

Advance Information

The Milliner and the Phrenologist Kay Syrad

* An ambitious and compelling debut novel—a Victorian narrative that taps into the current *zeitgeist*.

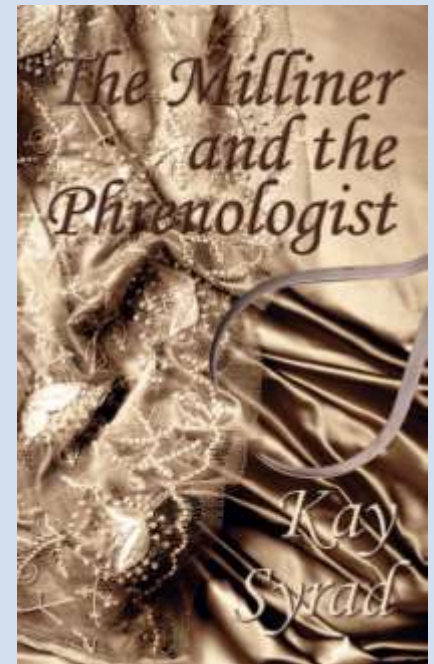
1860s London: a period of discovery, competing ideas and rigid social hierarchy. When Alice Heapy, an unusual and artistic young milliner, daringly sets up her own business, the mother of John Motton, eminent phrenologist, is amongst the first of her bourgeois and eccentric clients. Alice is intrigued by the phrenologist's belief that he can determine his clients' character and moral capacity by measuring their heads, whilst Motton is astonished at the power Alice's poetic hats exert on the lives of his mother and her peculiar friends. But under each other's exacting and increasingly hostile gaze, Alice and Motton begin to reveal—and, in desperation, attempt to conceal—their own characters.

As Alice and Motton play out the ferocious Victorian tensions between social classes, men and women, science and art, faith and reason—tensions which continue to challenge us—we are drawn into the sensuous imagery and subtle humour of this sharply observed drama, eager to know where it will lead. A highly original and visual novel, brimming with delicious wit, *The Milliner and the Phrenologist* is a remarkable debut from Kay Syrad.

Kay Syrad is a lecturer and freelance writer, often working with visual artists. Her poetry has been published in a wide range of journals and anthologies. She is particularly interested in the nature of perception, which she explores in her poetry publication *Objects of Colour: Baltic Coast*, in collaboration with photographer Gina Glover. She is also co-author of a Thames & Hudson monograph, *Silent Spaces*, on the artist Chris Drury. She lives in East Sussex.

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