



The INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
**Victorian
 Women Writers**
Newsletter

Director's Cut

BY CAROLYN OULTON

'Nice to see you.' [Trans: 'No, we are never in this life going to meet for lunch'].

Who says the English are hard to understand?

But if that one takes a bit of decoding, the UK census tells – and hides – more complex stories. We still don't know what happened in 1921, because Covid has delayed the release date. But 100 years later, that didn't stop us imagining what Sarah Grand might have done that day. With clues from our student writers, we had her defying the laws of time and turning up all over @KentMaps1. You can try it with your own students on page 6.

Another Victorian / 20C boundary crosser, Canterbury's Mary Tourtel lost her 2020 centenary to Covid. But as the Beaney House of Art and Knowledge prepares to welcome us back into the archive, Emma Williams reminds us why everyone needs a bear called Rupert.

Kent may be named after a variant (or is it the other way round)? But across the garden of England birds are singing, things are growing that may well be flowers, and the sea is so romantic in the breeze. Although try telling that to Mary Godwin as she crosses the channel, while Percy Shelley bangs on about how beautiful she looks seasick.

Speaking of characters who look like death, shall we do a poll soon on crime v ghost stories? We nominate Dominique Gracia to adjudicate - when she's not coding for Kent Maps, she's often to be found contemplating living statues and dining with the dead.

Or for something a little less chilling, why not try a Rhoda Broughton 'hot-boiler'? As Graziella Stringos reminds us, no-one knows more about women under pressure. With the possible exception of Graziella herself, as she sets about organising (yet another deferred) centenary conference in collaboration with VPFA.

These are not easy times for the Humanities. But as someone generously commented a few years ago, seeing a photo of a raucous ICVWW event on facebook while she was fighting for her job 100 miles away, 'These are my people.'

Wherever you are today and whatever your situation, you're very much our people. Let's get together and have lunch soon.



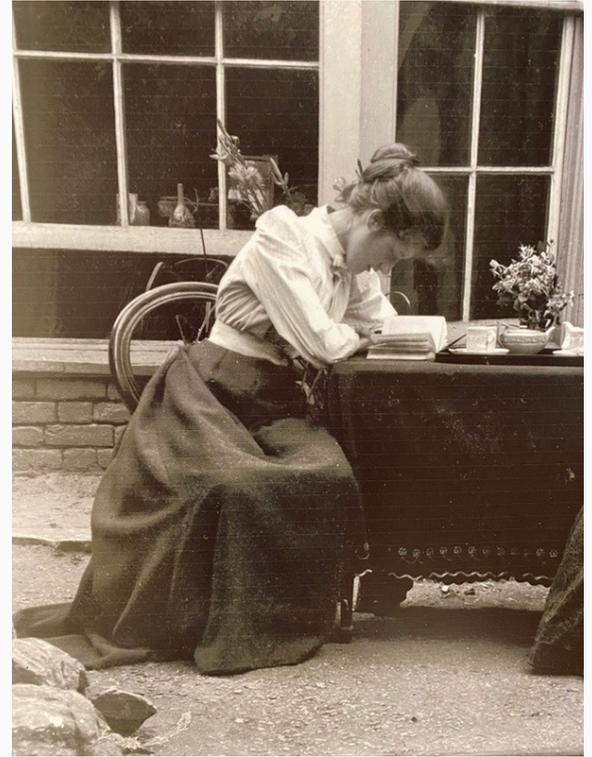
OUT OF THE ARCHIVE

TEXT AND IMAGES BY EMMA WILLIAMS OF THE BEANEY HOUSE OF ART AND KNOWLEDGE, CANTERBURY

all images ©Canterbury Museums and Galleries.

Remembering Mary Tourtel

2020 was the centenary of Rupert Bear's creation and a perfect opportunity to celebrate a mainstay of British culture and its creator. However, as we all know, 2020 did not go quite to plan and as such, Mary Tourtel (1874 – 1948), his creator, missed her much-needed moment in the spotlight. The Beaney's Rupert exhibition sadly was never opened due to the lockdown restrictions, and as a result this key opportunity for Canterbury to learn about Rupert and Mary, was missed.



Mary was foremost an illustrator, but she also wrote Rupert's stories. She studied at the Sidney Cooper Art School and won many awards for her artwork. It was there where she met her husband-to-be Herbert Tourtel, a journalist and sub-editor for the Daily Express, when he requested an artist at the school to illustrate one of his poetry books.

Herbert persuaded his wife to submit drawings to the Daily Express. It was her Rupert, who was originally called the 'Little Lost Bear', which became an immediate success and was used in 1919 as a rival to other newspapers' animal characters. Unlike the Rupert we know today, Mary's Rupert was more ursine, with smaller ears and more fur.



From the mid-Twenties Tourtel's stories of Rupert became more imaginative, with elements of magic and fairy tales and the storylines became more elaborate as time went on, helping to create the unique and immersive world of Rupert Bear. Unfortunately, the combination of Mary's failing eyesight and her husband's death in 1931, led to her stepping down from writing and drawing the Rupert stories. Mary died from a brain tumour, after collapsing in Canterbury High Street, on 15th March 1948 aged 74. She is buried with her husband's ashes in St Martin's Church graveyard.

...STILL IN THE ARCHIVE



Despite her creation's international success and fame, her death went almost unnoticed. There were no obituaries and Mary seemingly faded from memory. Regardless of her grave being in Canterbury, with multiple plaques and even a road named after her, her significance in Canterbury has waned. However, she is not being allowed to simply fade into the past. In addition to the previously mentioned Rupert centenary exhibition, there are plans for Mary to feature in a new case in the Garden Room in the Beaney, which will showcase animals and art.

You can read more about Mary Tourtel at the [Kent Digital Maps](https://kent-maps.online/20c/20c-tourtel-biography/) <https://kent-maps.online/20c/20c-tourtel-biography/>



The more familiar modern day image of Rupert.
Elliott Simpson / Museum of Canterbury with Rupert Bear Museum

INTERVIEW WITH A GUEST

Dominique Gracia

Independent academic and Project Manager on the Oxford English Faculty's Telling Our Story Better project, volunteer with the Kent Maps Online project and the UK Administrative Director for the Collaborative Organization for Virtual Education.



What is your current research project?

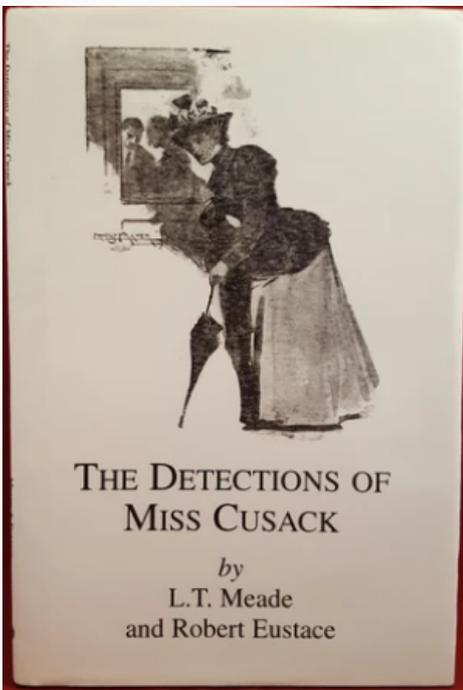
I've just submitted an entry on ekphrasis for the Palgrave *Encyclopaedia of Victorian Women's Writing*, so now I'm doing revisions on a chapter for an edited collection about adaptation that looks beyond adapting books for film/TV. It's about DG Rossetti's doubleworks, self-adaptation, (obsessively) repetitive content, etc.

What would be your dream research project?

I've spent a little while writing about detective stories (Victorian and not), but I'm now circling back to thinking about the relationship between artworks and texts, which was my PhD focus. I did a talk recently on vengeful living statues for the Romancing the Gothic project (run by Dr Sam Hirst), and I'm developing it into a chapter for an edited collection. I want to use that to do some more thinking about statues, real and literary, and the current 'statue discourse' that seems to be preoccupying lots of our political news. I'm generally interested in topics where I think the nineteenth century can shed light on whatever's going on in our current moment, which is most areas!

Critical sources you can't live without?

Because I'm writing across adaptation studies, literary criticism, and art history at the moment, I'm having to absorb some new core texts that I can't live without if I'm going to get my chapter into good shape! Work by critics like Kamilla Elliott and Thomas Leitch, for example. In terms of the already well-thumbed, they mostly have to do with how media "talk" to each other and "work" on us. That means lots of Friedrich Kittler and work by people like Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan, plus criticism on ekphrasis by scholars like Murray Krieger and WJT Mitchell, and Ana Rueda's work on Pygmalion and Galatea.



LOVEDAY EXPLAINED THE WHOLE THING.

What is your favourite work by a Victorian female writer?

It's hard to have just one! I wrote about Vernon Lee and Michael Field in my PhD, and I continue to love them for their life stories, their ideas, and the mix of genres they've left for us to study. I've spent lots of time poring over detective short fiction, too, like CL Pirakis' Loveday Brooke stories and LT Meade's Miss Cusack. If I had to choose one thing, though, it would be [Vernon] Lee's Hauntings: Fantastic Stories.



If you could have three Victorians round for dinner, who would you have, and why? Would it be more entertaining to have people who didn't know each other well, or people who did? There's something fascinating about eavesdropping on a clique, or a family group. The Rossettis? Or even the Harmsworths? I'd probably have to go for an eclectic mix, to not waste my chances of learning something new, though. Maybe Charles Booth (I love looking at my area of East London on his maps), Edith Ellis (née Lees), and Vernon Lee?

Writer and women's activist Edith Ellis, with her husband Havelock [WikiCommons]

ICVWW ANTICS AND EVENTS

Sarah Grand's Census Day

BY CAROLYN OULTON

On 21st March 2021, ICVWW took part in the National UK census by imagining what Sarah Grand would have been doing to celebrate the day. Follow the clues and links through our new site [Kent Maps](#) and find out what she got up to!

The vote has been won – suffragist Sarah Grand can finally relax. But where is she? Follow the clues (and take a few liberties of your own with literary history), as we play Sarah Grand's Census Day! You can ONLY follow links between pages, no visiting the home page.

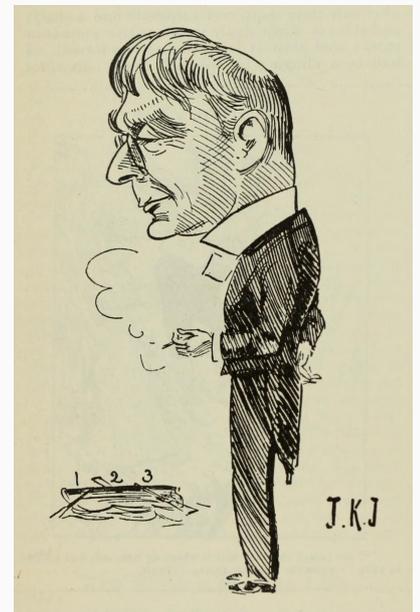


Clue 1 - Grand takes a trip to Herne Bay where she enjoys a morning cigarette with a fellow suffragist writer. She is keen to discuss "the woman of to-day, whose food is fruit of the tree of knowledge...whose drink is the intoxicating ether of freedom and independence." Who is she with?

Not easy, is it? Congratulations if you got that one! She's with [Mary Pendered](#) Or at least she was a minute ago...



Clue 2 - During their discussion, Pendered let slip that a man has been rude about Grand in *The Idler*. She travels south, but finds that he hasn't been home in years. Anyway, if she's honest, *Three Men on the Bummel* was not all it was cracked up to be.



Hmm. Not quite up to *Three Men in a Boat*, perhaps. Sorry [Jerome K. Jerome](#). Anyway it seems to have been a heated exchange. Where has she gone to let off steam?

Clue 3 - After leaving Jerome K. Jerome Grand takes a short walk on the beach, in this town which reminds her of her home. But which resort is she in?



Looks a bit windy there. A passer-by says a woman on a bicycle nearly got blown off. So she WAS in Folkestone. We've missed her by a few minutes.

Clue 4 - Grand escapes to an imaginary world by visiting one of Folkestone's most stimulating attractions. As she browses, she is happy to find that they have a copy of her scandalous novel, *The Heavenly Twins*.



That's right, Folkestone Free Library. Nothing like requesting your own book to get people talking. Ahem. So we're told. The next clue isn't easy - just don't go too far if you want to SEA the LADY...

1



Clue 5 - In the library, she overhears two gentlemen whispering about a local New Woman author. She decides to visit his 'spade house' before leaving this coastal town. Confronting him about his morals leads them to an intriguing, lively conversation. They speak of film and of travel.

You're doing WELLS to have got this far! But you know campaigners, they never sit still. Where has she gone now?

Clue 6 - For lunch, Grand visits another author to hear tales of his time spent at sea. She cuts up some fruit as she listens to his first voyage as Captain. The Polish author is happy to have a keen listener. He tells of his childhood; how his chance of an education was stolen.



Clearly Grand and Conrad had plenty to talk about. Then she suddenly rushed out, saying she had to see for herself. What was that all about?

Clue 7 - Conrad compared his education to that of his biographer, whose education journals are kept at The King's School. Grand says her goodbyes and with curiosity thinks of her own brothers' education, on her way to Canterbury.



Walpole seems to have enjoyed his time at King's. But which fictional school did it inspire? Maybe.

Clue 8 -During her visit to the King's School, Grand notices a certain *Bildungsroman novel* left open on a table. She flicks it open, - is it as good as Great Expectations, she wonders?

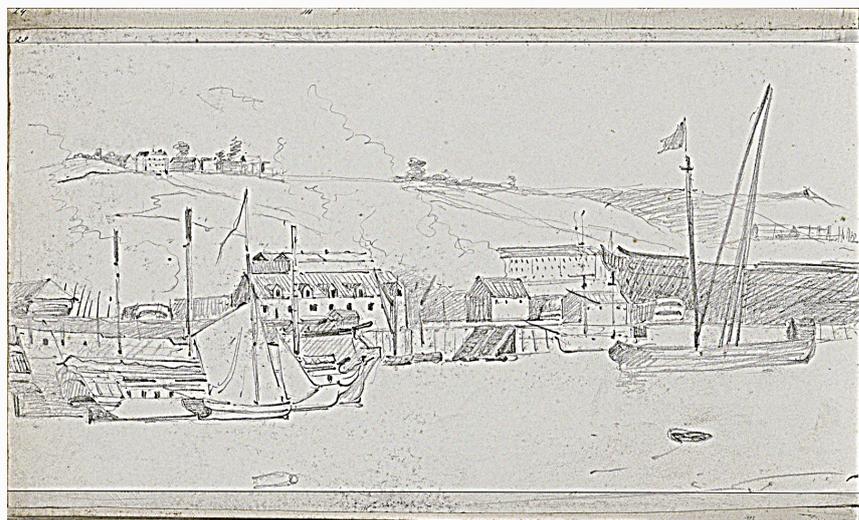


David Copperfield was Dickens's favourite of his own novels. But Canterbury wasn't the only cathedral town he put in his novels.

Clue 9 - "These pages must show." (Copperfield) Grand knows that Dickens's Pip spent time in a certain 'marsh country' described as "mudbank, mist, swamp." This area is named after its river.



1



Grand has enjoyed a walk along the Medway. But you're just too late to catch her. She was last seen heading for a nearby port. If you're quick you'll catch her...

Grand and others campaigned for the repeal of some infamous 1860s legislation. She's round here somewhere. But can you find her in time for the census?



You've found her! Yes, she's spending the evening thinking just how far she and her fellow women have come. How did you spend this historic night?

Find out more about Sarah Grand at <https://kent-maps.online/19c/19c-grand-biography/>



Found a Kent connection we don't know about? Contributors very welcome to the site - drop us an email at ICVWW@canterbury.ac.uk if you'd like to take part!

ROMANTIC TRAVELLERS: WOMEN WRITING DOVER AND THE CHANNEL CROSSING, 1789-1815

BY SUSAN CIVALE

We often assume that no one was traveling between England and France between 1789 and 1815, the period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, but it turns out that a host of intrepid Romantics made the journey, and lived to write about it in their poems, novels, memoirs, travelogues, letters, and diaries. Writers as diverse as Frances Burney, Hester Thrale Piozzi, Maria Edgeworth, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Robinson, Mary and Percy Shelley, Dorothy and William Wordsworth, and Lord Byron all crossed the Channel during this time, with most of them setting sail from Dover. French historian Fernand Braudel has emphasised the significance of making the journey at this time, asking:

What traveller, leaving Calais, or arriving in Dover, could fail to think that he was leaving one frontier and meeting another?

And yet in the accounts of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Robinson, and the Shelleys, in particular, the geopolitical stakes of the journey take a backseat to other, more personal concerns. The obvious dangers of European travel in a time of revolution and war are subsumed by a preoccupation with the ordeals of their own romantic (and Romantic) lives. Instead, their writing traces a movement between places that becomes the implicit framework for a transition between identities, “frontiers” of a different kind.

Percy and Mary Shelley (aged 21 and 16 respectively), for example, travelled from Dover to Calais and then across Europe in the Summer of 1814, eloping to the continent against the wishes of Mary’s father, William Godwin, and in spite of the fact that Percy was

already married. Descriptions of their journey can be found in the co-authored *History of a Six Weeks’ Tour* (1817) and in the less censored entries from Percy’s diary. For Percy, Dover symbolises the starting point of his new life with his beloved, and their freedom from the obligations and restrictions of their old lives: “she was in my arms—we were safe; we were on our road to Dover”.



His diary entries convey an elation at being reunited with his beloved (“Mary was ill as we travelled, yet in that illness what pleasure and security did we not share!”) and revel in their physical intimacy (“She lay in my arms through the night [...] her head in rest on my bosom”).

The published account elides these details, however, making no mention of the risks to Mary’s reputation, family ties, and social status, or their mutual anxieties about being pursued, caught, and forcibly separated. Instead, Mary uses the boat trip, storm, and sunset to render the stakes of this journey figuratively. The voyage begins on a “beautiful” evening but the waters soon become “so violent” as to render Mary afraid for her life: “the waves rushed into the boat: even the sailors acknowledged that our situation was perilous”. When the couple finally reaches Calais safely, she records how she awoke “from a comfortless sleep, and saw the sun rise broad, red, and cloudless over the pier”. Emerging from a dark night of illness and mortal danger to see the sunrise on the French coast suggests a rebirth or a hopeful new beginning. Traveling across the Channel marks a frontier crossing not only physically but also personally, a transition from one identity to another.

A change of status is also at the heart of Mary Robinson’s “Stanzas Written between Dover and Calais, July 20, 1792”, an autobiographical poem which sees her leaving behind her country and her unfaithful lover, and risking hostile shores to forge a newfound identity as a single woman. She wrote this poem three years after the start of the French Revolution, at a time when traffic across the Channel had started to become restricted. The title of the poem registers the political, historical, and geographical contexts of its composition, even if the lines themselves focus more on the failed relationship between Robinson and her lover, Banastre Tarleton. The poem ostensibly characterises Robinson as a figure of suffering, a woman jilted by an unworthy lover whose feelings are “Wav’ring as the passing wind”. In contrast to his infidelity and inconstancy, she emphasises her own loyalty and devotion over the course of their ten-year relationship. She will not “seek a cure” in “ranging” but will bear the pain of loss. She “disdains the thought of changing, / proudly destin’d to endure”. There is perhaps an irony to a disavowal of “ranging” in a poem whose title makes explicit her international mobility. And yet the poem stages an opposition between two kinds of movement, one physical, and the other metaphorical. Verbs such as “wander”, “flies”, “go”, “lead”, “waft”, and “part” relate to Robinson’s actual journey through space. But this physical movement is the reaction to her lover’s fickle affections which are figured, metaphorically, in kinetic terms (he has a “vagrant mind” and a “bosom prone to ranging”; he is a “rover”). As such, the poem treads some rather fine lines, raising a distinction between movement that is self-willed and movement that is compelled, and courting the sympathies of the reader whilst also profiting by the publication of a poem (first printed in a national newspaper, *The Oracle*, in August 1792) based on her private life. The poem ends with her arrival in Calais and an affirmation of the finality of her separation from Tarleton (“Now we part – TO MEET NO MORE”) which can be seen as a last lament for the past or as a first step in a new path ahead. Either way Robinson’s status has changed by the end of the poem. Crossing the Channel also marks a transition into a new state of being, however unwanted.

Like Robinson, Mary Wollstonecraft also writes about Dover in conjunction with the dissolution of a romantic relationship. In the Autumn of 1795 Wollstonecraft returned to Britain from the continent, having cut her planned expedition short on account of the “presence of the French army”. In the final epistle of her *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), her description of her homecoming is saturated in feelings of weariness and dejection. Her private letters tell us more. She longs desperately for home: “no poor tempest-tossed mariner ever more earnestly longed to arrive at his port”. But at the same time she worries that her lover, Gilbert Imlay, has “formed some new attachment” and despairs at arriving because she “has no place to go to” and knows she will be “landing without having any friend to receive me”.

The placelessness Wollstonecraft feels is both physical and relational. Dover seems a “dirty place”, and its white cliffs “insignificant”, to her not only because – as she implies – Dover pales in comparison to the grander Scandinavian topographies she has lately viewed, but because it no longer restores to her the sense of home and security she craves. If spatial relations are bound up with social relations, as modern critic Sara Mills has suggested, the rejection Wollstonecraft experiences – or anticipates experiencing – from her lover is figured in her writing as a feeling of displacement. Her return home is soured by the realisation that she is indeed alone. By the end of her journey her sense of herself has shifted, such that her long-awaited return home ironically sees her questioning not only who she is but where she belongs.

All of these writers figure their Channel crossings—either to or from Dover—not only as a movement from one place, or one country, to another, but also as a transition between states of being. Though the political implications of their journeys do not take centre-stage, they do comprise the implicit framework on which are layered other kinds of frontiers to be crossed. These texts map shifts in identity onto physical movements through space, implicitly combating the static notion of a woman’s ‘place’ with a sense of female mobility and change, and yet also highlighting the gendered aspects of travel, and its records, during the period.



Mary Robinson by Thomas Gainsborough
[WikiCommons]

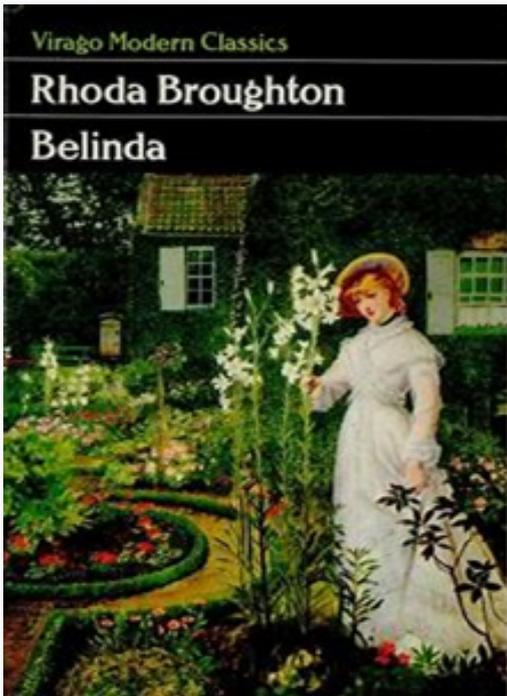
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PROFILE OF A FORGOTTEN WRITER

BY GRAZIELLA STRINGOS

Queen of the Circulating Library: Rhoda Broughton (1840-1920)



My first encounter with Rhoda Broughton was purely accidental. I was browsing through the nineteenth-century novels section in our university library when I spotted a Virago edition of *Belinda* tucked in between well-known novels. I was then still looking for my focus for my doctoral degree and was unsure of the direction I wanted to take. I had never heard of Broughton before but the title, bearing a woman's name, and the synopsis, referencing a nod to George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, intrigued me.

I remember devouring the novel; reading Broughton's Victorian 'hot-boiler' felt like a breath of fresh air. I was hooked. Years of reading and research have made me more appreciative of Broughton's fiction although her aptitude was obvious from the beginning: the wit, the humour, the dialogue, the passion, the spirited (inevitably unfortunate) heroines, the psychology and yes, the sentimentalism too. Of course, I cannot forget to mention the dogs!

The Welsh writer Rhoda Broughton was born on 29th November, 1840 to the Reverend and Jane Delves-Broughton, the third child of four. Instructed at home by her own scholarly father, Broughton knew Greek, Latin and the English classics well. She developed a love for French literature, evident in her recreation of French heroines and the rewriting of familiar plots, but was also well-versed in other modern languages, including German and Italian. Her friend, Ethel Arnold, described her as possessing 'a mind so richly stored with "the best that has been thought and said in the world"', highlighting her deep knowledge of poetry and her love of Shakespeare's plays, most of which she knew by heart.

At the age of twenty-two, most probably inspired by a novel by Anne Thackeray Ritchie, she started writing fiction, and encouraged by her uncle-in-law, the mystery and ghost-story writer, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, she published her first novel, *Cometh up as a Flower* in 1867; the revised *Not Wisely but too Well* appeared shortly after. Broughton is the author of more than twenty novels and of a number of short stories, the latter featuring supernatural and mystery elements. Her first works were two- and three-decker novels, very popular at the time, but her strength undoubtedly lay in shorter narratives and she wisely resorted to the one-volume form, where she revealed skill and depth. These little gems include the satirical masterpiece, *Mamma* and the deeply psychological, *The Devil and the Deep Sea* and *Between Two Stools*. Indeed, somewhat distortedly, Broughton's fame has rested on her first few novels, which, in her time, earned her the reputation of an audacious writer to be henceforth associated with the sensation genre. Margaret Oliphant and Geraldine Jewsbury, for instance, were shocked with her choice of subject matter and her delineation of passionate young women in love.

Broughton's novels do contain sensational elements, like skeletons in the closet, madness, adultery and (contemplated) suicide but they are essentially domestic in setting and in sentiment. Interested in anything a woman's heart feels and desires, her major contribution to Victorian literature is unarguably her crowded canvas of compelling female characters: her multiple windows into female consciousness corroborate her insight into female psychology. Her relentless depiction of unconventional young women (often motherless or orphans) who are awakened to their sensuality and sexuality and who fall in love ardently and permanently is remarkable: Nell Le Strange, Kate Chester, Lenore Herrick and Belinda Churchill are among the most captivating heroines in the popular fiction of the period. Moreover, as various critics, including Pamela K. Gilbert, Tamar Heller and Lyn Pykett, claim, Broughton's classification as a sensation writer is mainly linked to her close and repeated representation of the body of woman, which is in turn used for the exploration of important issues like class, gender, education and profession. This is clearly the case in *A Beginner* and *A Fool in her Folly*, for instance, where the literary aspirations of two young women are cruelly thwarted, particularly due to their gender. Similarly, a young woman's search for a meaningful life is at the heart of *Not Wisely*, *Belinda* and *Dear Faustina*. This is not to say that her male characters are devoid of interest as has often been argued: the erring John Talbot in *Doctor Cupid*, the effeminate Rupert Campion in *Lavinia* and the distressed artist Ned Bromley in *Concerning a Vow* are only a few of her absorbing male portraits.



Broughton's literary career spanned more than fifty years: she experimented with the sensation, mystery, domestic, social and New Woman novel as well as with satire and romance. She was certainly indebted to her predecessors, particularly, Jane Austen and the Brontës, as well as contemporary French authors but she herself eventually became an inspiration to emergent writers, including the young Edith Wharton. She had her fair share of criticism, which greatly disturbed her, and was also the subject of caricatures but she was undeterred and continued producing on average a novel every two years until her death in 1920.

With a mountain that bears her name and with Prime Minister E. W. Gladstone counting as one of her fans, Broughton was herself a character worthy of attention. She was renowned for her witty conversation, her erudition and her no-nonsense attitude. By friends she was considered fiercely loyal, generous and compassionate. When living in Oxford and London, she formed important friendships in the literary world, most notable of which are those with Mary Belloc Lowndes, Thomas Hardy and Henry James. Regrettably, a very private person, Broughton destroyed her correspondence during her last illness.

Along with many of her contemporary popular rivals, Broughton has now, for the last few decades, been given more critical notice, and can boast a critical biography by Marilyn Wood entitled *Rhoda Broughton: Profile of a Novelist*, written in 1991, and an ever-growing number of critical articles and chapters that highlight her various contributions to the Victorian and early-twentieth-century literary market.



The 'Rhoda Broughton and her Contemporaries: A Centenary Conference', organised by the VPFA and co-organised by Dr. Graziella Stringos, will be held online on Saturday, 11th September, 2021. Registration opening soon.