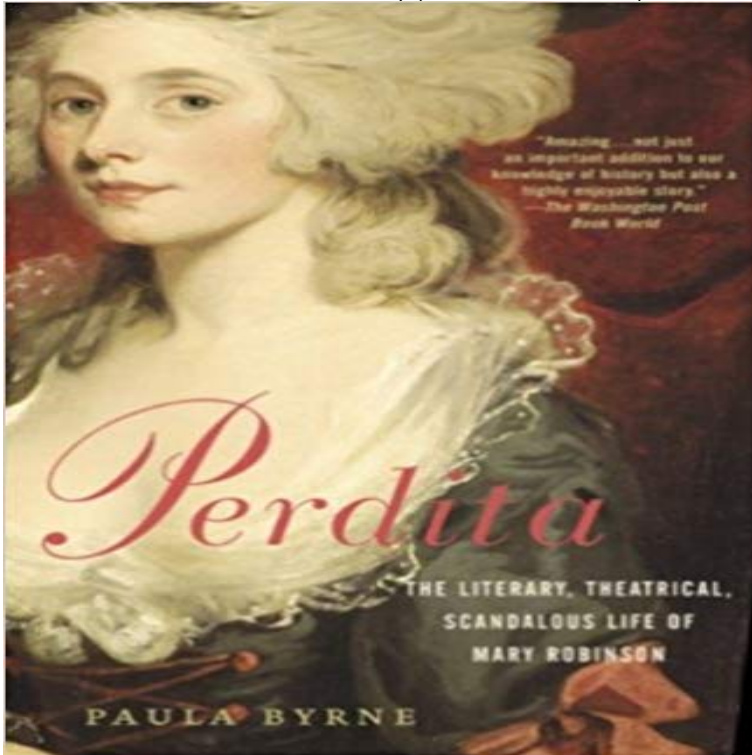


Perdita: The Literary, Theatrical, Scandalous Life of Mary Robinson



This thoroughly engaging and richly researched book presents a compelling portrait of Mary Robinson, darling of the London stage, mistress to the most powerful men in England, feminist thinker, and bestselling author, described by Samuel Taylor Coleridge as a woman of undoubted genius. One of the most flamboyant free spirits of the late eighteenth century, Mary Robinson led a life that was marked by reversals of fortune. After being abandoned by her merchant father, who left England to establish a fishery among the Canadian Eskimos, Mary was married, at age fifteen, to Thomas Robinson. His dissipation landed the couple and their baby in debtors prison, where Mary wrote her first book of poetry, gaining her the patronage of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. On her release, Mary rose to become one of the London theaters most alluring actresses, famously playing Perdita in *The Winters Tale* for a rapt audience that included the Prince of Wales, who fell madly in love with her. Never one to pass up an opportunity, she later used his ardent and numerous love letters as blackmail. After being struck down by paralysis, apparently following a miscarriage, she remade herself yet again, this time as a popular writer who was also admired by the leading intellectuals of the day. Filled with triumph and despair, and then triumph again, the amazing, multifaceted life of Perdita is marvelously captured in this stunning biography. From the Hardcover edition.

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