



Lady Worsley's Whim: The divorce that Scandalised Georgian England

By Hallie Rubenhold

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Their marriage had the makings of a fairy tale but ended as one of the most salacious and highly publicized divorces in history.

In February 1782, England opened its newspapers to read the details of Sir Richard Worsley vs. George Maurice Bisset, a Criminal Conversation trial in which the aggrieved Sir Richard attempted to sue his wife's lover for an astronomical £20,000 in damages. In the course of the proceedings, the Worsley's scandalous sexual arrangements, voyeuristic tendencies and bed-hopping antics were laid bare.

Lady Worsley's Whim is the story of a marriage between two opposing personalities; a stoic, art-collecting empiricist and a passionate romantic. Their tale is driven by the consequences of a terrible error of judgment made at a bath house on a summer's afternoon. The aftermath of this "whim" altered their lives forever. This fascinating story has lain buried in long forgotten newspapers, overlooked pamphlets, yellowing satires and uncatalogued letters. No other author, past or present, has ever told it before.

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“Nothing else in the genre is close to being this good. As a historian and a storyteller, Hallie Rubenhold is in a league of her own.”

— *Literary Review*

“[Rubenhold] traces the knife-edge that women walked between social success and public disgrace with subtlety and assurance.”

— *Spectator*

About the Author

Hallie Rubenhold has worked as a university lecturer and as a curator for the National Portrait Gallery in London.

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