

# National Centre of Biography, ANU

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## Biography Workshop

Gabrielle Carey

### **‘Only Happiness Here’: The Life and Work of Elizabeth von Arnim**

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Date: Thursday 29 August 2019  
Venue: Jean Martin Room,  
Beryl Rawson Building,  
13 Ellery Cres, ANU  
Time: 11:00 am until c. 12.30 pm  
Contact: [Nicole.McLennan@anu.edu.au](mailto:Nicole.McLennan@anu.edu.au)

Born in Australia in 1866 as Mary Beauchamp, Elizabeth von Arnim was the author of 21 best-selling novels, a lover of H.G. Wells, a Prussian Countess and the wife—for a short time—of Francis Russell, brother of Bertrand. She was also Katherine Mansfield’s cousin and the two writers had an intense, if occasionally prickly, relationship.

Von Arnim’s first book *Elizabeth and her German Garden*, published in 1898 under the pen name ‘Elizabeth’ was an instant best-seller; her last book, *Mr Skeffington*, published in 1940, just months before she died, was made into a film starring Bette Davis and Claude Rains.



Portrait of Mary Beauchamp, c. 1869 (David Norton family archive)

In the words of Australian biographer Verna Coleman, ‘Elizabeth was a mountain of vanity and had the will power to fight for what she thought her due. A powerful personality—fearless, determined, able, clever. She created a persona that took her to comparative heights for an Australian-born intruder of no class standing. Talented, musical, petite and pretty—definitely a girl from far away, even a girl from nowhere. This was the girl that was to become a tough-minded Prussian aristocrat and a dryly comic observer of European and English life.’

DR GABRIELLE CAREY published her first co-written book, *Puberty Blues*, in 1979. She has since written biography, autobiography, memoir, essays and articles. Her book, *Moving Among Strangers: Randolph Stow and My Family* (UQP 2013), was the joint winner of the 2014 Prime Minister’s Award for Non-Fiction and short-listed for the 2015 National Biography Award. In 2017 Carey was awarded a NLA Fellowship to research *Falling Out of Love with Ivan Southall* (ASP 2018), chiefly through Southall’s vast correspondence with his young readers. Carey teaches non-fiction writing at the University of Technology Sydney. She was the 2019 H.C. Coombs Creative Arts Fellow and is a Visiting Fellow at the School of History at ANU. Gabrielle is currently working on a biography of Elizabeth von Arnim.