



## **The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age**

*Vic Gatrell*

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## **The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age** Vic Gatrell

The colourful, salacious and sumptuously illustrated story of Covent Garden - the creative heart of Georgian London - from Wolfson Prize-winning author Vic Gatrell

SHORT-LISTED FOR THE HESSELL TILTMAN PRIZE 2014

In the teeming, disordered, and sexually charged square half-mile centred on London's Covent Garden something extraordinary evolved in the 18th century. It was the world's first creative 'Bohemia'. The nation's most significant artists, actors, poets, novelists, and dramatists lived here. From Soho and Leicester Square across Covent Garden's Piazza to Drury Lane, and down from Long Acre to the Strand, they rubbed shoulders with rakes, prostitutes, market people, craftsmen, and shopkeepers. It was an often brutal world full of criminality, poverty and feuds, but also of high spirits, and was as culturally creative as any other in history. Virtually everything that we associate with Georgian culture was produced here.

Vic Gatrell's spectacular new book recreates this time and place by drawing on a vast range of sources, showing the deepening fascination with 'real life' that resulted in the work of artists like Hogarth, Blake, and Rowlandson, or in great literary works like The Beggar's Opera and Moll Flanders. The First Bohemians is illustrated by over two hundred extraordinary pictures, many rarely seen, for Gatrell celebrates above all one of the most fertile eras in Britain's artistic history. He writes about Joshua Reynolds and J. M. W. Turner as well as the forgotten figures who contributed to what was a true golden age: the men and women who briefly dazzled their contemporaries before being destroyed - or made - by this magical but also ferocious world.

## **The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age Details**

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## **From Reader Review The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age for online ebook**

### **Emg says**

I can't remember having read a book that so informatively and intelligently places art in the context of both time and geography. Unfortunately, the reproductions in the edition I read were not clear enough or large enough to see the details; guess that's a good enough reason to go to London and see some of the original.

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### **Eleanor says**

A totally great, full-to-overflowing study of the Covent Garden art world in the eighteenth century. Hogarth, Rowlandson, Blake, Gillray, and other incredible satirists, landscape painters and engravers burst from the pages. If you're into this sort of thing, you'll really like it. (Gatrell uses the word "whore" a lot, which is mildly discomfiting, but then a lot of the time he's quoting eighteenth-century men, for whom "whore" was merely a noun with no emotional charge...)

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### **Adrian says**

Covent Garden, London in the eighteenth century is the setting and its population of writers and artists are the characters. Johnson, Hogarth, Reynolds, Goldsmith, Turner, Burney, Rowlandson and others are all here. But the book is mostly social history. The sights, sounds and smells (usually bad) that effected what the above wrote and painted are fully detailed. This close knit warren of streets was home to much crime and punishment. It was still a time when locals were encouraged to pelt criminals in the pillory till they died making all the art and literature that came from this time and place all the more remarkable.

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### **Jeff Howells says**

Much better than the last history of 18th Century London I read. In the main because it has a much tighter focus - the 'bohemians' who lived in and around Covent Garden...There are pen pictures of some notable figures (like Hogarth) and lots of illustrations. Good overview of the coffee house scene.

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### **Tracy White says**

Good, interesting , full of weird and wonderful facts

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### **Kodiaksm says**

Not pleasant and I did not like the author's writing style.

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### **Rebecca says**

A charming portrait of 18th century Covent Garden and the people there - the highs and lows, the famous, the infamous and the less known... As is said, somewhere in the book (and I'm paraphrasing), the ordinary people are the ones that are hardest to come close to, for the simple reason that they leave so few traces in the records. But even so, not much is missing in this densely populated book!

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### **Adam Stevenson says**

An enjoyable and well-written look at the lively world of the Covent Garden area in the 18th Century.

I very much enjoyed 'City of Laughter' and I enjoyed this also - the focus is a little wider, starting off with the environment of Covent Garden, the sort of houses, shops and spaces that were there and how they were depicted before going into a tension between artists who portrayed real life and those (primarily of the Royal Academy) who were making art that was more neo-classical and refined.

Then we had a chapter on Hogarth, one on Rowlandson and one on Turner. These last three chapters, interesting as they were, didn't seem to contribute much to the Covent Garden theme and seemed more tangential to it.

I definitely liked the first part about Covent Garden as a place most. I also love how his feeling for the 18th Century where the writing is no nonsense and 'propels us niftily to the point' as opposed to the 19th Century which is 'windy tosh' is exactly my feelings.

I'm still not convinced we could call the people of Covent Garden Bohemian though, even following his definition; 'an attitude of dissent, from the prevailing attitudes of the middle class' as most of the people in Covent Garden were the middle class. Also, people like Hogarth were desperate to be of a higher social status and the writers wrote for money - I just don't think there is the anti-middle class element to call them Bohemian.

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