

“Brigid Brophy ... in
Transition”:
Call for Papers



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In 2015, I and the ECW team at the University of Northampton ran a two-day international conference to celebrate all aspects of Brigid Brophy's literary career, as well as her leading contributions to animal rights, vegetarianism, anti-vivisectionism, humanism, feminism and her advocacy of the Public Lending Right.

Brophy (1929-1995) wrote books of all kinds in all genres. The 600-page monograph *Prancing Novelist: A Defence of Fiction in the Form of a Critical Biography in Praise of Ronald Firbank* (1973) may have created a genre. Her fiction career began with the short-story volume *The Crown Princess* (1953), followed by seven novels, each entirely unlike its predecessors. *Hackenfeller's Ape* (1953) concerned the relationship between an ape at London Zoo and a Professor observing the animal's mating rituals. *The King of a Rainy Country* (1956) depicted a set of Bohemians in post-war London and Venice. *Flesh* (1962) portrayed the erotic tutelage of an inexperienced husband by his wife.

The Finishing Touch (1963, revised 1987), set in a girls' finishing school in the South of France, offered a fully-realised homage towards Ronald Firbank. It also saw art historian and Soviet spy Anthony Blunt portrayed in fictional guise as the Headmistress. The novel out-Brodied Miss Jean Brodie, responding creatively to Muriel Spark's 1961 novel. *The Snow Ball* (1964) reflected Brophy's devotion to Mozart, its protagonists attending a ball dressed as characters from Don Giovanni with dramatic consequences. *In Transit* (1969) remains one of a handful of English novels to conceal entirely the anatomical sex of its chief protagonist, with the further, rare distinction of being set in an airport departure lounge. *The Adventures of God in His Search for the Black Girl* (1973) punned on George Bernard Shaw's 1932 parable about religious faith. *Palace without Chairs* (1978), Brophy's last novel, a playful dialogue questioning the nature of democracy, was also inspired by Shaw.

Brophy's radio play *The Waste Disposal Unit* was broadcast and published in 1964. *The Burglar* (1967), her only published stage play, had a West End run starring Jim Dale and Sian Phillips, directed by Frank Dunlop. *Pussy Owl: Superbeast* (1976) was Brophy's sole work of children's fiction. Non-fiction writings include *Black Ship to Hell* (1962), a psychoanalytic account of man's destructive and self-destructive temperament, *Mozart the Dramatist* (1964; revised 1990), *Black and White: a Portrait of Aubrey Beardsley* (1968) and also *Beardsley and His World* (1976), the aforementioned *Prancing Novelist* (1973), a work of children's non-fiction with illustrations entitled *The Prince and the*

Wild Geese (1982), the collections *Don't Never Forget* (1966), *Baroque 'n' Roll* (1987) and *Reads* (1989), and the iconoclastic and controversial *Fifty Works of Literature We Could Do Without* (1967), for which Brophy collaborated with Michael Levey and Charles Osborne.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *In Transit*, the first edited book collection concerning Brophy will appear. Entitled *Brigid Brophy in Transition*, it embraces her lives and writings in all their diversity, originality and achievement.

Proposal:

- promiscuous and versatile concerning length and form
- send what you want, not what you think the editor(s) want(s)
- perhaps 10k as an upper limit (but do try to break the rules)
- short stuff too (haiku is probably minimum length)
- MLA latest style for academic contributions preferred, but open to other forms of presentation for other contributions
- creative responses longed for, including poems, paw prints, stories, drama, reminiscence, invention, polemic, journalism, photographs, art, T-shirts
- contributions from all conference participants welcome, whether they feature in the forthcoming CWW special issue on BB or not – do write something else!
- non-academics, lay scholars, enthusiasts, PhD students and readers welcome
- feel free to write about women, men, uncertain, changeable or “other” – or any combination of these [non-] “species”
- feel free to self-describe as male, female or any preferred designation

Proposed Contributors include:

- Richard Canning, on Brophy's Firbank and Decoding *The Princess Zoubaroff*
- Gary Francione and other canines, on Brophy's theory of animal rights
- Gerri Kimber, on Brophy's Katherine Mansfield and her Colette
- Kate Levey, Brophy's daughter
- Jill Longmate, t.b.c.
- Robert Mackay, t.b.c.

- Peter Parker, on Brophy's Firbank, *Prancing Novelist* and non-fictional method
- Sam Reese, on Brophy's 1950s short stories and early novels
- Kim Stallwood, "A Felicitous Day for Fish"
- Carole Sweeney, t.b.c.

Proposed publication: November 2019

Proposed final submission date: October 2018

Proposed publisher: range of US/UK University Presses approached, once abstracts confirmed

Proposed remuneration: at least 2 copies, more and/or a fee if resources allow

Reminder: the UK REF criteria (for English and all other areas) does not discriminate on grounds of place or form of publication

Abstracts, 100-300 words, by January 31st, 2018, with 'Brophy' in the subject line to: richard.canning@northampton.ac.uk