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Gender and Perspective in Eighteenth-Century Women's Travel Writing

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History 485

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Abstract:

Gender, class, and nationality have always affected how travelers perceive the people and cultures of the places they visited. This was especially true in the travel writings of eighteenth-century British women. This research is an exploration of the travels of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Jane Vigor, and Lady Elizabeth Craven through their collections of published letters. The gender, class, and nationality of these three aristocratic British women framed how they perceived the people they met throughout their travels through Europe to Russia and Turkey. These women's backgrounds were reflected through the stories of their travels and their perspectives on the women in cultures different from their own.

I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work.

During the eighteenth-century, the British Empire was expanding rapidly through colonization, trade, and exploration. This expansion led to a culture of exploration and travel for the British elite. Until recently, women travelers have been left out of historians' discussions of eighteenth-century British travel, despite the fact that women contributed significantly to the culture and literature of travel. Female travelers were less common than their male counterparts, but British women did travel to the same wide array of locations that men did and contributed unique experiences and perspectives to travel literature due to their gender. Three women whose epistolary collections showed the distinct experiences of travel for eighteenth-century British women were Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Jane Vigor, and Lady Elizabeth Craven.¹ Each of these women were educated, upper-class women who traveled to Russia and the Near East during different parts of the eighteenth century. They wrote letters to friends and family as they traveled, and each later published those letters in collections that became popular among the British public. In their letters, Montagu, Vigor, and Craven told the stories of their travels while reflecting their own backgrounds through their descriptions. Eighteenth-century British women's travel writings showed the ways in which their gender, Englishness, and class shaped their travel experiences and perspectives of other cultures.

The eighteenth century was a significant moment for women in travel because it was the start of women traveling for reasons other than religious tradition.² There were two main reasons why women chose to travel in the eighteenth century. The first was wifely duty. Most women

¹ Jane Vigor (born Jane Goodwin) was married three times in her life, therefore had four different last names depending on her husband at the time. She began her journey as Jane Ward, but quickly into her journey became Jane Rondeau. For the sake of consistency and clarity, in this paper she will be referred to as Jane Vigor because her book was published under the name Mrs. William Vigor, her third and final husband.

² Billie Melman, *Women's Orient: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 14.

travelers of the eighteenth century traveled as companions to their husbands. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Jane Vigor both embarked on their journeys to Constantinople and Russia respectively as companions to their diplomat husbands. In 1715, Lady Montagu's husband, Edward Wortley Montagu, was appointed the British Ambassador to Constantinople.³ Lady Montagu quickly decided that she would perform her wifely duty and move herself and her children to Constantinople with her husband. When she explained her desire to complete her journey in one of her letters to Lady Rich, Lady Montagu expressed how "while Mr. [Wortley] [was] determin'd to proceed in his design, [she was] determin'd to follow him."⁴ In 1728, Jane Vigor's first husband, Thomas Ward, was appointed consul-general to Russia, and she too decided to follow her husband East. She proudly travelled with him and tended to him while he was ill in 1731.⁵ She remained in Russia after Ward's death in 1731, and became close to Ward's successor, Claude Rondeau, marrying him only a few months later. Vigor's wifely duty did not end with Ward's death, as she continued to perform the role of a devoted wife to her next husband. When the Chinese ambassadors met Vigor, they commented on how they thought the English were wiser than bringing their wives with them like Rondeau had done, but they were glad to have met her and complimented her for the love and courage she must have for following her husband so far from home.⁶ The people whom Lady Montagu and Vigor came across on their travels and the friends they wrote to at home were surprised by the courage and commitment these women had in order to follow their husbands so far from England. Vigor's friend to whom

³ Diana Barnes, "The Public Life of a Woman of Wit and Quality: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Vogue for Smallpox Inoculation," *Feminist Studies* 38, no. 2 (2012): 323.

⁴ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to Lady Rich, December 1, 1716, in *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Robert Halsband (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 287.

⁵ Mrs. William Vigor to Her Friend in England, 1731, in *Letters from Russia*, (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1970), 50.

⁶ Vigor to Her Friend in England, 1733, in *Letters from Russia*, 84-85.

she wrote her letters did not understand how Vigor could have followed a man on such a journey, but Vigor responded that her friend's mind was "not calculated for love" or else her friend would not question her resolution to follow her husband.⁷ Vigor and Lady Montagu were considered brave for traveling so far with their husbands, but the feelings of love and duty for them helped each woman justify the risks.

The second reason why women chose to travel in the eighteenth century was a desire for adventure. This eagerness was a major factor for all travelers in the eighteenth century, but it is important that this desire for exploration and new experiences was not exclusive to men. In addition to her desire to do her wifely duty, Montagu noted that she traveled because she enjoyed meeting people of differing cultures and learning about their lives. Not long after her journey began, she stated how when it came to "thoughts of Return, [she] was never farther off in [her] Life."⁸ For some women, the desire for adventure was so strong that it was their primary reason for travelling. One of these women was Lady Elizabeth Craven, who decided to travel through Europe to both Russia and Constantinople beginning in 1781 after her divorce.⁹ Craven enjoyed the mobility of travel and spent much of her trek through Europe on horseback.¹⁰ Mobility was limited for women in eighteenth-century England because of the formation of the conceptual domestic sphere. Women, and particularly mothers, were placed as the center of the domestic sphere and were expected to perform the role of the moral, familial center.¹¹ In England, these social obligations to the family tied middle to upper-class women to the home. For elite women,

⁷ Vigor to Her Friend in England, 1734, in *Letters from Russia*, 92.

⁸ Montagu to Lady Rich, December 1, 1716, in *The Complete Letters*, 287.

⁹ Elizabeth Zold, "Expanding the Domestic Sphere: Mothers who Travelled in the Eighteenth Century," *Studies in Travel Writing* 19, no. 4 (December 2015): 331.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, June 25, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1970), 17.

¹¹ Zold, "Expanding the Domestic Sphere," 325.

the opportunity to travel was one of the few ways in which they gained the freedom of mobility. As a woman who was no longer married and did not have the wifely duty of the other two women, Lady Craven embarked on her travels out of a desire to see more of the world.

Part of the surprise of elite British women travelling was due to the extreme levels of risk and danger associated with travel in the eighteenth century. The act of travel itself was perilous, with precarious roads, mountains, and weather. It was dangerous to travel across the more remote areas of Europe, especially for women travelers, who did not fit the expected image of an explorer, scholar, or cultural interpreter.¹² Often in their letters, Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven illustrated stories of treacherous roads and extreme weather they faced on their way to their many destinations. Lady Montagu explained the stress of travelling through remote parts of Hungary in such severe cold that they could have easily been killed by it.¹³ In her letters, Lady Craven told of the dangers of both land and sea travels. She warned her friend never to follow the path she took because the roads were so narrow, they could barely get through safely.¹⁴ One of the most fearful accounts was Lady Craven's story of leaving Athens by boat, and how the thunderstorm nearly caused their vessel to crash into the rocks that littered the sea.¹⁵ In addition to the dangers associated with the actual travel, women who travelled also faced fears of danger related to gender. Lady Craven was informed that her choice of locations would cause her to risk being kidnapped by pirates, but Lady Craven insisted that she had no fear.¹⁶ Travel was

¹² Efterpi Mitsi, "Lady Elizabeth Craven's Letters from Athens and the Female Picturesque," in *Women Writing Greece: Essays on Hellenism, Orientalism and Travel*, ed. Vassiliki Kolocotroni and Euterpe Metse, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 21.

¹³ Montagu to Lady Mar, January 16, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 295.

¹⁴ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, July 15, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 25.

¹⁵ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, May 20, 1786, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 319.

¹⁶ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, August 28, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 77-78.

especially dangerous for women who did not fit the image of the usual traveler, and not many women were willing to face the uncertainty.¹⁷ Each female traveler had varying reactions to the dangers they faced, sometimes downplaying the severity of the danger by acting unphased, sometimes admitting to the fear that encompassed them, but none of these women shied away from sharing stories of the constant danger they experienced in their travels.

The elite British women who chose to travel did not completely escape the social pressures of British society while they were away. In order to remain a member of the social elite in England, Lady Montagu, Lady Craven, and Vigor were expected to maintain frequent correspondence with their friends and family back home. In the eighteenth century, writing letters was an extremely important part of the social lives of intellectual individuals.¹⁸ Letters were considered precious, prized for their intellectual worth, and were often kept, collected, and stored to be returned to the family of the sender after their death.¹⁹ Letter writing was also important because communication by written word was the only way to communicate with friends and family or receive news and events of home while traveling. Oftentimes these women travelers would complain to their correspondents for not providing enough news from home in their letters. For those left at home, letters were the only ways to hear of the events of these women's travels as well as a great source of entertainment. Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven all felt the pressure of needing to entertain the recipients of their letters. Lady Montagu stated in her letter to the Princess of Wales that her purpose of going through the trials of her travel was to have the opportunity to amuse the Princess with accounts of unknown places.²⁰ In

¹⁷ Mitsi, "Lady Elizabeth Craven's Letters from Athens and the Female Picturesque," in *Women Writing Greece*, 19.

¹⁸ Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel* (New York: AMS Press, 1980), 63.

¹⁹ Caroline Franklin, "Introduction: The Material Culture of Eighteenth-Century Women's Writing," *Women's Writing* 21, no. 3 (July 2014): 287.

²⁰ Montagu to the Princess of Wales, April 1, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 310.

her letters, Jane Vigor frequently mentioned how the friend she was corresponding with commanded Vigor to share the stories of her travels.²¹ Lady Craven expressed that she hoped her accounts amused her readers.²² Each of these women ultimately decided to compile and publish a collection of their letters with the hope that the letters and accounts of their travels could entertain and amuse a larger audience. The purpose of these letters and their eventual publication was not education or status, but entertainment.

Even within the act of letter writing, Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven were expected to follow certain rules of correspondence. Common of all three women's letters was an apology for their letters being too long. Even though they were telling interesting stories that their readers would never hear elsewhere, each woman felt it was improper to send a letter that was too long and apologized each time their letters passed an acceptable length. At one point, Lady Montagu ran tired of constantly apologizing for the length of her letters, so at the end of a letter to the Princess of Wales, she expresses that she realized that she had likely tired the Princess's patience with the length of her letter, but said that the "Letter is in your Hands, and you may make it as short as you please by throwing it into the fire when you are weary of reading it."²³ Despite living in locations where the expectations for women differed from those in England, British women travelers were still confined to the limitations of eighteenth-century British society.

Even though these epistolary collections were written and compiled with the purpose of entertaining friends and family with stories of travel through Russia and the Near East, the ways

²¹ Vigor to Her Friend in England, April 1730, in *Letters from Russia*, 9.

²² Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, August 18, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 59.

²³ Montagu to the Princess of Wales, April 1, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 312.

in which each woman wrote about her experiences reflected more about their own backgrounds and culture than about the subjects of the letters. Gender was an important aspect in women's travels because their gender provided women travelers with a different experience from men.²⁴ The letters of Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven are examples of how eighteenth-century British women's travel writings showed the ways in which their gender, Englishness, and class shaped their experiences and perspectives of other cultures. The letters show how each woman's experiences were influenced by their gender through special access to events and locations exclusive to women, the unique connection of female friendships, and the experiences related to motherhood and travel. The writings reflect the women's Englishness through moments of self-consciousness and observations of others that show what each woman values. These women's letters also project their upper-class perspective through romanticizing the poor and the living standards they expected while traveling.

One of the most interesting aspects of the epistolary collections by Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven is the fact that they had a unique perspective as women, and no travel accounts before them were written from the female perspective. Many of the experiences female travelers had were distinctively different from the experiences of male travelers. Access to female only events and locations, friendships and connections with other women, and the experience of motherhood were all experiences unique to women travelers and stories that could not be told with authority and authenticity in travel writings by men. The Ottoman Empire especially had areas that were only ever accessible to women, specifically harems and baths. Since the British first began travelling to the Near East, a strong fascination of the harems and baths emerged. For

²⁴ Katrina O'Loughlin, *Women, Writing, and Travel in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 13.

a long time, male travelers could only speculate about what happened inside these exclusive locations.²⁵ One of the things that make Lady Montagu's letters so interesting is because her accounts of harems and Turkish baths were England's first real experience with these elusive communities.²⁶ Women who traveled to these locations not only had the authority to write about baths and harems because of their access, but the exclusivity of their access constantly reflected back on their status as women. The most famous part of Lady Montagu's letters is her account of the Turkish baths. Lady Montagu was in the Turkish town Sophia, famous for their hot baths and was determined to visit them herself. She was fascinated by the beauty of the baths itself, and made sure that she gave the money that upper-class women were expected to give upon entering. She was surprised at how kindly the women in the baths accepted her, especially because she was so clearly a foreigner based on how she was dressed.²⁷ Lady Montagu was surprised at how kind all of the women were to each other, not gossiping, judging each other for wearing the wrong thing, or for any imperfections of their bodies. Her surprise at the level of friendliness and understanding between women of different classes and ages within the baths shows how much Lady Montagu was used to the strict social expectations for women in England. Lady Montagu was used to the strict, judgmental eyes of fellow upper-class women in England. So much of their focus was on looking and behaving properly and gossiping about those who did not follow those rules. All of the women in the bath were in varying stages of undress, and one of the more elite women encouraged Lady Montagu to undress as well. The practice of going to baths was not uncommon for the English upper class, but in British baths, the bathers remained fully

²⁵ Elizabeth A. Bohls, "Aesthetics and Orientalism in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (1994): 179.

²⁶ Melman, *Women's Orients*, 62.

²⁷ Montagu to Lady ---, April 1, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 312-313.

clothed in specific bathing garments.²⁸ Lady Montagu had to convince the women to let her keep her clothing on, and eventually showed them her stays, which she presumed the women thought she was wearing some sort of chastity belt and was unable to undress.²⁹ Lady Montagu felt comfortable maintaining her own level of dress in the baths because she could tell that none of the women there were judging her for acting differently from the rest of them. Her pleasant surprise at the friendly and welcoming community that she had met in the hot baths reflects how different this experience was from the female communities that she was used to in England.

Women travelers also had exclusive authority in accounts of harems. Harems were the women's quarters of the Turkish elite. Wives and sisters of Turkish aristocrats lived in intricate homes in which only women were allowed. Harems were the primary locations for interactions between Muslim and British women, which put female travelers in a privileged position for exclusive interactions with Turkish elite.³⁰ Lady Montagu expressed the exclusivity of harems when writing to Anne Thistlethwayte. She explained how her accounts may be different from travel writers in the past, but that was because men were never allowed in Harems, so they were writing about a subject they knew nothing about.³¹ Due to her social status and her status as a woman, Lady Montagu spent a significant amount of time in the Harems of many important women, giving her the authority to write about them.

Another area which gave women travelers exclusive access is private audiences with royalty and gendered court activities. Male travelers had the opportunity to tell stories and

²⁸ Amanda E. Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 123.

²⁹ Montagu to Lady ---, April 1, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 314.

³⁰ Onur Inal, "Women's Fashions in Transition: Ottoman Borderlands and the Anglo-Ottoman Exchange of Costumes," *Journal of World History* 22, no. 2 (June 2011): 264.

³¹ Montagu to Anne Thistlethwayte, April 1, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 343.

experiences within courts in Turkey and Russia, but many aspects of court life were gendered. For example, Lady Craven had the opportunity to attend a private audience with the Emperor in Vienna. This private audience was only offered to the ladies, which only included Lady Craven and one other Lady. While in this private audience they had the opportunity to meet Princess Esterhazi and sit and talk with the Emperor for forty-five minutes. Lady Craven valued this opportunity to converse with the Emperor privately because it was much easier to ask questions and have them answered openly in a small audience rather than in an audience before a hundred people.³² Lady Craven would not have had this opportunity to converse with the Emperor on such an intimate level if she was not a woman. Special access to opportunities such as these made her travels unique and gave her an authority that male travelers did not have.

Lady Montagu also had a court experience that was only available to her because she was a woman. Lady Montagu had more opportunities to experience court life due to her class and gender than M. Jean Dumont. Dumont's book about his travels was translated and published in England in 1696, and became one of the best known accounts of travel in the Near East at the time Montagu began her travels.³³ Lady Montagu spent much of her letters correcting information in Dumont's book that she observed to be incorrect, mostly due to her ability to access areas of court and Turkish life that was unavailable to Dumont. Lady Montagu had a very pleasant experience as a woman in the courts of Vienna. It began with a private audience with the Empress and the other Ladies of the court. The women sat and conversed together while playing a game of Quinze before reconnecting with the men of the court for supper. The next day

³² Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, December 15, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 146-147.

³³ Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, "An Early Ethnographer of Middle Eastern Women: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762)," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40, no. 4 (October 1981): 332.

Lady Montagu attended another private audience, this time with the Empress Mother, and once again only the Ladies of the court were invited to attend. The following day Lady Mary attended an event at the Empress Amalia's palace. The event turned out to be a shooting contest in the Empress's garden. This time, the men of the court were invited to attend, but only the Ladies could participate in the contest.³⁴ This multi-day female-focused court experience was especially interesting for Lady Montagu because it was unlike many other court experiences. She observed how the people of Vienna respected women, especially older women. She was so pleased to know that there was a place where older women were so welcome and lively, and thought forward to her own future saying how it was "a considerable comfort to [her] to know there [was] upon Earth such a paradise for old Women, and [she was] content to be insignificant at present in the design of returning when [she was] fit to appear no where else."³⁵ Her sentiments and appreciation for a place in which older women were valued and respected showed that Lady Montagu did not believe she would be respected and valued in England in her old age. The gender specific court events that elite women travelers experienced helped them to understand the formal social practices of the elite in different countries, and then reflected back on how English society differs. There were some aspects of court life that these women travelers believed that England did best, such as clothing and fashion, but other aspects that they wished England would adopt, such as the respect for older women in Vienna.

The unique access given to women in courts, harems, and in elite culture in general allowed for women travelers to make deep connections with women of different cultures. Elite British women travelers were able to gain a certain amount of trust with the elite women of the

³⁴ Montagu to Lady Mar, September 14, 1716, in *The Complete Letters*, 265-269.

³⁵ Montagu to Lady Rich, September 20, 1716, in *The Complete Letters*, 270.

countries visited due to the formation of female friendships. Friendships between women in British society were constructed within spaces that belonged to women.³⁶ The female only spaces of the Muslim world allowed women to form even deeper connections in ways that were similar to the way that female friendships formed in England. Lady Montagu experienced these close friendships frequently during her time living in Constantinople. She formed a deep friendship with the Sultana who felt comfortable with Lady Montagu, and the two women bonded over the love of their husbands and children.³⁷ Vigor also developed a close friendship with Princess Elizabeth during her time living in Petersburg. The women often visited each other, and Vigor described those visits as “thing[s] of pleasure, not of ceremony.”³⁸ Similarly to the other women, Lady Craven also became friends with women she visited with on her travels. She especially enjoyed her friendship with the Dutch Ambassador’s wife because she happily answered all of Lady Craven’s “millions of questions.”³⁹ In England, women spent most of their time in homosocial worlds with other women, and Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven showed through their new friendships away from England that connections between women was common beyond the boundaries of the English-speaking world.

In addition to the individual friendships Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven made with women, she also observed and participated in a broader community of female friendship. This idea of a female utopian community can be seen in her descriptions of the Turkish baths and the courts of Vienna, both discussed earlier. Lady Montagu’s idealistic views of these locations as female utopias likely came from her interest in seventeenth-century British feminist theorist

³⁶ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 2.

³⁷ Montagu to Lady Mar, March 10, 1718, in *The Complete Letters*, 384-385.

³⁸ Vigor to Her Friend in England, 1735, in *Letters from Russia*, 105-106.

³⁹ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, 1786, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 281.

Mary Astell. Astell wrote extensively about feminism through a utopian community, and one of such writings was one of Lady Montagu's favorite books when she was fifteen years old.⁴⁰

Astell's influence came through in Montagu's descriptions of the Turkish baths in her belief that the women in the baths were all friendly to each other and that there was no gossip or talking about other women taking place.⁴¹ Whether this level of comradery was the truth within the baths was not as important as Montagu's belief that a female utopia existed within the Turkish baths. Lady Montagu's perspective of the Turkish baths as space of female freedom and comradery is an example of Pratt's concept of "feminotopia" which she defines as "episodes that present idealized worlds of female autonomy, empowerment, and pleasure."⁴² Because of her strong belief that the Turkish baths were a place in which women were free of responsibility, judgement, and men, Lady Montagu's creation of this feminotopia shows how her gender was an important influence in her travel experiences.

Vigor also had the experience of a female community while in Russia, but did not quite equate it to a level of utopia like Lady Montagu. While living in Petersburg, Vigor and the Countess of Biron bonded over their love for embroidery. Embroidery was a common and important gift in female friendships among elite women in England.⁴³ Vigor and the Countess began meeting two to three times a week to embroider together, along with a few other women. The Czarina soon began to visit them while they embroidered. These meetings gave Vigor the opportunity to get to know these two women in a way that she would not have been able to in a

⁴⁰ Alessa Johns, "Mary Astell's 'Excited Needles': Theorizing Feminist Utopia in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Female Communities 1600-1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities*, ed. Rebecca D'Monté and Nicole Pohl (London: MacMillan Press, 2000), 129.

⁴¹ Montagu to Lady ---, April 1, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 312-313.

⁴² Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 163-164.

⁴³ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 68.

more formal setting. They would ask questions of each other to learn more about their different cultures, and the Czarina even helped Vigor with her Russian.⁴⁴ Vigor's experience of bonding with and befriending other women through embroidery was a common manner in which British women connected with each other in the eighteenth century. Prescriptive literature was created to encourage women to work together and bond while doing domestic work. Working together so closely in the home with women of different classes cultivated close female friendships between women among all different classes and backgrounds.⁴⁵ Lady Montagu and Vigor brought this background in creating and feeding close female friendships through domestic work and hobbies with them on their travels, and used them to create connections across religion, nationality, and language barriers. The experience of creating female friendships and female communities was unique to women in the eighteenth century, and through their travel writings, Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven showed the ways in which connections between women were universal.

One experience that was entirely exclusive to women travelers was the experience of motherhood and travel. Motherhood and travel seemed like they would be incompatible according to eighteenth-century British values. Women were the center of the domestic sphere and were expected to remain home and care for the children. Motherhood represented stasis and stability.⁴⁶ Because of the demands of the domestic sphere and societal expectations, British mothers who traveled in the eighteenth century were often seen as neglectful. The mothers who did choose to travel had to be careful not to allow their status as mothers away from home affect their social standing. Even with the risks of social judgement that came with travelling as a

⁴⁴ Vigor to Her Friend in England, 1734, in *Letters from Russia*, 87-89.

⁴⁵ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 78-90.

⁴⁶ Zold, *Expanding the Domestic Sphere*, 324.

mother, the intersection of travel and motherhood gave these women travelers a unique experience and perspective in their writings.

Mothers who travelled had two choices: either bring their children on the journey or leave them at home, and either choice had its problems. Travel at this time was dangerous, as was shown throughout all three women's accounts. The act of traveling was dangerous because of tricky terrain and unexpected weather difficulties, as well as the possibility of attacks and violence against the travel convoys. Another fear mentioned frequently in Montagu's account was the danger of illness. Each of these dangers was magnified for a woman traveling with her child. Lady Montagu brought all of her children with her when she followed her husband to Constantinople. Occasionally in her letters, Lady Montagu expressed her fears and concerns with bringing her children on such a risky journey. The journey to Constantinople itself was risky, and she shared with her sister in a letter how thankful that she, and most importantly her children, had arrived safely.⁴⁷ Lady Montagu also had a baby while in Constantinople and, while returning to England, expressed the difficulties of traveling with children and an infant. She said that she was sad to be leaving Constantinople because she was comfortable there, had learned the language, and loved traveling, but traveling was so inconvenient with multiple children and a new infant.⁴⁸ The fears and difficulties of traveling with children affected Lady Montagu's experience while traveling. Scattered throughout her letters, there were moments of worry and some of annoyance for bringing her children on such a large journey.

The other option for travelling mothers was not much better for emotional stress. Lady Craven had to leave her children at home when she travelled, and throughout her letters there

⁴⁷ Montagu to Lady Mar, September 8, 1716, in *The Complete Letters*, 259.

⁴⁸ Montagu to the Countesse of ---, May 1718, in *The Complete Letters*, 405.

were moments of homesickness and longing for her children.⁴⁹ Lady Craven was not given the choice of bringing her children on her journey because according to eighteenth-century law, children were the property of the husband, and since she and Lord Craven had just divorced she had no right to her own children.⁵⁰ Because she did not have the choice to bring her children with her, Lady Craven made a conscious effort in her letters to defend herself against those who would judge her for leaving her children. Lady Craven showed her motherly desires by caring for an orphan that her convoy came across early on in her journey. She worried for the young boy and saw that he was cared for before she continued on her journey. She emphasized her motherly intuition in this situation by comparing the boy to her own young son.⁵¹ The experiences and feelings of bringing and caring for children on such an intense journey are ones unique to women at this time. The travelling mother's other option of leaving on a journey without her children created another type of concern and longing, as well as the stigma of leaving her children behind. These concerns and struggles brought another level of reality and depth to women's travel narratives.

In addition to the societal pressures and expectations of motherhood from eighteenth-century British society, women travelers also felt the pressures expected of women in the societies they visited. This was particularly the case for Lady Montagu. After living with her husband and family in Constantinople and desiring to embrace Turkish culture, Lady Montagu quickly learned the important values in Turkish culture. Lady Montagu felt extreme pressure from the Turkish cultural expectations for women, because the way that women in that society

⁴⁹ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, September 28, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 110.

⁵⁰ Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel*, 31.

⁵¹ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 7-12.

proved their youth and usefulness was by constantly having children. She explained how they believed that when a woman stopped having children, the only reason was because they had become too old to have any more. She was amazed by the fact that many of the women she met in Turkey had twelve or thirteen children after only ten years of marriage.⁵² Lady Montagu did succumb to this pressure and had a child during the time she lived in Turkey, purely for the purpose of proving that she was still young and able. She even once expressed to a friend that she wished “with all [her] heart to hasten [her] return, because [she was] absolutely obliged to lie in every year, as long as [she] remain[ed] here.”⁵³ The second layer of societal expectations expected of women travelers further complicated their travels because they experienced the pressures of the British expectations for mothers and the expectations for women in the countries in which they traveled. Sometimes, such as in Lady Montagu’s case, either or both levels of pressure went against what the woman herself desired, and had to decide if she was to live as she wanted or as those around her wanted her to live.

The experiences of women travelers in the eighteenth century were strongly formed by their gender and the specific treatment and experiences available to women who traveled. As seen in the travel accounts of Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven, women had access to areas of society in Eastern Europe and the Near East that were unavailable to male travelers. This special access that women were granted gave them the opportunity to write with authority about areas of society that British travelers could only speculate about before. Women were also able to provide intimate accounts of the lives and experiences of the women in the areas they traveled because of close female friendships. Another frequent reminder of these traveler’s statuses as

⁵² Montagu to Anne Thistlethwayte, September 1, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 371-372.

⁵³ Montagu to Madame ---, April, 1718, in *The Complete Letters*, 459.

women were their fears and desires related to the complications of motherhood and travel. These stories of exclusive access, female friendships, and motherhood that Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven included in their travel writings showed the ways in which their status as women permeated their travels and experiences and shaped their perceptions of other cultures, and especially the women they met.

The lives and travels of eighteenth-century women travelers were not only defined by their gender, but also by their nationality. Similarly to how the accounts of Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven showed how their gender impacted their travels, their letters also showed how their Englishness comes through in their behavior and perceptions while traveling. One way in which their Englishness was reflected in their letters was each woman's desire to remain proper and follow the rules of British society while away from England. Travel was not only physically dangerous, but for upper-class British women, travel was a social risk because they chanced losing status and respect in British society. Even while traveling and visiting other cultures, elite British women were expected to behave according to British rules of society. Women who chose to travel knew that acting outside of rules and expectations set by eighteenth-century England risked losing respect back home.⁵⁴ Travel itself was not conducive to women remaining in the roles that British society placed on women. The eighteenth century saw the rise of the domestic sphere in England.⁵⁵ Women were expected to run the home, which is nearly opposite of the act of travel. By travelling, these women were rejecting their role in the domestic sphere, so in order to keep their positions in society, women travelers had to be careful to follow other expectations of the proper woman. Behaving according to the rules of British society in

⁵⁴ Sarah Brophy, "Women, Aging, and Gossip in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Letters of the 1720s," *Eighteenth Century* 45, no. 1 (2004): 15.

⁵⁵ Zold, *Expanding the Domestic Sphere*, 325.

countries with very different social practices made these British travelers stand out. They did not always realize it, but British elites were very conspicuous travelers.⁵⁶ Even though in the letters of Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven, they saw themselves as the observers, from time to time the women became aware that they too were being observed. Due to their efforts to behave according to British rules, Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven stood out in the areas they visited, many of which had never seen British women before. The occasional moments within their letters that reflected the self-awareness that they were being observed show how each woman's Englishness affected the events of their travels.

One such moment of self-consciousness for Vigor was during the "sledging" event in Petersburg. Vigor was particularly amused and confused one winter day when the Russians went to a slope made of boards that went from the upper story of a building to the ground and started throwing water on it. The water turned to ice on the boards and they continued throwing water on it until a thick layer of ice formed on the slope. The ladies and gentlemen of the court then took turns sitting on "sledges" and sliding down the ice ramp. Vigor was terrified by the idea of riding on the sledges and was amazed that nobody had yet broken their neck. Her fears went beyond the danger of injury, as she was "terrified out of [her] wits for fear of being obliged to go down this shocking place, for [she] had not only the dread of breaking [her] neck, but of being exposed to indecency too frightful to think on without horror."⁵⁷ She was soon encouraged to take her turn on the ride, but much to her delight and relief, the Czarina excused Vigor from the activity because she was in an improper condition for sledging. In this moment, it is made very clear to Vigor, the people of the Russian court, and to the reader of her letter that Vigor was

⁵⁶ O'Loughlin, *Women, Writing, and Travel*, 4.

⁵⁷ Vigor to Her Friend in England, 1735, in *Letters from Russia*, 144-146.

out of place. As an Englishwoman, she had never seen such a practice as sledging before, and not only was she fearful of injury, she was also afraid that if she was seen participating or if people in England learned that she had participated, she would be judged harshly for not behaving properly. In this moment, Vigor was not only doing the observing, but she was intensely aware that she too was being observed. This self-consciousness and concern for behaving according to British society's guidelines kept her from experiencing the sledging herself, but also gave her an excuse to avoid putting herself in a frightening situation.

Lady Craven also had a moment of self-consciousness that she did not expect because of behaving according to the rules of British society. Throughout her journey, Lady Craven enjoyed traveling by horseback rather than in a coach or other vehicle. As any proper eighteenth-century British woman would, Lady Craven only rode horses on her side-saddle. She never thought of how other cultures may have different expectations for women on horseback until she was riding through the Italian countryside. She expressed how "a lady on side-saddle [was] an object of great wonder here," and learned that many of the peasants she passed had never seen a side-saddle before and thought she only had one leg.⁵⁸ Lady Craven was not used to her side-saddle causing such concern from those who saw her on horseback since ladies on side-saddle was so normal in England. Even though she was not used to being stared at because of the side-saddle, Lady Craven was greatly amused by the looks of concern she received from those she passed. This was one of the few times Lady Craven noticed that she was the outsider, but she did not feel judged or "othered" by the encounter.

⁵⁸ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, September 20, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*. 104-105.

Multiple times while living in Constantinople, Lady Montagu attempted to shed her English exterior in order to experience the everyday life of a common Turkish woman. Occasionally, Lady Montagu dressed in Turkish clothing in an attempt to fit in and visit Mosques, shopping districts, and other areas of Constantinople that women commonly visited. Lady Montagu wore Turkish clothing like this out of curiosity and a desire for authenticity, but also to learn the truth about the lives of Turkish women in hopes to correct some of the writings by previous male travel writers.⁵⁹ Some of these times, Lady Montagu felt like she was disguised convincingly and therefore was able to get an authentic experience in Constantinople, but other times it was clear to Lady Montagu that the Turkish veil was not enough to hide her Englishness. One time when Lady Montagu went to see the Exchange, she chose to do so in her Turkish dress because it was “disguise sufficient.”⁶⁰ But, later on when she went to visit the Mosque of Sultan Selim in her Turkish clothing, she could tell that she was not disguising herself as well as she intended because the “Extreme Officiousness of the door keeper” gave away her identity.⁶¹ There were certainly other times in which Lady Montagu’s identity as an Englishwoman escaped her attempted disguise, but she rarely notices and continued to act as if she blended in without notice.

There were likely many other instances in which Vigor, Lady Craven, and Lady Montagu’s English practices drew the attention of the people they met, but these women were so focused on observing others that they rarely noticed that they were the ones who stood out. The moments in which these women realized they were being noticed for their differences was not the only way in which their Englishness showed up in their letters. This aspect of their

⁵⁹ Onur Inal, “Women’s Fashions in Transition,” *Journal of World History*, 253.

⁶⁰ Montagu to the Abbé Conti, May 17, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 354.

⁶¹ Montagu to the Abbé Conti, May 17, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 358.

backgrounds also became apparent in their observations and descriptions of others. All three women spent time in many different courts and homes of aristocrats in almost every city they visited, so they each met a wide variety of royalty, diplomats, and other members of high society. In eighteenth-century women's travel, the women travelers ultimately evaluated other cultures on the terms of their own culture.⁶² In their letters to friends and family back home, Lady Mary, Vigor, and Lady Craven included descriptions of the looks, fashions, and personalities of the different individuals they met. These descriptions reflect not only facts about fashions and people of the courts of Russia, Austria, and Turkey, but these English women's opinions on the looks and personalities of those people show what traits and fashions are valued to the English.

Lady Montagu spent most of her travels in Constantinople and other areas of Turkey, and she had a generally favorable opinion on those who lived there. She shared her thoughts and opinions on those she met, but mainly focused on the fashions she saw and experienced. In Vienna, Lady Montagu was dressed in the fashions of the Viennese courts before attending a private audience with the Empress. She described the dress she wore as well as the extravagant clothing of the other ladies in court, but thought it was inconvenient, excessive, and monstrous. She even supposed that the women of Venice dressed in such extravagance to distract from their natural ugliness.⁶³ This letter described the fashions of Viennese courts in great detail, but showed even more about the beauty standards of England. Lady Montagu's strong aversion to the clothing, hair, and general looks of the women in Venice did not necessarily show that the clothes and women were ugly, but they did not fit the beauty standards of eighteenth-century England. The first half of the eighteenth century was the beginning of England's consumer

⁶² O'Loughlin, *Women, Writing, and Travel*, 24.

⁶³ Montagu to Lady Mar, September 14, 1716, in *The Complete Letters*, 265.

revolution which was defined by commercial change, world trade, and women seen as the consumers of fashionable goods.⁶⁴ The expectations of fashion in England had been raised as the consumer revolution continued in the eighteenth century, so the elite British women held others to an even higher standard for fashion. According to a later letter by Lady Montagu, Hungarian women conformed to British beauty standards much better than the Austrian women. She described the Hungarian women as “generally very fair and well shap’d,” and their clothing was described as much simpler than in the courts of Vienna.⁶⁵ This description, especially in direct comparison to the descriptions of Viennese women, show Lady Montagu’s preference for England’s beauty standards, which include simple elegance and fair skin. Vigor’s descriptions of the Russian royal family also reflect a general preference for fair skin. She described the looks and personalities of the Czarina, the Duchess of Mecklenburgh, Princess Anne, and Princess Elizabeth. She described the Czarina and the Duchess as generally pleasant looking, and Princess Anne as not very handsome, but Vigor described Princess Elizabeth as very handsome, emphasizing her fair skin, light hair, and blue eyes.⁶⁶ The attention each woman payed to physical details reflects the expectations of England’s beauty and fashion standards that the women experienced and grew up with at home.

These three women travelers were invested in describing the people they met past just their exteriors. In addition to and sometimes in lieu of physical descriptions, each woman also described the personalities and characteristics of the individuals they met in court and along other parts of their journeys. In England, elite women had constructed ideas of what qualities

⁶⁴ Jill Campbell, “Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Historical Machinery of Female Identity,” in *History, Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. Beth Fowkes Tobin (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 65.

⁶⁵ Montagu to Lady Mar, January 30, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 303.

⁶⁶ Vigor to Her Friend in England, 1733, in *Letters from Russia*, 71-73.

were considered proper and placed them under the terms of politeness and civility. They included behavior ideals, speech, and activities that were performed in order to show status, wealth, power, and education.⁶⁷ As with fashion and beauty, the personalities of those that women travelers encountered were judged based on the expectations of British society. Vigor had a favorable opinion of most of the women of the Russian royal family because after each physical description, she also included an honest opinion of each woman. Vigor explained how the Czarina had a way of speaking to everybody so affably that it felt like she was talking to an equal. Vigor clearly appreciated the Czarina's humility and called her a "fine agreeable woman."⁶⁸ She also had a positive impression of Princess Elizabeth, explaining how she was generally very gay and enjoyed talking to everybody, but did so properly. Vigor's description of what made Princess Elizabeth an admired woman was not only her friendliness, but most importantly her ability to behave properly. Vigor did not like the Duchess of Mecklenburgh for that reason, because she was not as proper, and described as having a satirical wit.⁶⁹ Vigor appreciated the Czarina and Princess Elizabeth because their behavior and personalities aligned with the British ideas of politeness and civility.

Lady Montagu and Lady Craven also described people in a way that was consistent with the values and expectations of British society. Although most of Lady Montagu's descriptions of people were focused on their fashions and physical beauty, she also make an overarching statement about the characteristics of Turkish women in general. Before Lady Montagu lived in Constantinople, previous travel writers almost exclusively "othered" the Turks in their travel

⁶⁷ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 14.

⁶⁸ Vigor to Her Friend in England, 1733, in *Letters from Russia*, 71.

⁶⁹ Vigor to Her Friend in England, 1733, in *Letters from Russia*, 71-73.

accounts.⁷⁰ Lady Montagu on the other hand, after living alongside the Turkish elite and gaining good friendships with Turkish women, came to the conclusion that Turkish ladies had “at least as much wit and Civility, nay, Liberty, as Ladys Among us.”⁷¹ Lady Montagu connected with many of these women and decided based on her own experience that, according to the standards in England, these women were good and proper ladies and should be seen as such. Unlike Lady Montagu, Lady Craven rarely described the surface qualities of the people she met, and instead focused on the characteristics of their personalities. In describing a man she dined with in France, Lady Craven appreciated that he was both sensible and well learned.⁷² Another time, she described the Russian minister’s wife as “extremely sensible and polite.”⁷³ In each of these situations, Lady Craven praised these individuals for their sensibility, education, and politeness, all characteristics valued in eighteenth-century British society. The idea of sensibility came out of the British idea of sociability. Sensibility added the importance of feelings to civility and taste.⁷⁴ Not only did Lady Craven’s descriptions show how the British valued sensibility, she also showed the importance of a leader who genuinely cared about their people. Lady Craven began her explanation of Prince Kaunitz by calling him “extraordinary.”⁷⁵ She described him as sincere and frank but emphasized how much he truly cared about his people, supposing that “the welfare of the people at large [was] his delight.”⁷⁶ This observation asserted Lady Craven’s

⁷⁰ Cynthia Lowenthal, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 89.

⁷¹ Montagu to the Countesse of ---, May 1718, 407.

⁷² Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, June 30, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 20.

⁷³ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, November 4, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 133.

⁷⁴ O’Loughlin, *Women, Writing, and Travel*, 23.

⁷⁵ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, December 15, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 148.

⁷⁶ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, December 15, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 148.

appreciation for royalty that valued the lives of his people and could connect well to others, much like how Lady Montagu recognized the Czarina's ability to speak to others as equals rather than display her authority.

The extensive descriptions Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven shared of the people they encountered provided information about the people and cultures of the areas the women visited, but showed even more about England. How each of those characteristics of individuals were framed by these women reflected what characteristics and personality traits were valued in British society. Women travelers' valuation of the people and other cultures they encountered were held to the standards of British society. Much like how these women had never experienced the Russian and Turkish cultures before, many of the people Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven met likely had very little exposure to British culture. The ways in which each women judged individuals and cultures based on the values of the English was a consistent reminder of the British background and perspective of these women travelers.

Another important aspect of Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven's backgrounds that affected the experiences and perspectives of their travels was their class. Each of these women were members of the upper class in England, which involved strict rules and expectations, delicate social tensions, and economic uncertainty. During the eighteenth century, an elite status was unstable and susceptible to change suddenly and unexpectedly. It was common for elite British women to experience financial hardship, social ruin, loss of livelihood and lifestyle, and were constantly living on the border of prosperity and financial ruin.⁷⁷ In order to travel in the ways that they did, Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven were all in moments of prosperity

⁷⁷ Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 7.

and enough wealth to trek across Europe. These women's elite status had a distinct effect on their travels and their perceptions of others while abroad. Firstly, these women were only able to travel like they did because of their money and political status. Lady Montagu and Vigor went on their voyages because their husbands' diplomatic assignments. *add some about Craven's reasons/economic ability to travel* The locations and quality of these women's travels were also due to their elite economic and social status. Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven were only invited to stay with royalty and attend court events because they had high enough social status in England. The effect that elite status had on the experiences and perspectives of these three women permeated their letters, and was especially reflected in instances of romanticizing the poor and expecting certain standards of living while traveling.

Even though these women spent most of their time while traveling in the homes and company of the upper class, they did all pass through towns and areas of poverty along their journeys. When passing through those areas and seeing how the lower class lived, these elite women reacted to these peasants with admiration for the simplicity of their lives. When passing through Hungary, Lady Montagu came across a few small villages filled with people she saw as simple but kind. She explained how they had no money, but lived off the abundance of their surroundings. She described their clothing as "very primitive, being only a plain sheep's skin," and said that it was so sturdy that it would last many winters and that they had little need for money.⁷⁸ Lady Montagu admired how simply they lived, yet continued her travels in extravagance. She never seemed to question that it was their choice to live off the land rather than necessary for their survival. Lady Craven had a similar moment of romanticizing ordinary peasant life while traveling through France. She came across a rural area and enjoyed watching

⁷⁸ Montagu to Lady Mar, January 30, 1717, in *The Complete Letters*, 301-302.

country girls herding sheep in the hills. Lady Craven explained that the rolling hills and simple farming life was new to her, and it pleased her to see. She even shared how two oxen pulling a plow reminded her of the days when the Romans were conquering land. By making this comparison, Lady Craven simplified the lives and work of farmers, and compared them to the past, belittling their lives and essentially calling them primitive or even ancient. This idealization, romanticization, and simplification of the lives of the working class came from perspectives of elite women who never lived in poverty. Lady Montagu and Lady Craven's idealization of the ordinary lives that these women just passed by reflected the privilege of an elite life in England.

Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven not only had the means to travel, but their lives as elite women gave them the expectations of traveling in a certain level of comfort and style. These three women came from some of the most aristocratic families in England, so they were raised in comfort with all of their needs and many of their desires met. Lady Craven, for example, came from the line of Berkeleys, an aristocratic family that could be traced back to Saxon and Norman roots, and even gained royal blood in the thirteenth century.⁷⁹ These aristocratic women were used to physical comforts and had high expectations for travel. Although the process of travelling across Europe in the eighteenth century was not always glamorous, and often was dangerous and uncomfortable, the elite women who did take this trek expressed their desire and expectations for some comfort in order to maintain their ideas of acceptable living standards. Lady Craven had certain expectations of what items were essential to her travel. In the first letter of her collection, Lady Craven assured her friend that her harp was

⁷⁹ Julia Gasper, *Elizabeth Craven: Writer, Feminist and European* (Wilmington, DE: Vernon Press, 2017): 1-3.

in the coach with her, because she could not imagine being so long without it.⁸⁰ This harp accompanied Lady Craven throughout her journey, which became an important comfort to her when she discovered that harps with pedals were very rare in Italy. Lady Craven also had an interesting view on what comforts counted as essentials when she took a trek through Crimea. She had to leave some of her favorite essentials in Petersburg, such as her harp and her side saddle, but she could not go even on this short trip without her tea and her milk with melted chocolate that she drank in place of the local water.⁸¹ At this point in her journey, nearly a year after she left England, Lady Craven moved past her need for all of her comforts, but she still saw her tea and other special beverages as essentials because she was told that she could not possibly just drink the local water. Even when Lady Craven could not have the level of comfort she desired, she still imagined and wished for the ideal situations which would suit her needs. While traveling by boat from France to Italy, Lady Craven wished for the ideal situation of enjoying a pleasant ride on a yacht with fellow Englishmen as company. She followed this fantasy with the reality that her actual voyage to Italy involved Italian sailors singing “unharmoniously” and making “a horrid noise” for hours during the journey.⁸² Lady Craven’s descriptions of an ideal journey juxtaposed to the reality of her travels showed how her upper-class background shaped the standard of living she expected on her travels. Even though some aspects she described as less than ideal, such as her voyage by boat from France to Italy, the complaints she had about

⁸⁰ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, June 15, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 2.

⁸¹ Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, April 3, 1786, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 216-217.

⁸² Craven to The Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith, September 1, 1785, in *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, 81-82.

those areas of travel were not much more than annoying or inconvenient, her expectations were high because of the quality of life she was used to in England.

Vigor showed her heightened expectations slightly differently from Lady Craven. In Vigor's letters, her class background showed in how some sights and locations did not meet her expectations. When she first arrived in Petersburg and saw the palaces and castles that belonged to different royalty and aristocracy, she frequently commented with her surprise at how small they were. In her first letter, Vigor described three different palaces as small, and she seemed surprised and disappointed by them.⁸³ Her disappointment in the size of the palaces that belonged to the Russian royalty showed the way that she as an elite British woman had an image of what a proper royal palace should look like, and clearly the size of the palace was essential to that image. Lady Montagu also had certain expectations of comfort that came from her elite background and the fact that she was traveling with her diplomat husband. At one point in her journey, Lady Montagu was asked by the Empress to deliver a letter to the Duchess of Blankenburg. She arrived in the town late at night and thought it improper to disturb the Duchess so late, so Lady Montagu found housing in an inn that she described as miserable. Lady Montagu was willing to stay in the inn for one night, but was not pleased about it. Luckily, the Duchess agreed that Lady Montagu should not stay in such a place, and when she learned that Lady Montagu had arrived, the Duchess sent a carriage with six horses to pick her up and bring her to the castle.⁸⁴ Even though Lady Montagu would have managed sleeping in an inn for one night, her elite associates understood the discomfort of living like an average person and desired to provide the physical comforts that British elite like Lady Montagu expected. Due to the fact that

⁸³ Vigor to Her Friend in England, February 1729-30, in *Letters from Russia*, 4-7.

⁸⁴ Montagu to Lady Mar, December 17, 1716, in *The Complete Letters*, 289.

travel and travel writing for women was limited to mostly the upper class in the eighteenth century, the upper-class perspective of travel is mostly what was recorded. Although Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven did come across and interacted with people of lower classes, they spent most of their time living, dining, and conversing with the royalty and elite members of the societies they visited. Their class gave them a somewhat limited perspective because of this, but it also gave the women the opportunity to share the activities and pastimes of the courts of Vienna, Russia, and Turkey. These exclusive opportunities as well as the elite perspectives and opinions on the cultures and people of their travels showed how class affected the travels and writings of Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven.

The epistolary travel collections of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Jane Vigor, and Lady Elizabeth Craven were dramatic, fascinating accounts of their experiences and thoughts throughout their travels across Europe to Russia and the Near East. The letters, once published, were of great interest to the British public because of the descriptions and stories of Russia and Turkey. Even though other British travelers had visited and written about those areas before, the writings of Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven were brought new and exciting stories because their gender, Englishness, and class gave each woman ideas and perspectives on Russia and the Near East that the British readers had not experienced. Their status as women gave Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven exclusive access to female only events and locations such as private audiences with royalty, special court events, Turkish baths, and harems. This special access along with the common practice of female friendships in England allowed for each of these women to gain a level of closeness to the women they met that traversed language, religion, and culture. The unique experiences and complications of motherhood also showed the ways that gender affected the experience and process of travel differently from men. Although

most of their letters involved making observations of others, Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven occasionally noticed that some of their English practices made them stand out. In these moments of self-consciousness, the women realized that they were in fact the ones being observed, yet they continued to live according to the expectations of British society. As they continued observing the people and making judgements about the cultures they encountered, the women travelers attempted to seem objective in their observations, but held the appearances and personalities of individuals to the standards of eighteenth-century England. The moments of self-consciousness and English-focused observation showed how the Englishness of these women travelers affected their experiences and perceptions while traveling. In addition to how Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven's gender and Englishness affected their travels, the elite background of these women was also reflected in the ways in which they romanticized the poor and expected a high level of physical comfort while traveling. Throughout the letters of Lady Montagu, Vigor, and Lady Craven, they exemplified the fact that eighteenth-century British women's travel writings showed the ways in which their gender, Englishness, and class shaped their travel experiences and perspectives of other cultures.

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