had a very pleasant passage from Smyrna to Moudagna – just as the Tarleton arrived at the

¹⁴ Charles Pigott, part III, 160.

¹⁵ *The Beautiful Lady Craven*, xxxviii-xxxix.

¹⁶ It should be noted that Lady Craven did not hide the fact that she was travelling in company with Henry Vernon, as shows a letter she sent from Constantinople to Robert Murray Keith, a diplomat, on 30th April 1786 : 'Mr. Vernon presents his compliments to you and we both hope to find you as well and as glad to see us, as we shall be to see you' (*The Beautiful Lady Craven, The Original Memoirs*, introduction, xxxix). But this letter was not addressed to the Margrave and was not published in 1789 as part of the Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople. The Margrave may then have been unaware that the pretty lady was in gallant company.

¹⁷ *A Journey*, 41.

entrance of the Straits, wind dropped entirely and we found ourselves in the midst of a large fleet, composed of vessels of every size and nation, that waited for a South wind to pass the Dardanel—luckily we did not lay a considerable time at anchor, a southerly breeze sprung up and our swift Tarleton left all the other sails’¹⁸. The letters sent from Greece also express her marvel at the area : ‘We passed the western point of the islands of Mittelina and Ipsera, leaving to the left the island of Scio – to the right that of Miconia (..). I saw but little remains of the temple dedicated to Bacchus’¹⁹. Leaving the area of Greece and Turkey was painful for Elizabeth whose letter 61 depicts the landscapes she saw in most emotional terms : ‘Adieu, for the last time, from this beautiful and sublime situation, which must make all landscapes appear trifling to me for the future’²⁰.

Towns and architecture also stun Elizabeth Craven as show her letters : the statues in Florence²¹, the cleanliness of the streets of this town²², the admirable setting of the city of Constantinople²³, the majesty of Hagia Sophia’s huge dome²⁴, the spectacular beauty of the entrance to the Piraeus Port²⁵ : all fill her with wonder. Encountering unknown people and manners can also make her extremely admiring : the Italians’ kindness²⁶, the Turkish most elegant feminine outfits²⁷ are described at length, as well as all the private spaces that as a woman she can visit, like the baths and harems -- places that no male traveller is allowed to enter : ‘Craven is interested in the picturesque, in the private and domestic spaces’, as notices Efterpi Mitsi²⁸, which ‘embodies a development in travel writing’²⁹.

¹⁸ *A Journey*, 273.

¹⁹ *A Journey*, 244.

²⁰ *A Journey*, 288.

²¹ ‘I think and dream of nothing but the statues from the time I leave them till I see them again’, 78.

²² ‘this city is very clean and chearful ; the streets are paved with large pieces of rock, unlike any other pavement I have seen, and much smother ; fine statues and relievos in marble stand in the squares and angles of streets, without having any thing to protect them but the respect the very lowest people have for them’, 83.

²³ ‘Constantinople and the entrance of the Bosphorus by the sea of Marmora, is the most majestic, magnificent, graceful and lively scene the most luxuriant imagination can desire to behold’, 210.

²⁴ ‘The dome of st Sophia is extremely large and well worth seeing’, 217.

²⁵ ‘just below the town, standing unincumbered with other objects, the superb, the beautiful temple of Theseus’, 254.

²⁶ ‘the Italians are very good-humoured’, 84.

²⁷ ‘You can conceive nothing so neat and clean to all appearance as the interior of this Harem ; (...) I am *femmelette* enough to have taken particular notice of the dress – which, if female envy did not spoil everything in the world of women would be graceful – it consists of a petticoat and vest, over which is worn a robe with short sleeves – the one belonging to the lady of the house was of sattin, embroidered richly, with the finest colours, gold and diamond – a girdle under that, with two circles of jewels in front, and from this girdle hangs an embroidered handkerchief – A turban with a profusion of diamonds and pearls, seemed to weigh this lady’s head down’, 244.

²⁸ Mitsi, Efterpi, 21.

²⁹ Mitsi, Efterpi, 24.

But prejudices and scorn are however far from absent from Craven's letters. The populations she encounters often find no favour in her eyes. The French appear ridiculous with their craving for English manners³⁰, their ignorance and their absence of taste³¹. She also considers them rude, contrary to the Italians³² and their hostility to the English, which she experiences in Toulon, shocks her³³. Elizabeth Craven's negative judgment does not spare Russia, whose peasants get drunk during Carnival³⁴ and whose men can be extremely abusive to their wives³⁵. In spite of their priceless monuments, the Greeks are, according to Craven, vulgar people whose dances are grotesque³⁶ and music atrocious³⁷. In Naxos, Lady Elizabeth vents her disdain for the way young Greek girls look : 'The town of Naxos is a poor place ; we waited near four hours to see a Naxiote maiden dressed in her holiday clothes – which are neither decent nor pretty'³⁸.

Lady Craven fully discloses her deep orientalist³⁹ scorn for the locals once she is in Turkey. In Constantinople, for instance, she insists that the pillars of mosque Hagia Sofia are not perfectly upright, that the decoration is poor and not really worthwhile. This tends to confirm, in her eyes, the absence of respect of those she calls the 'mahometans'⁴⁰ for their God and his

³⁰ 'Everybody last year, that would be quite *à l'anglaise* at Paris, had to wait on them what they called a *Jakay*, a little boy with straight, lank, unpowdered hair, wearing a round hat – and this groom-like looking thing waited upon the mat dinner, and was frequently stuck up with three tall footmen behind a fine gilt coach – it was in vain for me to assert to some grave old French people that jockey meant riding-groom in a running-horse stable', 23.

³¹ 'Ill taste prevails universally as to dress in France', 25.

³² 'the Italians are very good-humoured which is more than I can say for their neighbours the French ; and they have likewise more natural civility to strangers', 84.

³³ 'I stopped in my way here at Toulon, and intended to look at the dockyards, but was refused, which surprised me very much (...). I could get no other reason assigned for the refusal but this – (...) nothing of *English blood* should ever be permitted to go into them', 36.

³⁴ 'I would never advise a traveller to set out from Petersburg as I have, just at the end of the carnival ; he might with some reason suppose it is a religious duty for the Russian peasant to be drunk' », 139.

³⁵ 'There is a custom here which I think is abominable ; noblemen who are engaged to marry young ladies, make no ceremony but embrace them in the midst of a large company at a ball', 137.

³⁶ 'In the evening the Athenian girls were invited to perform before me the ancient dance called Ariadne's dance – A more stupid performance as a dance I never saw', 264.

³⁷ 'The Greeks, in their parties upon the water, have generally a lyre, a fiddle and a guittar (sic) or two in the boats – with these instruments they make a horrid noise, each performer playing in a different key and if they sing, all in discordant tones (...) why then do not these Greeks find out they make nothing but discordant sounds when they sing or play – I confess it seems to me a very strange thing', 282.

³⁸ *A Journey*, 245.

³⁹ 'The European encounter with the Orient, and specifically with Islam, strenghtened this system of representing the Orient (...) and turned Islam into the very epitome of an outsider against which the whole of European civilization from the Middle Ages on was founded' (Edward Said, 70).

⁴⁰ This term, as Edward Said insists, is offensive : '(...) the polemic name 'Mohammedanism' given to Islam' (Edward Said, 60). 'Mohammedan' is the relevant (and insulting) European designation' (66).

prophet⁴¹. Laying her expert eyes on the Turkish women's physical appearance, she describes them as wearing too much make-up⁴², as obese⁴³, not elegant⁴⁴, with black teeth, round shoulders⁴⁵, and awful skin wrinkled by too hot baths⁴⁶. Elizabeth proves unable to consider these women as equal to her and incapable of imagining that these women could wish to experience the same degree of liberty as she does. She therefore totally approves of the Turkish practice of keeping women secluded in harems. Considering this tradition as a way of protecting women, Elizabeth even insists that the Turks treat women with respect and protect them from the hostile world : 'The Turks in their conduct towards our sex are an example to all other nations [...] in Turkey likewise, women are perfectly safe from an idle, curious, impertinent public, and what is called the world can never disturb the ease and quiet of a Turkish wife – her talents, her beauty, her happiness, or misery, are equally concealed from malicious observers' (Craven, 232). This perception of Turkish women's situation and this incapacity of regarding them as human beings who might be willing to explore the world – as she herself was doing at the very moment when she wrote these letters – prove that Elizabeth never really identified with these women. Even though they were women, just like her, she apparently considered that the relative liberty she had conquered could not be extended to these foreign, non-White and non-Christian women : 'I repeat it, Sir, I think no women have so much liberty, safe from apprehension, as the Turkish – and I think them, in their manner of living, capable of being the happiest creatures breathing' (Craven, 232).

Elizabeth is also harsh towards the Turkish males whom she regards with disdain, depicting them as lazy and even lethargic⁴⁷ -- another orientalist *cliché*⁴⁸ -- or criticising their

⁴¹ 'I have been to see the Mosque of St Sophia, with two others. The dome of st Sophia is extremely large and well worth seeing, but some of the finest pillars are set topsy-turvy, or have capitals of Turkish architecture. In these holy temples neither the beautiful statues belonging to Pagan times, nor the costly ornaments of modern Rome are to be seen : some shabby lamps, hung irregularly are the only expense the Mahometans permit themselves, as a proof of their respect for the Deity of his Prophet, 217.

⁴² 'I have no doubt but that nature intended some of these women to be very handsome, but white and red ill applied, their eye-brows hid under one or two black lines', 220.

⁴³ 'I think I never saw so many fat women at once together, nor fat ones as fat as these', 263.

⁴⁴ 'these simple ignorant beings do not see that it disfigures the *tout ensemble* of a beautiful dress', 220.

⁴⁵ 'teeth black by smocking, and an universal stoop in the shoulders, made them appear rather disgusting than handsome', 220.

⁴⁶ 'The Turkish women pass most of their time in their bath or upon their dress ; (..) the frequent use of hot-baths destroys the solids, and these women at nineteen look older than I am at this moment', 225.

⁴⁷ 'Turkish idleness (...) Turkish supineness (...) Asiatic splendour, superstition, and laziness' (..) Mahometan idleness' 325.

⁴⁸ 'An Oriental lives in the Orient, he lives a life of oriental ease, in a state of Oriental despotism and sensuality, imbued with a feeling of Oriental fatalism' (Said, 102).

‘ignorance’ and lack of respect for the antique wonders their country is blessed with⁴⁹. Mosques are portrayed as dangerous places, constantly open, where any wrong-doer, hidden behind the traditional outfit, can come and commit any sort of evil act : ‘Mosques are constantly open ; and I could not help reflecting that their mode of worship is extremely convenient for the carrying of a plot of any sort – a figure, wrapped up like a mummy, can easily kneel down by another without being suspected and mutter in a whisper any sort of thing’⁵⁰. The *Tchouadar* who accompanied her through her journey in Turkey is in his turn described as rude, annoying and arrogant by Elizabeth Craven : ‘a Tchouadar who seems to promise me much more delay and inconvenience than his presence can make repay (...) If any travellers were to meet us, they would certainly take him for some *Grand Seigneur*, and that I am of his suite’⁵¹. At the end of her stay in Turkey, Elizabeth’s letters simply refer to: ‘my abominable tchouadar’⁵². Back in Europe, Elizabeth confesses in a letter to the Margrave that she is relieved to be once again ‘with Christian people’⁵³.

What did Lady Craven get then from this experience abroad, through so many different countries ? We have previously seen that this tour to the Orient was in part a way of ridding herself of the social pressure exerted on her after her repudiation for adultery in 1781. It should besides be noticed that if her journey to the Orient lasted about a year and a half, her exile from Great-Britain lasted nine years, to which must be added the years she spent in Italy after the Margrave’s death⁵⁴. Lady Craven was in a way a fallen woman, a social outcast in her own country and this partly accounts for her becoming a travelling woman from 1783 until her death in 1828. But we have also noticed that Lady Craven was a very daring person who was attracted by the idea of travelling the world. Could it be considered that this journey to the Orient was decisive for Lady Craven’s emancipation ? This long journey was the sequel to her departure from England in 1783 after her repudiation. It was a way of taking distance with her relatives, friends and the British society in general. It was also a way of proving to them all that even though she paid a high price for cheating on her husband – who did exactly the same but was never stigmatised for this – she was able to re-settle elsewhere, to travel the

⁴⁹ ‘we returned to the Consul’s, very much concerned at the excessive injustice and ignorance of the Turks, who have really not the smallest idea of the value of the treasures they possess, and destroy them wantonly on every occasion’, 256.

⁵⁰ *A Journey*, 217.

⁵¹ *A Journey*, 290.

⁵² *A Journey*, 300.

⁵³ *A Journey*, 322.

⁵⁴ The Margrave died in 1806.

world with whomever she liked, to plan her journey on her own, to deal with money, to face all sorts of perilous situations – she crossed Russia in February using *kibitkas*⁵⁵, she visited the Antiparos grotto and was the first lady to do so—, in a word, to live an independent, successful and highly transgressive life for a woman of the late 18th century. This tour to the Orient was therefore another proof that Craven was a bold and clever lady, but the journey undeniably contributed to making her even more independent. It should be noted that Lady Craven was actually the first English lady to undertake such a tour to the Middle East, since even though Lady Mary Wortley Montagu lived in the Ottoman Empire before Lady Craven⁵⁶, she merely followed her husband who held a diplomatic position for a few years in Constantinople. Lady Craven's experience was therefore more resolute, risky and more genuinely emancipating than Lady Montagu's : 'Elizabeth Craven's account represent the exploits of an aristocratic and ambitious Englishwoman, travelling alone in regions where no other European woman had ever travelled before'⁵⁷. But this journey to the Orient was also helpful in many other ways. It was an opportunity for Lady Craven to pursue a literary career. On her return, Horace Walpole strongly encouraged her to publish her letters : 'Your Ladyship tells me that you have kept a journal of your travels (...). I conclude and hope, prepare it for the press (...)'⁵⁸. Walpole insisted that this would be totally unique as no woman before her had undertaken such a long and remote journey : 'How proud I should be to register a noble authoress of my own country, who has travelled over more regions and farther than any female in print ! Your Ladyship has visited these islands and shores whence formerly issued those travelling sagas and legislators who sought and imported wisdom, laws, and religion into Greece'⁵⁹. The publication of her letters gave Craven some additional literary fame, and credibility : although she had already written poems and books⁶⁰, the publication of these letters probably helped her promote the theatrical performances she later held in the Margrave's estate in Anspach, then in Brandenburg House in London and certainly encouraged her to publish her personal memoirs many years after⁶¹.

⁵⁵ Sledges.

⁵⁶ Her *Turkish Embassy Letters* were published in 1763.

⁵⁷ Mitsi, Efterpi, 21.

⁵⁸ *The Beautiful Lady Craven*, li.

⁵⁹ *The Beautiful Lady Craven*, li.

⁶⁰ 'I certainly did not send you, Madam, Lady Craven's verses, nor intend it, though they are extremely pretty', Horace Walpole, *Letters*, VI, 233. In 1779, Lady Craven had her novel *Modern Anecdotes of the Ancient Family of Kinkervankotsdarsprakengotchderns* published and shortly after, her first play, *The Miniature Picture* was performed.

⁶¹ *The Beautiful Lady Craven*, ix.

But the most striking alteration that this tour to the Orient caused is the radical change in Lady Craven's status. She used to be an English aristocrat. After this tour she became a nomad until her death in Italy in 1828. A nomad, that is to say, someone whose life is always in-between, always at the junction of several places, languages, civilizations, social codes, activities and peoples. As Deleuze and Guattari put it : 'the life of the nomad is the *intermezzo*'⁶². From 1783 when she left Britain, until her death, Lady Craven was undoubtedly in a situation of territorial, social and ideological *intermezzo* or in-betweenness. She became difficult to locate geographically as Horace Walpole noticed in a letter to Horace Mann : 'I thought her at Paris, and was surprised to hear of her at Florence'⁶³. Socially speaking, her status was in-between respectability and scandal : unfaithful to the husband who cheated on her, she faced the public humiliation of her repudiation, re-married a prince, bore the title of Princess Berkeley and ended up owning a fortune in Italy. Ideologically, she spent her adult life encroaching limits, deliberately ignoring people's criticisms, leaving Britain, settling abroad, travelling on her own, writing, performing plays and losing contact with five of her children who reproached her with her attitude. Elizabeth Craven's difficulty to conform was thus reinforced and turned into an asset by this journey to the Orient which gave her a new status and the taste of living abroad.

Lady Craven never really blended in and the events of her life, more particularly this journey to the Orient, led her to develop a hybrid identity. Touring Europe to the Orient – a male upper-class privilege – gave her the authority typical of learned male noblemen and thereby turned her into a sort of gender hybrid⁶⁴ : a woman with the experience of a learned male aristocrat and the first British woman to travel almost on her own to the Orient. Her hybridity was also geographical : born in Britain, she left her country for nine years from 1783 to 1792 and again from 1806 to 1828. Her exile, due to degrading reasons – her repudiation first and later on persistent accusations regarding her alleged unfaithfulness to her second husband— pushed her to the continent and to territories at the crossroads of the West and the East, with her journey to Constantinople first, then with her settlement in Naples

⁶² 'la vie de nomade est *intermezzo*', Deleuze et Guattari, 471.

⁶³ Horace Walpole, *Letters*, IX, 27. Walpole also wrote a worried letter to Elizabeth Craven in November 1786, expressing, then again, his concern : 'To my extreme surprise, Madam, when I knew not in what quarter of the known or unknown world you were resident or existent.' Horace Walpole, *Letters*, IX, 75-6.

⁶⁴ 'a fearless and self-disciplined narrator, a 'great traveller' who crosses over the gender divide', Efterpi, Mitsi, 29.

(Italy), a Greek-named town which once belonged to the Byzantine Empire. Lady Craven, a British aristocrat, an unfaithful and repudiated wife, an expatriate, who became a princess after marrying the Margrave, a writer, a playwright, an actress and most of all a daring traveller who challenged sexist prejudices and limits : a woman with a hybrid identity living in an ambiguous and transgressive in-betweenness.

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