

Julia Gasper

Elizabeth Craven

Writer, Feminist and European

SERIES ON THE HISTORY OF ART

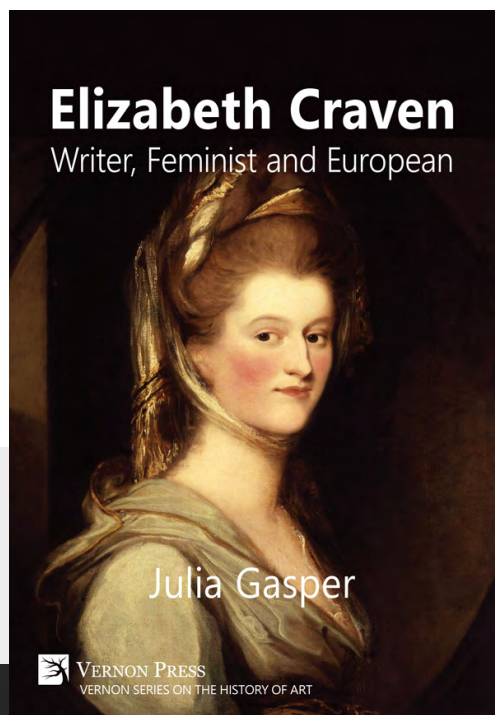
Summary

Elizabeth Craven's fascinating life was full of travel, love-affairs and scandals but this biography, the first to appear for a century, is the only one to focus on her as a writer and draw attention to the full range of her output, which raises her stature as an author considerably. Born into the upper class of Georgian England, she was pushed into marriage at sixteen to Lord Craven and became a celebrated society hostess and beauty, as well as mother to seven children. Though acutely conscious of her relative lack of education, as a woman, she ventured into writing poetry, stories and plays. Incompatibility and infidelities on both sides ended her marriage and she had to move to France where, living in seclusion, she wrote the little-known feminist work *Letters to Her Son*. In the years that followed, she travelled extensively all over Europe and turned her letters into a travelogue which is one of her best-known works. On her return she went to live in Germany as the companion and eventually second wife of the Margrave of Ansbach. At his court she organised and appeared in theatricals, and wrote several more plays of great interest, including *The Modern Philosopher*. In 1792 she and the Margrave settled in England, where they were never fully accepted by the more strait-laced pillars of society but mixed with all the musicians and actors and the more rakish of the Regency set. Craven continued to put on her own theatricals and write for the theatre. In her old age, she moved to Naples where

she passed her time sailing, gardening and writing her *Memoirs*. Even in her final years, scandal dogged her, and Craven made her feminist principles and criticisms of the laws of marriage apparent through her involvement in the notorious divorce case of Queen Caroline.

About the author

Julia Gasper got her doctorate in English Literature at Somerville College, Oxford. Her first book, *The Dragon and the Dove: The Plays of Thomas Dekker*, was published by Oxford University Press in the Oxford English Monographs series (1990). She is the translator and editor of the *Modern Philosopher and Other Works by Elizabeth Craven* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2017), a collection of three texts including *Letters to Her Son*. Her other recent books include *Theodore von Neuhoff, King of Corsica: The Man Behind the Legend* (University of Delaware Press USA, 2012) and *The Marquis d'Argens: A Philosophical Life* (Lexington Books USA, 2014), a critical biography of the French Enlightenment author and philosopher. She has taught for Stanford University in Oxford, the Open University, and the University of Surrey at Roehampton.



June 2017 | Hardback 236x160mm | 334 Pages | ISBN: 978-1-62273-275-3
Also in Paperback (\$57/€46/£41) | ISBN: 978-1-62273-338-5

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