



Bird Of Paradise: The Colourful Career of the First Mrs Robinson

Sarah Gristwood

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A singular history of Georgian England through the prism of the rags-to-riches story of Mary Robinson who rose to become mistress of George IV and a cause celebre in 18th century England.

Few women's lives have described such an arc as that of Mary Robinson – or Perdita, as she was widely known. She began her career as an actress, royal mistress and possible blackmailer, and ended it just two decades later as a Romantic poet and early feminist thinker of note. She was the subject of paintings by Gainsborough and Reynolds, and of a hundred political cartoons. Variouslly portrayed as a wounded innocent and a harlot, she deliberately chose, in her later career, to make a political issue of her sexuality.

Born in 1758, she married at fifteen, and shortly after, followed her husband into debtor's prison where she wrote her first book of poems. Encouraged by Sheridan and Garrick, who admired her beauty, she went on the stage. It was her role as Perdita in *A Winter's Tale* that brought her to the attention of the 17-year-old Prince of Wales, and they embarked on a widely satirized liaison. Mary had made her mark in fashionable Georgian high society and, over the next two decades, this was where she contrived to stay.

This wonderful biography, vividly and compellingly told by the acclaimed biographer of Arbella Stuart, explores Georgian England during a period of extreme political upheaval through the life of one extraordinary woman.

From the Hardcover edition.

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From Reader Review Bird Of Paradise: The Colourful Career of the First Mrs Robinson for online ebook

Jane Walker says

There is apparently a resurgence of interest in Mary Robinson, though I confess to barely having heard of her. An actress, a Royal mistress and then a poet and novelist, her life gives a vivid insight into the world of Georgian society. Gristwood is in no doubt about her talents as a writer, but Robinson writes in a style which doesn't attract many admirers today. Hers was an extraordinary life, but she doesn't emerge from this biography as a very likeable person.

Helen Carolan says

an o.k read. I've read Sarah's other books and enjoyed them but this was not one of my favourites. She quotes mrs Robinson's memoirs which she points out are not always very accurate. mrs Robinson was known to history as Perdita. When her relationship with the Prince of Wales ended she tried to blackmail him using letters he had written to her. readable but not one of her best.

Jo says

I registered a book at BookCrossing.com!
<http://www.BookCrossing.com/journal/13770096>
