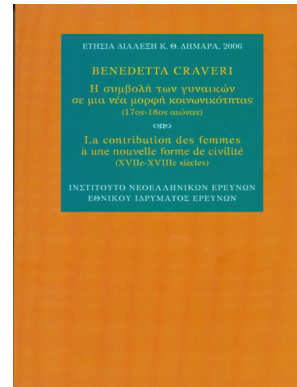




INSTITUTE FOR NEOHELLENIC RESEARCH
NATIONAL HELLENIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION



Benedetta Craveri,

***Η συμβολή των γυναικών σε μια νέα μορφή κοινωνικότητας (17ος-18ος αιώνας) /
La contribution des femmes à une nouvelle forme de civilité (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles).***

Translation: Roxane D. Argyropoulou.

Annual C. Th. Dimaras Lecture -2006, INR/NHRF , Athens 2007, 107 p.

This lecture brings to the fore a new form of female social behaviour predominating in the world of French letters and politics during the 17th and 18th centuries. Studying the prevalence of women of the aristocracy and the urban class in French society, Professor Benedetta Craveri focuses on the influence they exerted on ethics, language, art, literature, psychological and moral thought, and religious belief.

In Renaissance and counter-Reformation Europe women were to be found in the margins of political and social life. In France, however, from the 16th century on, women of the aristocracy enjoyed a more liberal treatment. Yet their social presence was to take a decisive turn from the very early 17th century, when they gained control of the new form of liberation that came about under the guise of entertainment within the courtly premises of Versailles or those of rich private houses. Distancing themselves from the atmosphere of the court and Cardinal Richelieu, certain women of the aristocracy embraced the Fronde Movement, turning to the Jansenism of Port-Royal and at the same time becoming the arbiters of etiquette, good taste, the French language and literature. They also took a keen interest in the education of girls. In the manuals published at the time they aimed to form both the “honest” man – the model of the morality of the period – and the “honest” woman.

In the salons of the 17th century *Précieuses*, an art of living was created in Paris arousing the admiration and curiosity of the whole of Europe. Outstanding in the circle of the *Précieuses* were the cousin of Louis XIV la Grande Mademoiselle, Madame de Maintenon, esteemed writers such as Madeleine de Scudéry, Madame de La Fayette, Madame de Sévigné, who left chefs-d’oeuvres of French culture. The salons were frequented by figures of French classicism: La Rochefoucauld, Racine, La Bruyère. They were succeeded in the 18th century by other significant personalities of Parisian life: Madame de Lambert, Ninon de Lenclos, Madame de Tencin, Julie de Lespinasse, Madame du Deffand, the Duchess du Maine, Madame Geoffroy, Madame Necker were to encourage their select guests, Montesquieu, Voltaire, the Encyclopaedists in their work. Despite the fatal blow dealt to the *ancien régime* by the French Revolution, this social phenomenon, later preserved, represented not only the expression of French culture but in general a chapter of the Feminist movement.

Χορηγός της έκδοσης
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