The Modern Philosopher, Letters to Her Son and Verses on the Siege of Gibraltar, by Elizabeth Craven

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Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

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This book first published 2017

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-9504-0
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9504-0

To Graham, with love and thanks

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INTRODUCTION

The three works in this book were all written by Elizabeth Craven (1750-1828), an Englishwoman, while she was living on the Continent in the period 1783-91. *The Modern Philosopher* (*Le Philosophe Moderne)* is a play written in French and here translated into English for the first time.[1] *Letters to Her Son* was written in English and published in England, but is not usually included in lists of her works.[2] Like *The Modern Philosopher* it is a neglected work of great interest. Together with the poem, these works display her versatility as a writer and wide range of interests.

The Modern Philosopher was performed at Triesdorf in 1790, and printed in French and in a German translation soon afterwards. But since then it has fallen into oblivion, which is a pity, because its subject matter, the egalitarian political theories of the French Revolution, is by no means trivial and remains significant after more than two centuries. The play's first – and only – performance, at the court of the Margrave of Ansbach, was noted in *Mémoires Historiques, Littéraires et Anecdotiques: ou, Correspondance Philosophique et Critique* by Friedrich Melchior Grimm and Denis Diderot, who confirm that it is by "Mylady Craven" and praise it highly, "This ingenious work, which makes fun of our modern politics with as much wit as grace and gaiety, has been produced only in the private theatre of His Highness the Margrave of Brandenbourgh-Anspach, at Triesdorf".[3]

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[1] *Le Philosophe Moderne. Comédie en trois actes (and in prose. By Elizabeth Lady Craven),* Anspach, 1790.

[2] *Letters from a Peeress of England to her Eldest Son* (London: Debrett, 1784). Translated into French as *Lettres de Mylady Craven à Son Fils,* by P Noël Durand (Paris: Chez Durand fils, 1788).

[3] Friedrich Melchior Grimm and Denis Diderot, *Mémoires Historiques, Littéraires et Anecdotiques: ou, Correspondance Philosophique et Critique* (2nd edition, London: Colburn 1814), 4:416. "Cet ingénieux ouvrage, où le ridicule de notre politique moderne est peinte [sic] avec autant d'esprit que de grâce et de gaîté n'a paru que sur le Théatre particulier de S.A.S. Monseigneur le margrave de Brandenbourgh-Anspach, à Triesdorf."

When she wrote it, Craven was living in Ansbach in Germany as the mistress and wife-to-be of the ruling Margrave Christian-Charles-Alexander, whom she married the following year.[4] A German edition appeared shortly after the French, *Der Moderne Philosoph. Ein Lustspiel in drey Aufzügen. Aus dem Französischen*.[5] The present edition is based on the copy of the work in the British Library, one of the few to survive. Another copy is listed in the catalogue of the library of Princeton University.[6] The BL copy comes from the collection of Horace Walpole, Lord Orford, and is addressed to him on its wrapper, "Earl of Orford, Berkeley Square".[7] It was probably sent to him personally by Elizabeth Craven as they were friends and she had sent him some of her earlier works. Indeed, he had printed one of them at his private press at Strawberry Hill, and he was the dedicatee of one of her earlier tales, *Modern Anecdote of the Ancient Family of the Kinkvervankotsdarsprakengotchderns*.[8]

Elizabeth Craven was the author of poems, plays, stories and travelogues. Born in London in 1750, daughter of the Earl and Countess of Berkeley, Elizabeth was married much against her will at the age of sixteen to Lord Craven, by whom she had seven children. She started writing poems when she was very young, and also enjoyed acting, something that was widely considered improper. She soon became notable for her theatrical ventures and wrote several original plays and translations. Lord Craven was thirteen years older than her, and they were not compatible in tastes or temperament. His overbearing, domineering treatment of his wife was legal but not really approved of in the aristocratic Whig circles in which they moved. Eventually, he took up with a mistress, while Elizabeth had various love-affairs, including one with the writer William Beckford (author of *Vathek*). In 1783 the Cravens

[4] For all biographical details, see Julia Gasper, *Elizabeth Craven: Writer, Feminist and European* (Wilmington, Delaware: Vernon Press, 2017).

[5] *Der Moderne Philosoph. Ein Lustspiel in drey Aufzügen. Aus dem Französischen.* 1790 n.p. n.p. The translator is said to be J. J. C. von Reck.

[6] Listed but not uploaded on Google e-books.

[7] BL copy. *Le Philosophe Moderne. Comédie en trois actes (and in prose. By Elizabeth Lady Craven)* shelfmark C.38.c.16. Cover inscribed by hand "Earl of Orford, Berkeley Square" in what could be Craven's handwriting.

[8] *Modern Anecdote of the Ancient Family of the Kinkvervankotsdarsprakengotchderns: A Tale for Christmas 1779. Dedicated to The Honorable Horace Walpole* (London: Privately printed 1779). Re-printed by BiblioBazaar, 2010.

separated and she left to live in France, pursued by scandal and gossip about her love life.[9]

It was while living in France that she wrote *Letters from a Peeress of England to her Eldest Son*, published in 1784. Ostensibly a book of advice about marriage, it should really be regarded as a pioneering feminist text. Although no name appears on the English edition, there is abundant evidence of attribution and the French translation names her in its title.[10] This edition offers the text with a minimum number of corrections, reproducing the 18th century spelling, with Craven's idiosyncratic punctuation and grammar and occasional coinages of new words.

She addressed the letters to her eldest son, William Craven, born on 28th September 1770. He was aged thirteen when the book was published, and was at a boarding school in England. He was a handsome and cheerful boy, who had been educated at home by tutors until the age of eleven because he was considered too delicate to send away. One of these tutors was the Rev. Percival Stockdale, a scholar and poet recommended to Craven by Dr Johnson. William's health was the reason why his family did not in due course send him to Oxford. Instead he joined the Berkshire militia, which was considered a lesser risk, and in later life he seems to have grown quite robust.

Early in the book, Craven writes "It is innumerable the persons who have in this and past ages addressed women on every subject and in every situation in life."[11] That was certainly true. The eighteenth century abounded in books of advice, many in the epistolary form that was the predominant form of the age. One of the best-selling works was by Lord Halifax, *The Lady's New-Year's Gift; Or, Advice to a Daughter. Under These Following Heads, Viz. Religion, Husband, House, Family and Children, Behaviour and Conversation, Friendship, Censure, Vanity and Affectation, Pride, Diversions.* Originally published in 1688 it had run into fifteen editions by 1765.[12] It was followed by the Rev. Wetenhall Wilkes'

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[9] For all biographical details see Julia Gasper, *Elizabeth Craven: Writer, Feminist and European* (Wilmington, Delaware, USA: Vernon Press, 2017).

[10] *Letters from a Peeress of England to Her Eldest Son* (London: J. Debrett, 1794). Advertisements for it appeared by April so it was published fairly early in the year.

[11] *Letters from a Peeress of England to Her Eldest Son* (London: J. Debrett, 1794), 9.

[12] George Savile (Marquis of Halifax), *The Lady's New-Year's Gift; Or, Advice to a Daughter. Under These Following Heads, Viz. Religion, Husband, House, Family and Children, Behaviour and Conversation, Friendship, Censure, Vanity and Affectation, Pride, Diversions*. 15th edition, (London: J Dodsley, 1765).

A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady (1746).[13] There were also Lady Sarah Pennington's *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters* (1761),[14] the anonymous *A Father's Advice to his Daughters* (1776)[15] and the immensely popular *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1795) by Dr John Gregory.[16] All of these works seem to us full of platitudes and tedious admonitions, but so great was the market demand for them that in 1792 a compendium appeared entitled *The Young Lady's Parental Monitor:* containing the works by Gregory and Pennington, plus another translated from the French of Madame de Lambert, *Advice of a Mother to Her Daughter*.[17]

In the category of advice for sons, the most admired classic was Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son* (1748), a work that Craven quotes somewhat critically in her own book. *Instruction of a Father to his Son*, by Sir Walter Raleigh, was published as early as 1632 but reprinted as late as 1754. Other examples included Philippe Sylvestre Dufour's *Moral Instructions of a Father to His Son Upon His Departure for a Long Voyage: Or, An Easie Way to Guide a Young Man Towards All Sorts of Virtues, With an Hundred Maximes, Christian and Moral*, [18] and, *The Country Gentleman's Advice to his Son, on his Coming of Age* (1755).[19]

What is noticeable in all these books is that both fathers and mothers were entitled, indeed duty-bound, to give advice to daughters, and fathers were expected to give it to their sons; but nowhere does any woman attempt to give advice to her son. Women did not offer advice to men. They did not presume to guide, instruct or counsel the superior sex. Craven is the first female author to dare to do so, and it is no exaggeration to call this revolutionary, particularly since her book contains so much

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[13] Wetenhall Wilkes, *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady. In which is digested, into a new and familiar method, a system of rules, and informations, to qualify the fair sex to be useful and happy in every state* (London: C. Hitch, 1746).

[14] Lady Sarah Pennington, *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters. In a letter to Miss Pennington signed in MS., S. Pennington* (Third Edition, London: S. Chandler, 1761).

[15] Sherbourne: R. Goadby, 1776.

[16] London: Robert Campbell, 1795

[17] London: Nathaniel Patten, 1792.

[18] Philippe Sylvestre Dufour, (London W. Crook, at the Green Dragon without Temple-Bar, near Devereux Court, 1683).

[19] *The Country Gentleman's Advice to his Son, on his coming of age, in the year 1755, with regard to his political conduct. Showing, amongst other things, the folly and pernicious consequences of all party clubs* (London: Abraham Tucker, Edward Weston, Printed for W. Owen, 1755).

criticism of the laws of marriage as they then existed, and defines its aim as to ensure that her son will make his *wife* happy. If he does so, she thinks he will make himself happy too, but paramount in her mind is the right of the woman to find consideration, respect and dignity in marriage. This is not merely a matter of choosing a suitable bride but of behaving as if marriage were an equal companionship, rather than the tyranny of a man over a woman. Writing in 1784, some years earlier than Mary Wollstonecraft, whose *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* appeared in 1787, Craven must be considered as a pioneer.[20]

Craven's quotation from Lord Chesterfield appertains to a woman always welcoming a compliment to her understanding rather than her beauty – a condescending remark with which she takes issue, pointing out that men are just as vain in such respects as women.[21] Later in her book she quotes from Madame de Sévigné, who wrote letters of a more general kind to her daughter, and Craven shows far more approval of Sévigné's opinion.[22]

While the *Letters* ostensibly set out to advise her son how to find happiness in marriage, they also serve the purpose of explaining to her son exactly why she had to leave his father and confiding in him some of the miseries she had endured, In fact, they amount to a blistering attack on the legal inequities of marriage as it then existed. She frankly condemns the requirement for a woman to promise to obey her husband – a requirement that was only made optional in 1928 – and points out the injustice and double standards that prevail. She protests that a husband can legally beat his wife, lock her up, give her no money, be unfaithful with prostitutes or mistresses, or squander his money and her own, and for all of this she has no legal redress. If she seeks a divorce or separation, she will be disgraced and will lose custody of her own children. This is what happened to Craven herself when she parted from her unfaithful husband, and was forced to leave her children in his care. She protests with indignation, and at moments with sorrow. By addressing her book to her son, who will one day be a peer and a legislator of the United Kingdom, she is taking the first step to get such injustices rectified.

It is true that Craven is writing from the point of view of an upper-class woman who had many privileges, but her heartfelt cry not to separate a

[20] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct in the More Important Duties of Life* (London: J. Johnson, 1787).
[21] See Letter V below.
[22] See Letter XI below.

mother from her children can surely be felt by women of any class, and what she says about the humiliation of having to ask a husband for money applies just as much to the poor as to the rich. It may be that she is the first writer to point this out, or to say that women need a "room of their own".

The book had only one edition and seemingly made little impact at the time. It got only one, very short, review, in any English periodical. It seems there was no market at that time for a book about how to make a woman happy; dutiful, obedient, refined, well-mannered, modest and amiable, yes; happy, no.[23] When a French translation appeared four years later, it was not warmly received either. One review provided lengthy excerpts then concluded, crushingly, by hoping that the talented young translator, Durand *fils*, would find another more profound and more agreeable book to translate next time.[24]

It is pleasant to be able to say that Craven's son seems to have heeded all her good advice and followed it faithfully. His own marriage was as happy and successful as his parents' had been disastrous. On his father's death in September 1791, William succeeded to the title of Baron Craven. During the early part of the Napoleonic wars he commanded a regiment on active service abroad. He served in the Netherlands, then was sent to the West Indies to defend British colonies against the French. In 1801 he was created Earl of Craven, in recognition of his patriotic services. In 1803 he was sent to Ireland to defend it against French invasion and was raised to the rank of Major-General. In the latter part of the Napoleonic war he served again in senior command.

When in England in between campaigns, he had a series of mistresses, including the notorious courtesan Harriette Wilson, who wrote about him rather unfavourably in her *Memoirs*. "I shall not say why and how I became, at the age of fifteen, the mistress of the Earl of Craven. Whether it was love, or the severity of my father, the depravity of my own heart, or the winning arts of the noble lord…" She described his company as a "dead bore", recalled him talking to her about his regiment's campaign in the West Indies, and concluded that "we never suited nor understood each other", which was a greater compliment than she intended. Some internet sources refer to William talking about his "plantations", implying he owned slaves: this is not true. His father had once owned an estate in the

[23] *The English Review, Or, An Abstract of English and Foreign Literature*, April 1784, p 306

[24] Pierre Rousseau, ed., *Journal Encyclopédique,* vol VII (Bouillon: 1788), 208-221.

Bahamas but it was sold to the British Government in 1785.[25] William also incurred the disapproval of Jane Austen, who relayed a piece of disapproving gossip about him keeping a mistress (possibly Harriet) at Ashdown Park in Berkshire, in 1801. "Eliza has seen Lord Craven at Barton, and probably by this time at Kintbury, where he was expected for one day this week. She found his manners very pleasing indeed. The little flaw of having a mistress now living with him at Ashdown Park seems to be the only unpleasing circumstance about him." Austen could not be expected to take a warm view of the man she associated with the death of her sister's fiancé, Thomas Fowle, who died while serving as chaplain on William Craven's military expedition to the Caribbean.[26]

But there are many more favourable things we can say about William. For instance he was one of the patrons of a London charity health-care scheme called the General Dispensary for Inoculating and Administering Advice and Medicine Gratis to All the Infant Poor. William and his four sisters, Elizabeth's daughters, are all listed as subscribers to this scheme, and they got their enthusiasm for inoculation from their mother and their uncle George, both of whom were keen advocates of Dr Jenner and his innovations.[27] William was active as Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire, a considerable responsibility as it involved recruiting and training militia even in peace-time. In the House of Lords, he voted on such matters as the raising of revenue for the government through sale of Exchequer Bills, the repair of lighthouses around the coast of Ireland, and the terms for exchange of prisoners of war. He was guardian of his Berkeley cousins, offspring of Elizabeth's brother Frederick, Earl of Berkeley, who left so much confusion when he died, in respect of their status and inheritance, that a lengthy legal battle ensued and William had to appear as a witness in the House of Lords.[28]

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[25] Harriette Wilson, *Memoirs of Harriette Wilson, Written by Herself: The four volumes collected into one* (London: John Joseph Stockdale, 1825), 1. Website of Ashdown House http://ashdownhouse.blogspot.co.uk/2010/02/jane-austen-william-craven-harriette.html. Julia Gasper, *Elizabeth Craven: Writer, Feminist and European* (Wilmington, Delaware, USA: Vernon Press, 2017).

[26] Deirdre Le Faye, ed, *Jane Austen's Letters* (4th edition, Oxford: OUP 2011), 74. Jane Austen to Cassandra, Steventon: Thursday, January 8th 1801. And index.

[27] *Plan of the General Dispensary for inoculating and administering advice and Medicine Gratis to All the Infant Poor...in their home and at the Dispensary in Wardour Street* (London: General Dispensary for Inoculating and Administering Advice and Medicine Gratis to all the Infant Poor, 1794), preliminary pages.

[28] *Journals of the House of Lords* (Great Britain House of Lords,1810), 48:339, 457, 107.

When he did eventually marry, in 1807, William seems to have followed his mother's counsels and both he and his wife were extremely happy in the union. He was almost exactly the age she had recommended for happiness, 36, and his bride was exactly the age she had said was ideal, 25. He could have married among the highest aristocracy but instead he chose an actress, Louisa Brunton, from a middle-class family. She was admired for her talents and her good behaviour, as well as her beauty. She was "Tall and commanding and of the most perfect symmetry, and her face the perfection of sweetness and expression". Another admirer described her as "A handsome woman with prodigious fine black eyes". For seven years she had excelled in a wide range of roles including Shakespearean heroines, in provincial and London theatres, and this gave her something in common with William's mother, who had always enjoyed acting, directing and writing plays. It is pleasing to find that Miss Brunton was described as not only beautiful and gifted but also "eccentric" and fond of a joke, which again reminds us of Elizabeth.[29]

In 1785, Craven set off on a protracted tour of Europe, starting with Southern France and Italy, then travelling on to Austria, Poland, Russia, the Crimea, Turkey and Greece. She returned via Romania and Hungary and described what she saw in a series of letters later published under the title of *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople: In a Series of Letters*. It was while she was staying in Hyères in the south of France that she wrote her comical poem, *Verses on the Siege of Gibraltar*. [30]

Craven was very given to writing comical verses, and often enclosed them in her letters. A few were published in the periodicals of the day.[31] She was prompted to write this example by reading a French pamphlet about the recent Great Siege of Gibraltar, which had lasted for three and a half years, ending in a British victory.[32] The French and Spanish had taken

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[29] Deirdre Le Faye, ed., *Jane Austen's Letters* (4th edition, Oxford: OUP 2011), 511-512.

[30] *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople: In a Series of Letters from the Right Honourable Elizabeth Lady Craven, to His Serene Highness the Margrave of Brandenbourg, Anspach, and Bareith* (London: G.G. and J Robinson, 1789), 43-53.

[31] See Julia Gasper, *Elizabeth Craven, Writer, Feminist and European* (Wilmington, Delaware: Vernon Press, 2017) throughout.

[32] Jean-Claude-Éléonore Michaud d'Arçon, *Histoire du Siège de Gibraltar, Fait pendant l'Eté de 1782, sous les ordres du Capitaine Général Duc de Crillon, Chevalier de la Toison d'Or, Grand d'Espagne de la première Classe, Grand-Croix de l'Ordre Royal de CHARLES III, Lieutenant Général des Armées de France, Chevalier de l'Ordre Royal et Militaire de S. Louis* (Hermil Frères, Cadix, 1783). "AVANT-PROPOS. Je vais raconter sans prétention, et avec autant de fidélité que peut le faire un témoin oculaire (i), les différentes opérations du Siège

advantage of the American War of Independence to attack Gibraltar and challenge British naval power in the Mediterranean.[33] The garrison, led by Lieutenant-General Sir George Augustus Elliot, Governor of Gibraltar, defended it stoutly throughout the prolonged and perilous siege.[34] The French and Spanish commanders called on their engineers to come up with new ideas and inventions to ensure success. The result was a variety of schemes, including a daring early attempt at aerial warfare using a kite, and the curious "floating batteries", a sort of raft designed by the Chevalier Jean-Claude Michaud d'Arçon. These were put into action in September 1782, but were burnt by the defenders who used red-hot bullets heated in a kiln to ignite their target. The British navy also had the advantage of copper-bottomed ships, thanks to the scientific advances of Sir Humphrey Davy. Such ships went faster and could stay at sea for longer without rotting. Gibraltar was eventually relieved by Admiral Sir Richard Howe, whose victory made him the greatest English naval hero prior to Lord Nelson. The besiegers had to withdraw; however the author of the pamphlet insists that they did not lose and the only victory was won by copper and coal (the fuel used to heat the kilns) not by the British.[35]

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de Gibraltar, et les événemens les plus remarquables qui se sont passés devant cette Forteresse et au Camp de Saint-Roch, depuis le 19 Juin 1782 jusqu'au 16 Octobre, et sur les mers d'Europe depuis le 12 Septembre jusqu'au 28 du mois suivant. Qu'on n'attende de moi ni éloges ni satyres; j'ai loué quand je l'ai dû, à la vérité; je n'ai blâmé que lorsque la force des circonstances m'y a obligé. Je ne crains pas qu'on m'accuse d'être adulateur; j'ose dire que ce sera à tort que quelques personnes seront tentées peut-être de m'accuser d'être détracteur, parce que s'il m'est arrivé quelquefois de faire entrevoir mon improbation, j'ai usé de tous les ménagemens que prescrit l'honnêteté, & que, dans ces momens délicats, je n'ai été que l'organe des autres." [Foreword: I am going to relate, in a straightforward way, and as faithfully as an eye witness may, the different operations of the Siege of Gibraltar, and the most remarkable events that passed in front of that fortress and in the camp of St-Roch, between 19th June and 16th October 1782, and on the seas between 12th September and 28th October. Expect from me neither adulation nor detraction; I have given praise where it is due, and blame only when compelled by force of circumstance. Nobody will be able to call me a flatterer; I venture to say that I may be wrongly accused by some of disparagement, because in places I have had to express my disapproval, in the most tactful manner that propriety will allow, and at delicate moments, I have merely expressed the general view."]

[33] René Chartrand. *Gibraltar, 1779-83: The Great Siege. Campaign series*. Illustrated by Patrice Courcelle (Botley, England: Osprey, 2006).

[34] James Falkner, *Fire over the Rock: The Great Siege of Gibraltar, 1779-1783* (Barnsley, England: Pen and Sword Military), 2009.

[35] D'Arçon, *Histoire du Siège de Gibraltar* (Cadix, 1783), 92.

Craven wrote of the poem, "I hope the following lines will amuse you, for a moment; I only wish they may make you laugh as much as I did, when I read the French officer's melancholy story in prose; whosoever he may be, should he take offence at my having turned his tragedy into a farce, I shall bear his anger patiently, when I think that the princes of the House of Bourbon,[36] all the Spaniards, Lord Howe,[37] and Sir George Elliot,[38] each of whose valour he slights, will certainly laugh with me. I have marked the pages where I have literally translated his own phrases, that you may not suppose I have invented the strange things he says—and I send you his pamphlet that you may compare the one with the other." Her poem does indeed give a very accurate rendering of what the pamphlet said, but it does so with artful mockery. It uses words playfully, rhyming "cruising" with "news in" and "d'Arçon" with "farce on".[39]

Craven is unaware that the pamphlet she read, written after the siege, to disparage the British victory, was actually written by d'Arçon himself, as she used the first edition, which appeared anonymously. (The second named him). She seizes on the comicality of a bad loser reluctant to acknowledge heroism on the part of the enemy. Her patriotic fervour is notable throughout the poem. Despite being a Whig, who sympathized with the aspiration of the American rebels to self-government, and a lifelong Francophile to boot, she was firmly on the side of Britain when it defended any of its own territories against Bourbon attack. Her enthusiasm for the British navy and admiration of its heroism is typical of her time. It had a personal dimension, as her favourite brother, Captain George Berkeley, was a naval officer who took part in the battle. He particularly distinguished himself in the relief of Gibraltar. In 1781-1782 he was commander of HMS *Recovery,* serving under Admiral Barrington, and shared in the glory of capturing two French warships, *Le Pégase* and *L'Actionnaire,* together with ten transports and store-ships of their convoy. As a reward, Captain Berkeley was promoted to the command of *Le Pégase*. In the spring of 1785 George visited Craven in France, and she heard about the naval battle first-hand from his own lips.[40] He eventually rose to become Admiral Sir George Cranfield Berkeley.[41]

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[36] The Kings of France and Spain were both Bourbons, and distant cousins.
[37] Admiral Howe was rewarded with a peerage.
[38] Sir George Augustus Elliot, Governor of Gibraltar.
[39] E. Craven, *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople in a Series of Letters* (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1789) 42-43. The poem follows Letter XV. Hyères, August 18, 1785.
[40] E. Craven, *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople in a Series of Letters* (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1789), 38. E. Craven, *Memoirs of the*

On her return from her travels, in 1787, Craven went to Ansbach in what is now Bavaria, as the guest of the Margrave, its ruling Prince, whom she had met in Paris. Charles-Christian-Alexander was the hereditary ruler of two small principalities, where he had his own court and a bevy of officials. Most of his efforts as a ruler were devoted to paying off his father's debts, and improving the economy by means of agricultural innovation and setting up a ceramics factory. Soon Craven was established there and they planned to marry as soon as their respective spouses died. The Margrave shared Craven's passion for the theatre, and his previous mistress had been the celebrated actress Madame Clairon, whom Craven soon superseded. The Margrave allowed her to take over the court entertainments, both musical and theatrical, a task she undertook with zeal, writing, producing and acting in numerous plays, and often roping in visitors and the leading courtiers to participate. The productions were all in French, as this, not German, was the language of the cultivated.[42] The texts of plays performed were printed in a collection, *Nouveau Théatre de Société d'Ansbach*, which includes several of her original compositions, as well as translations, one of them being from English into French. The collection does not include *Le Philosophe Moderne.*[43]

In late 1789, Craven and the Margrave visited Paris. They found it, of course, in turmoil. Famine and unrest were causing riots. The King had granted permission for all estates to elect representatives, and then, disastrously, tried to revoke the agreement he had signed. He was taken prisoner and in July the Bastille was stormed. By December, when Craven went there, the new Assembly was in the process of taking over and had just issued the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The periodicals and bookstalls were loaded with political theory but there was still a shortage of every other commodity. The finance minister, Jacques Necker, was dismissed in July and recalled a week later as nobody else could be found to take on the daunting task of coping with national bankruptcy. In 1788, Necker had published a book, not about finance, but about religious matters, *De L'Importance de la Morale, Et Des Opinions Religieuses.*

Margravine of Anspach, Written by Herself (London: H. Colburn, 1826*)*, 1:121-122.

[41] Obituary of Admiral Sir George Cranfield Berkeley, *The New Monthly Magazine*, Volume 9, April 1818, page 268.

[42] Jean Jacques Olivier, *Les Comédiens Français dans les Cours d'Allemagne au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie, 1901-1905), Vol 3 (1903) 56-67.

[43] Asimont, Etienne, ed., *Nouveau Théâtre de Societé d'Anspac et de Triesdorf* (2 volumes, Anspach: Messerer, Imprimeur de la Cour,1789, 1791).

Craven took a very sharp, satirical view of this, and makes a joke about it in the play. "A treatise on finance written by an ecclesiastic, or a treatise on religion, written by a financier!"[44]

On return to Ansbach, the Margrave found that there was a revolution going on in his own domains. The courtiers did not like Elizabeth Craven, whose influence they found excessive, and they had got wind of the Margrave's plan to abdicate and hand over control of Brandenburg and Ansbach to Prussia. They were not keen on the plan and blamed Craven for putting the idea into his head – which, as a matter of fact, she had not. Several ministers were dismissed, and this plot, as well as the Paris situation, found its way into the play Craven wrote at this time, *The Modern Philosopher.* The philosopher of the title, Longinius, is studying all the latest, most revolutionary ideas about equality and the Rights of Man current in the French capital. For this reason it seems appropriate that the play was originally written in French. He is also plotting against his employer, the Duke of Ursol, a benevolent hereditary prince like the Margrave.

Longinius is an admirable comic creation. He is deluded, infatuated with current fashionable ideas, and unaware of what is going on around him. He is part absent-minded professor and part dangerous fanatic. He says that all men are equal, but he patronises his servants, wishing to instruct them and condescend to them, rather than respecting their common sense. Longinius cannot really envisage the outcome of putting all his theories into practice, and he is not very enlightened in one way. He does not have a high opinion of the intelligence of women and does not believe in women's rights or education. His sister says of him, "He thinks our sex only exists to be wrong about everything". When he argues with her or with Hortense, he dismisses their views as the superficial understanding of a woman. Hortense and her Aunt are proved right, and Longinius turns out to be the real fool, so this play has an underlying feminist slant beneath its light comedy. Longinius is only saying what the culture in general upheld. In 1790 he is in the majority, and Hortense is in the minority.

The theories about natural equality that Longinius admires are associated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, but go back a long time before him. The English philosopher John Locke was one of many who had asserted in 1689 there were such things as "natural liberty" and "natural equality", referring us back even further to Hooker for the basis of these

[44] It was translated into English by Mary Wollstonecraft, *Of the Importance of Religious Opinions. Translated from the French* (London: printed for J. Johnson, 1788).

beliefs. [45] We could trace them back to the Diggers and the Lollards, or even further. It is likely that Craven's immediate sources lay in the French periodicals of the time, which Longinius is studying assiduously.

The play presents a sharp dichotomy between the egalitarian views of Longinius and the ultra-conservative royalist views of Hortense's suitor, Duval. This creates a dramatic confrontation that is the highlight of Act II. Duval's debate with Longinius alludes to the very situation that had so recently arisen in France, when the King's bodyguard had to decide whether to protect him or support the popular insurrection. Longinius likes to talk equality in theory, but is bewildered when his servants rebel. When the Duke returns, he is astonished to find the servants dressed up in their masters' clothes and Longinius being treated as a menial. This is followed by a dénouement that is tinged with melodrama as Longinius is revealed to have been plotting against the Duke. This justifies his banishment and Hortense is able to marry Duval. The uprising of the servants is a convenient thing for Hortense, who suffers under her uncle's authority but is immediately told by the Duke that she can marry the man she loves.

When she wrote it, Craven was leaning to the conservative side as, like most people, she was viewing with apprehension the descent of France into anarchy. The events of the next few years, and the Terror, confirmed the fears of those who thought that whatever the grievances of the common people, nothing would get better if order was overturned. Turmoil would benefit nobody; bloodshed would not feed the hungry multitude. So the play takes, on the whole, a conservative perspective, and concludes with the old order being restored as it was. Masters remain masters; servants remain servants. However, nobody apart from the foolish Longinius is punished. The Duke does not speak harshly to the upstart servants, or reprove them. He asks them to explain themselves, and when he has heard what is going on, he merely tells them they are mistaken. When Blaise the manservant asks him, "Are we not brothers?" he replies rather mildly, "No, my friend." In fact, Blaise does rather well as the Vicomte de Richemont immediately offers him a new job. The implication

[45] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning the True Original Extent and End of Civil Government* (London, 1689), chapter One, "Of the State of Nature". "To properly understand political power and trace its origins, we must consider the state that all people are in naturally. That is a state of perfect freedom of acting and disposing of their own possessions and persons as they think fit within the bounds of the law of nature. People in this state do not have to ask permission to act or depend on the will of others to arrange matters on their behalf. The natural state is also one of equality in which all power and jurisdiction is reciprocal and no one has more than another."

throughout is that the peasants have their own wisdom and common sense, which must be respected and valued.

The fact that Craven was, when she wrote the play, on the point of marrying the Margrave of Ansbach, undoubtedly influenced her point of view. He was an enlightened, progressive ruler who strove to render his people more prosperous and be considerate to everybody; she saw him as a benevolent autocrat. Yet, as she knew, the Margrave was planning to abdicate, which scarcely confirmed that his power was sacred and God-given. In 1791, he handed over power to the next heir, the King of Prussia, in return for a pension that enabled him to retire to England where he and Elizabeth lived for many years as a happily married couple. This play does not in itself typify all her political views on every topic at every stage of her long life. In the 1770s and 80s she had been a Whig and an ardent supporter of the American rebels against British rule, which made her a republican. The critical view of marriage that she takes in *Letters to Her Son* is influenced by the same Enlightenment ideas that Longinius is studying in this play. Its argument that women, being rational creatures, ought not to be subjected to the arbitrary authority of their husbands, is a call for emancipation.

A very unfavourable observer alleged that Craven had once been known to express "a wish…to have had a child by each man most celebrated in his profession. No coyness on her side has deprived her of this gratification; and the number and the boldness of her attempts must at least be acknowledged." [46] We have no way of knowing in what context or in what company these words were spoken by her, if at all, but it is quite believable that she took part in some far-ranging discussions of what the alternatives to marriage might be; it is not incompatible with what is known about her.

In later life, she had a bust of Voltaire on her mantelpiece and she was always concerned for the suffering of the poor in England, as well as disgusted at the heavy-handed suppression of all social unrest during the Napoleonic wars. "She execrates Lord Liverpool [*the prime minister*] and the Prince of Wales," wrote her friend and lover, William Beckford, to whom she sent a copy of this play when it was printed. She sheltered French royalist émigrés in her house, yet also showed some sympathy for new ideas under the influence of German romanticism. In 1799, Craven produced and published a translation of Schiller's *The Robbers,* a play

[46] Charles Pigott, *The Whig Club: or, A Sketch of Modern Patriotism* (London: W.Priest, 1794), 160.

considered so radical and dangerous to the established order of things that only very diluted versions of it got past the censors of the time.[47]

It is by no means certain that Duval in *The Modern Philosopher* gets the better of the debate. He gets the better of the action, but the revolutionary arguments for equality are presented lucidly, logically and capably through the mouth of Longinius. Longinius's egalitarian views are shown to be against his own interest, when his servants rise up against him and take over the household; but that does not prove that his theories are wholly false. They are inconvenient, and apt to create abrupt social upheaval, but nevertheless logical on their own terms. It is a matter of feasibility rather than sheer fallacy. The juxtaposition of an ultra-conservative and a revolutionary viewpoint creates good theatre and intellectual stimulation. When Duval describes Longinius's ideas as "capable of overturning the universe" he is expressing the alarm and apprehension of many observers, and also stating nothing but the truth. Longinius is finally rejected because his egalitarianism does not extend to the equality of women. Women have the first and last words in this play, the Aunt being left to sum up the moral and say what we have learnt from the action. The conclusion then is that an Enlightenment that does not include women is not worth supporting, as far as Craven is concerned.

The play indulges some jokes about garden design – one of Craven's passions – and also about the collecting of fossils – something that Longinius enthuses over in the play, and which was as a matter of fact, a hobby of the Margrave of Ansbach.

[47] *The Robbers, A Tragedy in Five Acts (and in Prose) translated and adapted from the German, As it was performed at Brandenburgh-House Theatre; 1798. With a Preface, Prologue and Epilogue written by Her Serene Highness the Margravine of Anspach* (London: W. Wig, 1799).

LE PHILOSOPHE MODERNE. COMÉDIE

FRENCH TEXT OF THE PLAY

Acteurs

M. Longinius,[1] oncle et tuteur d'Hortense, Intendant du Duc d'Ursol
Mlle Longinius, sa soeur
M. Duval, Lieutenant dans les Gardes du Roi
Hortense, Nièce de Longinius
Blaise, laquais paysan chez Longinius
Babet, petite servante, soeur de Blaise
Le Duc d'Ursol[2]
Le Marquis de Verdun
Le Vicomte de Richemont
Plusieurs autres Cavaliers
Des Chasseurs

ACTE I

Scène 1[3]

[*La scène représente un jardin –C'est la pointe du jour*.
Hortense entre suivie de Babet.]

Babet: Dame! Comme vous y allez! On diroit que vous courez un lièvre! –
Eh ben! Nous v'là dans la fin de notre voyage. – Q'y faire?
Hortense: Tais-toi, mon enfant! N'entends-tu rien?

[1] The name is possibly suggested by that of Cassius Longinus, a classical author and philosopher.
[2] The name Ursol may be an allusion to the Margrave of Ansbach's remote ancestor Albert the Bear, the first Margrave of Brandenburgh.
[3] In its format, the play follows French classical dramas, starting a new scene whenever a character enters or leaves. It conforms roughly to the classical unities, all the action taking place at Longinius's house in the course of a little more than a single day, from one morning to the next.

Babet: Et quoi donc? Le rossignol dort encore, Mamselle. Toutes les bêtes sont encore à ronfler sur leur litière; il n'y a que vous et moi sur pied. Et pourquoi?

Hortense: Écoute, Babet, vers la porte du jardin. N'entends-tu aucun bruit?

Babet: Non.

Hortense: J'ai prêté la clef du jardin à Monsieur Duval.—Il faut que je lui parle sans que personne nous voie – sans que personne nous entende.

Babet: Et moi, donc. J'avons deux yeux et deux oreilles. Je vous verrions –je vous entendrions.[4]

Hortense: Soit. Oh, pour toi, ma petite – tu rôderas pour voir que personne ne nous surprenne.

Babet: M'est avis que ce Monsieur Duval vous aime – et que le coeur vous en dit pour lui – Ah! Ah! J'entendrons vos discours – c'est bon –je saurions que dire quand j'aurions un amant aussi.[5]

Hortense: La folle! Ah! – j'entends quelque chose!

Babet: Oui! Oui! Le v'là! Le v'là.

Scène II. *Acteurs précédens. Duval entre.*

Duval: Quelle reconnaissance ne vous dois-je pas pour cette faveur, belle Hortense! Je puis enfin vous parler seule! Je puis –

Hortense: Je tremble qu'on ne nous surprenne! De grâce, Monsieur, dites au plus vite le secret que vous voulez me confier.[6]

Duval: [lui prend la main]. C'est un secret dont dépend le bonheur ou le malheur de mes jours. – Permettez que je m'adresse à votre Oncle pour obtenir votre main. Il y a plus d'un an que je vous adore, et je me suis souvent flatté que je ne vous étois pas absolument indifférent! Hortense – belle Hortense – par pitié! [*Il se jette à ses pieds.]*

Hortense: Relevez-vous, Monsieur Duval, relevez-vous donc! [*M. Duval lui baise la main à plusieurs reprises*]

Babet: Oh! qu'il est beau comme ça! – laissez lui donc votre main – comme c'est joli!

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[4] Throughout the play Babet and Blaise speak in *patois*, using the first person plural instead of the singular. Her observation that she will see and hear what Hortense does with Duval confirms what Longinius says later about all classes having the same organs and perceptions. Babet clearly is a reasoning person as she asks questions all the time about what they are doing and why.

[5] While comical, her remarks confirm that she is a rational being, and can learn by watching and listening.

[6] Correct modern spelling would be "grâce" but it has no circumflex anywhere in this text. This is perhaps an error of Craven's.

Hortense: Taisez-vous petite! Éloignez-vous! Relevez-vous, Monsieur!
Duval: Accordez-moi donc cette grâce! –
Hortense: Eh bien! Je vous l'accorde. [*Il se reléve*]. Mais à-présent parlons un peu de sang-froid. Croyez-vous que mon Oncle consentira jamais à notre union?
Duval: Pourquoi pas? Je ne suis pas riche, il est vrai, mais j'ai un petit bien – un métier qui mène à la gloire, aux honneurs, à la fortune. Il doit être flatté d'unir sa famille avec la mienne. Votre âge, votre coeur, est d'accord pour rendre notre mariage le plus heureux possible! Et puis votre volonté –
Hortense: Hélas! S'il n'étoit pour mon Oncle, mais il est mon tuteur aussi – et par le testament de feu mon père, je ne puis m'unir à personne sans son consentement.
Duval: Et pourquoi croyez-vous que je ne l'obtienne pas?
Hortense: C'est que je sais qu'il n'aime pas le militaire. Il croit qu'on n'est heureux – qu'on n'est grand que par la science, par la philosophie, par l'étude – que sais-je, moi?
Duval: L'est-il lui qui est toujours triste, toujours malade, est toujours collé sur des livres?
Hortense: Il croit qu'il est. Il m'a dit mille fois qu'une femme ne pouvoit être heureuse qu'avec un homme de lettres.
Babet: Quoi, il vous donneroit au Maître de Poste? Ce seroit joli – un vieux laid comme celui-là! Pouss! [*elle crache. Ils rient*]
Hortense: Tais-toi donc, et fais bien la sentinelle!
Duval: Enfin, il faut essayer. – je ne puis soutenir l'état de contrainte dans lequel je me trouve. Je lui peindrai si bien mon amour – mon estime pour vous –
Hortense: Parlez-lui plutôt de l'histoire naturelle, de causes morales et physiques; de la grande politique de l'Europe – de Newton – de Montagne[7] – d'Horace – de Platon; –de l'arrangement des jardins – de l'amélioration des terres – des inventions nouvelles en méchaniques – de –
Duval: Comment, il s'occupoit de toutes ces différentes sciences! Et les affaires du Duc d'Ursol? Comment trouvoit-il le tems de les arranger?
Hortense: Ah! Je tremble qu'il ne les oublie quelquefois; car quoiqu'il s'occupe depuis le matin jusqu'au soir à son bureau, il me semble qu'il embrasse trop de choses pour en finir une seule.

[7] The writer Montaigne.

Duval: En vérité, ce cher Longinius est un homme universel, mais n'a-t-il point de foible? – ne pourrois-je pas trouver un sujet sur lequel je pourrois flatter son amour-propre?

Hortense: Oh, oui; il voudroit qu'on le crût philosophe – et populaire surtout.

Duval: Philosophe et populaire? Cela ne s'accorde guère.

Hortense: Homme d'État – Patriote, –

Duval: Homme d'État et Patriote? Cela s'accorde encore moins selon le sens moderne du mot patriote.

Hortense: Enfin ménagez son humeur – flattez-le… j'y consens, pourvû qu'il ne vous refuse pas.

*Duval:*Vous me comblez de joie, charmante Hortense. Mais pour lui plaire, il faudroit qu'on devinât, laquelle de toutes ces choses lui tient à coeur à l'heure que je lui parlerai, car selon ce que vous me dites, il change tous les jours de caractère.

Hortense: Hélas, non! En le dépeignant, je vous ai fait un portrait incompréhensible –mais le voici! –

Babet: [*à courant*] Mlle! Mlle![8] voilà la Tante! Sauvez-vous, Monsieur!

Hortense: Non, restez, Monsieur. C'est plus que ma Tante – c'est mon Amie.

Scène III

Acteurs précédens. Mlle Longinius s'avance. Hortense lui baise la main. Elles s'embrassent.

Hortense: Ma tante! Monsieur Duval est ici pour plaider une cause où il faut absolument votre suffrage.

La Tante: Je la devine, mes enfants. Monsieur, j'ai toujours souhaité à ma Nièce un homme de votre caractère: franc, loyal, gai. – Votre figure me plaît aussi. – Il me semble que vous êtes faits l'un pour l'autre. Mais je vous conseille, Monsieur, de vous adresser directement à mon frère. – Il pense que notre sexe n'est fait que pour tromper ou pour être trompé, ainsi je gâterois votre cause en voulant la plaider auprès de lui.

Duval: Enseignez-moi au moins comment je peux lui plaire. Il a toujours été d'une grande réserve avec moi.

La Tante: Il l'est avec tout le monde. Je suis tentée de croire quelquefois que la moitié de son âme se défie de l'autre moitié. Il croit s'amuser de

[8] "Mle" in original text, but inconsistent.

toutes les sciences: –Aucune ne lui plait: Il a de l'ambition sans être d'accord avec lui-même quel en est le but!

Duval: C'est un beau portrait que vous faites-là, Mme; j'essayerai l'impossible pour le rendre favorable à mes voeux. Quel moment du jour voulez-vous que je me présente devant lui?

La Tante: Mais – après le dîner –s'il vous plait, –il aimoit la musique autrefois, et avant votre arrivée nous tacherons de l'égayer en lui faisant entendre quelques airs nouveaux.

Duval: Madame, vous êtes la bonté meme. Je vous quitte, belle Hortense – et jusqu'au moment de mon retour je ne cesserai d'étudier tous les moyens de me rendre agréable à Monsieur Longinius. Bon jour, Madame. Ne m'oubliez pas, Hortense! [*il sort*]

Scène IV. *Mlle Longinius, Hortense, Babet.*

Hortense: Je tremble que mon Oncle ne se refuse à ses prières!

La Tante: Espérons toujours, ma chère Nièce. [*Elle regarde sa montre*] Rentrons! Nous aurons à peine le tems de nous coëffer avant le dîner.[9]

Babet: [accourt] Madame! Monsieur a la jambe enflée. Il dit que c'est peut-être une goutte de vermichelle[10] qui lui est tombée–là. Il vouloit mettre ses bottines pour lanterner dans le jardin comme il fait tous les jours. Il y a bien fourré sa jambe droite – mais l'autre! Dame! C'est rétive[11] comme la bourrique de sa mère.

Hortense: Je n'entends jamais rien de son patois. Allons voir ce que c'est.

[Elle prend la Tante sous le bras. Elles rentrent.]

Scène V

[*La scène change et réprésente la chambre de Longinius. Il est en robe de chambre et bonnet de nuit, devant un bureau où il travaille. Blaise brosse*

[9] This must be a joke, since it is early morning. Craven was very impatient with the elaborate hair-styles of the time, which could take hours to arrange, and she often in private wore her hair loose or just casually bundled up. She wrote to the Margrave. "My head, when dressed, has no ornament but my own hair." Elizabeth Craven, *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople, With a Preface by the Author* (Enlarged edition, H. Colburn, Conduit Street, London: 1814), 296.

[10] Vermicello, Italian word for a little worm, can mean "vermilion". It was used to colour sealing-wax red, so I am hazarding that this is the meaning in this context.

[11] Craven wrote "retif" forgetting the agreement. She is probably using a saying that she remembers by ear.

son habit et regarde les jambes de son maître de tems en tems. Il huche les épaules – rit – siffle – se tait – etc.]

Longinius: Blaise! *[lit]* Le Courier de l'Europe. Voyons les nouvelles du jour, "une guerre civile chez les Marroquins"? – Cela n'est pas étonnant. Qu'ils sont loins ces pauvres Musulmans d'être civilisés! "La feuille de Lausanne: nouvelle économie sur les pommes de terre." Il est à présumer que l'arbre de pain d'Otaheite sera cultivée chez nous, alors les pommes de terre ne seront plus à la mode! – Traduction de la gazette angloise. "Nouvelle politique antibellonique par George Pacifique". –Je suis dégouté de ces gazettes angloises! Toujours les plaisanteries au milieu des choses les plus sérieuses! Ah! bon jour, Mesdames!

Scène VI

Mlle Longinius, Hortense, M. Longinius, Blaise, Babet.

La Tante: Bon jour, mon frère. Que faites-vous-là?
Longinius: Je parcourois les différentes gazettes. Le Courier de l'Europe nous apprend que –
Babet: Le Courier de Monseigneur m'a dit qu'on l'attendoit sous peu –
Longinius: Faites taire cette enfant. Vous voyez que son frère ne dit pas le mot. J'ai voulu faire du bien à ces deux êtres – Je me les suis attachés, –ils ont bien de la marge encore pour s'instruire en écoutant avant que de raisonner. Va-t-en, mon enfant! [*Babet s'en va*]

Scène VII

Acteurs Précédens, sans Babet.

La Tante: Elle m'a dit que vous aviez laissé tomber une goutte de vermichelle sur votre jambe gauche. Qu'est-ce que celà veut dire? – Vous êtes-vous brulé?
Longinius: Non, ma soeur! J'ai dit que je croyois avoir de l'érésipèle ou la goutte. Ma jambe est enflée. [*Blaise rit*].
Hortense: Permettez, mon oncle. Il y a quelque méprise dans ceci; car Blaise étouffe de l'envie qu'il a de nous expliquer cela. N'est-ce pas, Blaise? [*Il huche la tête*].[12]

[12] In modern French "hoche".