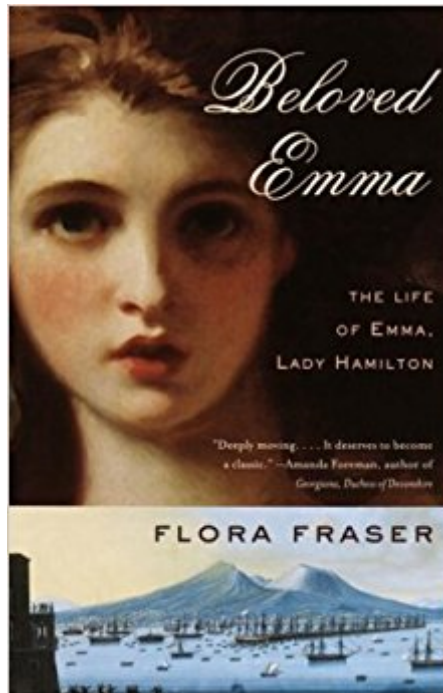




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# **Beloved Emma: The Life Of Emma, Lady Hamilton**



## Synopsis

From her humble beginnings as the daughter of a countryside blacksmith, Emy Lyon went on to claim the undying love of naval hero Admiral Nelson, England's most famous native son. She served as model and muse to eighteenth-century Europe's most renowned artists, and consorted with kings and queens at the royal court of Naples. Yet she would end her life in disgraced exile, penniless and alone. In this richly drawn portrait, Flora Fraser maps the spectacular rise and fall of legendary eighteenth-century beauty Emma, Lady Hamilton—as she came to be called—as a woman of abundant affection and overwhelming charm, whose eye for opportunity was rivaled only by her propensity for overindulgence and scandal. Wonderfully intimate and lavishly detailed, *Beloved Emma* brings to life the incomparable Lady Hamilton and the politics, passions, and enchantments of her day.

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## Customer Reviews

• "A most appealing book. . . . Succeeds in rescuing Emma from her myth and restoring her to her substance." • "The Washington Post Book World" • "Bewitchingly readable, authoritative." • "The Times (London)" • "[Fraser] achieves fully realized portraits of great conviction." • "Vogue" • "Excellent reading. . . . There can be little left to say after a biography of this length and thoroughness." • "Sunday Telegraph" • "Fraser [has a] gift for penetrating analysis." • "The New York Times Book Review"

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claim the undying love of naval hero Admiral Nelson, England's most famous native son. She served as model and muse to eighteenth-century Europe's most renowned artists, and consorted with kings and queens at the royal court of Naples. Yet she would end her life in disgraced exile, penniless and alone. In this richly drawn portrait, Flora Fraser maps the spectacular rise and fall of legendary eighteenth-century beauty Emma, Lady Hamilton--as she came to be called--a woman of abundant affection and overwhelming charm, whose eye for opportunity was rivaled only by her propensity for overindulgence and scandal. Wonderfully intimate and lavishly detailed, *Beloved Emma* brings to life the incomparable Lady Hamilton and the politics, passions, and enchantments of her day.

This biography of Emma, Lady Hamilton was excellent. Well written, well researched, a scholarly endeavor. This doesn't mean it's one of those dry histories that has you nodding off after the first few pages. After all, Emma Hamilton's life could not be very boring. Of course, it is a little dry and the story can drage just a bit in the beginning. I felt we were never going to leave Edgeware Row, but we did finally. Boy, what a journey. The story of this woman is so remarkable because of the time she lived in, and starting with nothing Emma achieved startling success. She was born into extreme poverty and by steps that would not put a regular woman on the road to prosperity, fame and success she achieved all her heart desired (well, almost). Emma must have been a brilliant person. She learned to read and write as a teenager, and by her early 20's had mastered both French and Italian. She also was known and acclaimed for the "Attitudes", a type of performance art that was a precursor of interpretative dance. With some shawls, and urn and creative lighting she would pantomime famous woman from the ancient world, like Agrippina bringing Germanicus' ashes back to Rome, Cleopatra, Medea, and others. These performances were very popular with male and female audiences. Everyone who visited the Hamiltons in Naples were treated to this spectacle. The author has a delightful way of describing these performances, especially if someone in the audience was not "feelin' it", Emma would go berserk and would get in the person's face flailing her shawls, it sounds hilarious and shows Emma's less attractive side.

I like Flora Fraser's biographies--they are quite factual and pretty well documented, but they flow well and are easily readable. She distinguishes reliably between her opinions and established fact. She doesn't stoop to pander to the seekers of cheap thrills by overemphasizing the lurid and the smutty. In fact, much more shocking things were going on at the same time in other palaces. This does not read like a dissertation, with more bibliography than content, but I consider that a plus for

the nonprofessional historian.

Loved this book and all of Flora Fraser's books. Excellent narrative about a mysterious historical person. Really interesting!

Ms. Fraser's biography of Lady Hamilton is not well written (especially after the first few chapters). Her organization is jumbled and seems sometimes to lose itself in the details; the prose is often indistinct and unclear. Although she does have a good eye for sources, discrediting dubious accounts and drawing on others that previous historians have overlooked, she is not much of an analyst, and her conclusions are sometimes more speculative than is justifiable. Some sources seem to have been lightly consulted, not studied or correlated. Nonetheless, Fraser has some insightful moments. Her treatment of Sir William Hamilton's relationship with his nephew Charles Greville in particular is really quite good. I read the Morrison MS (their correspondence) without getting more than a vague sense of some complexities which Ms. Fraser elucidates, and then uses to reveal the character of each more clearly. Then, Fraser does one thing better than the other Hamilton biographers I have read, and that is capturing the minuter context of Emma's existence—exact descriptions of the Palazzo Sessa where she lived in Naples, what she ate, how she occupied herself, how she entertained company. This is where Fraser shines, especially during the chapters comprehending 1786-1796. Here Fraser digs into the many accounts left by English and Continental travelers to The Two Sicilies, giving us a day by day and often hourly record of the way Emma lived at Naples. Some people found this boring, apparently, but to understand Lady Hamilton it is necessary to understand the essence of 18th century society. Despite her shortcomings in putting together a broader sweep, Ms. Fraser certainly mastered the essence and often conveys it quite poignantly.

and by the historical facts about the Napoleonic wars, accomplishing British seapower and foundation of the British Empire and the social bonds of that time. A bit too abundant, nearly prolix

Flora is NOT Antonia Fraser. She can't write her way out of a hole in the ground. This book was one of the most boring accounts of Emma that I have ever heard! There was nothing fascinating, exciting, or even eventful in this book. I could barely finish this, and some important aspects of her life are glossed over in such a boring fashion that one who didn't know any better would wonder how important they were. Boring, worse-than-textbook reading, if you must read this, buy it used.

I discovered Emma, Lady Hamilton, whose great beauty and drive helped her rise to the highest ranks of Napoleonic England, thanks to Susan Sontag's *The Volcano Lover*. Since then, I have seen her pictures in the Tate, and read about the period, Nelson and Josiah Wedgwood to learn more about her. This is, however, the book that gave me the context for understanding who she was and how she got there, and how she ended up penniless and alone. As only makes sense, given Ms Fraser's distinguished family of strong women, *Beloved Emma* is a fabulous portrait of an incredibly strong woman who overcame phenomenal odds, and succeeded so completely against her era's odds that even she could not sustain her success. Worth reading and, now that there is a paperback edition, rereading!

I'm not entirely sure if this was the actual book I read, although I did read a biography about Lady Emma Hamilton and found her to be a fascinating woman. I admired her greatly and was saddened a little by the way she was later shunned by society, who regarded her as coarse and common. Would love to see a movie made about her.

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