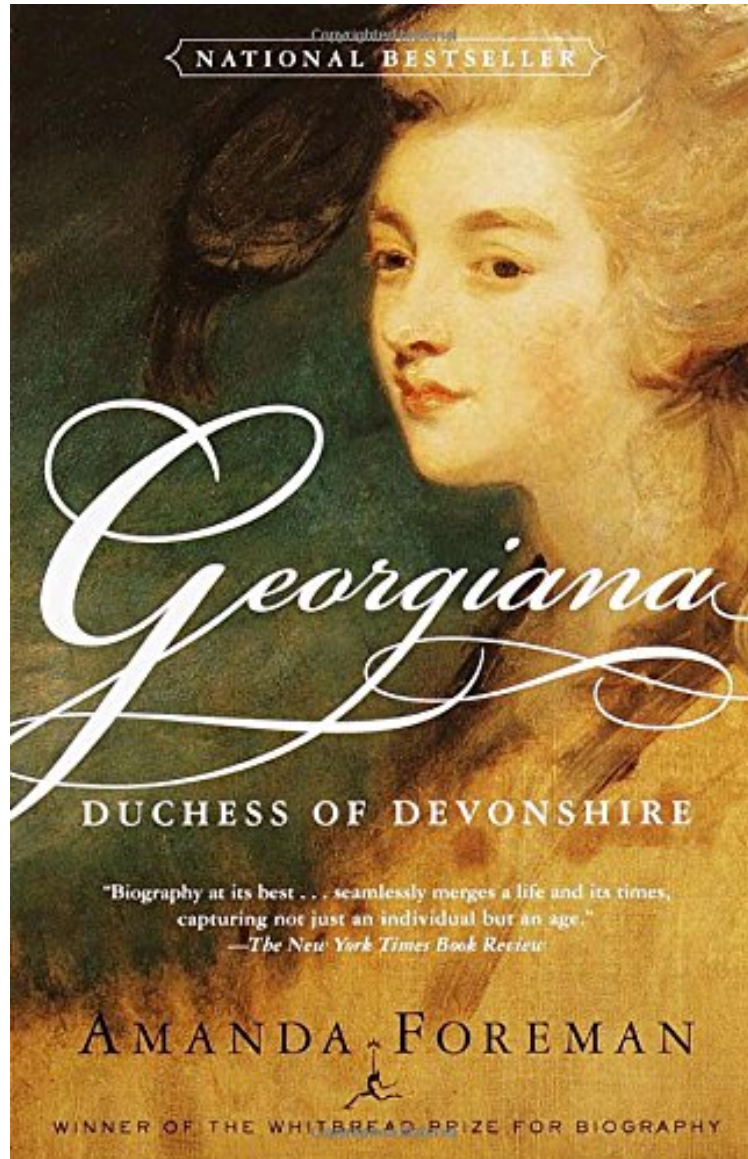


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Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire

Amanda Foreman

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Amanda Foreman : Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire:

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Georgiana: A chronology of known facts By walrif Kamil This book read as a collection of facts, which is fine if that's how the book is presented. However, the book was clearly presented in the introduction with the viewpoint that, while historians had judged Georgiana as charismatic but flighty, Foreman

saw another side of Georgiana and found her to be courageous and vulnerable. Throughout her book, Foreman presents little evidence to support her conclusions. Most facts could have gone either way, and the entire time I felt that Georgiana was most certainly flighty in every aspect of her life, and only vulnerable in the sense that she was a woman forced into a loveless marriage. Georgiana was the crux of her own misfortunes. We don't know why she continues to spiral, nor do we really understand why she doesn't take a more concerted effort to stop herself when she clearly knows certain things are detrimental to her marriage and privilege. Foreman tries to explain it by suggesting that Georgiana was a victim of Bess, who took advantage of Georgiana's kindness. I never got the sense from Georgiana that she regretted her generosity to befriend Bess, which leads me to suspect that either Georgiana is supremely weak-minded and is a pushover, or that she actually supported Bess -- neither of these conclusions are in line with the author's conclusions. It's still hard for me to grasp who Georgiana actually was. Maybe that's her point, but it could have been presented in a better manner. My other issue with the writing of this book is that it trivializes a lot of really juicy topics that could have been expanded upon. One example was in the paragraph in which Foreman explains that Georgiana's correspondences about discovering the affair between Bess and the Duke had been lost/destroyed. Foreman then quickly jumps into the next chronological event in their lives instead of writing a paragraph about Foreman's expectations as to how she expected Georgiana to have reacted based on all the evidence gathered. We also don't get much information about the more scandalous, behind-hidden-doors lifestyle of Georgiana - her affair with Grey lived and died within two pages. I didn't even get the sense there was a single private meeting between the two until it was revealed that she was pregnant. Such was the chore in reading this book. Georgiana is an intriguing person, and that's to the credit of Georgiana and less so the author. I did enjoy the author's depiction of the Whig and Tory rivalry, but I agree with some others that it sometimes went overboard with the details. I found the side characters to be much more real and interesting: Prince Charles, Marie Antoinette, Lady Spencer. I particularly enjoyed the section about Georgiana's visit to France during the French Revolution. What a fascinating time to be a fly on the wall. Lastly, the editing is poor. It was as if someone finished their dissertation and let it be published. There are spelling mistakes, and more importantly, incorrect spacing that makes it confusing as to whether you were reading text or a correspondence.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Enjoyable and informative
By Carmatt
This book gives realistic insights into her life. I felt it gave so much information as to what was going on in Europe as well as England during this time. It was easy to read and I enjoyed reading it.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Surprisingly Good Read!
By R. Heller
This is the book that they made the movie *The Duchess* from. The book originated in a doctoral dissertation, yet was not the least bit dry and made 18th century life come alive. As an American, it was interesting to read of political life in England at the time that our forebears were fighting for independence. Georgiana was a rare woman's voice who was heard in political circles as part of the Whig opposition to King George III

The winner of Britain's prestigious Whitbread Prize and a bestseller there for months, this wonderfully readable biography offers a rich, rollicking picture of late-eighteenth-century British aristocracy and the intimate story of a woman who for a time was its undisputed leader. Lady Georgiana Spencer was the great-great-great-great-aunt of Diana, Princess of Wales, and was nearly as famous in her day. In 1774, at the age of seventeen, Georgiana achieved immediate celebrity by marrying one of England's richest and most influential aristocrats, the Duke of Devonshire. Launched into a world of wealth and power, she quickly became the queen of fashionable society, adored by the Prince of Wales, a dear friend of Marie-Antoinette, and leader of the most important salon of her time. Not content with the role of society hostess, she used her connections to enter politics, eventually becoming more influential than most of the men who held office. Her good works and social exploits made her loved by the multitudes, but Georgiana's public success, like Diana's, concealed a personal life that was fraught with suffering. The Duke of Devonshire was unimpressed by his wife's legendary charms, preferring instead those of her closest friend, a woman with whom Georgiana herself was rumored to be on intimate terms. For over twenty years, the three lived together in a jealous and uneasy ménage trois, during which time both women bore the Duke's children as well as those of other men. Foreman's descriptions of Georgiana's uncontrollable gambling, all-night drinking, drug taking, and love affairs with the leading politicians of the day give us fascinating insight into the lives of the British aristocracy in the era of the madness of King George III, the American and French revolutions, and the defeat of Napoleon. A gifted young historian whom critics are already likening to Antonia Fraser, Amanda Foreman draws on a wealth of fresh research and writes colorfully and penetratingly about the fascinating Georgiana, whose struggle against her own weaknesses, whose great beauty and flamboyance, and whose determination to play a part in the affairs of the world make her a vibrant, astonishingly contemporary figure.

.com Georgiana Spencer was, in a sense, an 18th-century It Girl. She came from one of England's richest and most landed families (the late Princess Diana was a Spencer too) and married into another. She was beautiful, sensitive, and extravagant--drugs, drink, high-profile love affairs, and even gambling counted among her favorite leisure-time activities. Nonetheless, she quickly moved from a world dominated by social parties to one focused on political

parties. The duchess was an intimate of ministers and princes, and she canvassed assiduously for the Whig cause, most famously in the Westminster election of 1784. By turns she was caricatured and fawned on by the press, and she provided the inspiration for the character of Lady Teazle in Richard Sheridan's famous play *The School for Scandal*. But her weaknesses marked the last part of her life. By 1784, for one, Georgiana owed "many, many, many thousands," and her creditors dogged her until her death. Biographer Amanda Foreman describes astutely the mess that surrounded the personal relationships of the aristocratic subculture (Georgiana and the duke engaged for many years in a *mnage trois* with Lady Elizabeth Fraser, who inveigled her way into the duke's bed and the duchess's heart). Foreman is, by her own admission, a little in love with her subject, which can lead to occasional lapses of perspective, but generally it adds zest to a narrative built on, rather than burdened by, scholarship, that is at once accessible and learned. An impressive debut, in every sense. --David Vincent, .co.ukFrom Publishers Weekly

She was the most prominent British woman of her day. Whatever she wore became instantly fashionable, and her parties were the ones to attend. Royals, aristocrats and politicians sought her opinion, for she was as influential as she was beautiful. Princess Diana? No, her great-great-great-great-aunt, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire (1757-1806). A bestseller in the U.K. and the winner of the 1999 Whitbread Prize for Best Biography, Foreman's debut is captivating not just because of Georgiana--whose insecurity, demented love life and gambling addiction made her personal life even more dismal than Diana's--but also because Foreman's portrayal of high society in late-18th-century Britain and France is so remarkably vivid. Foreman gives readers the aristocracy fighting for control over Parliament, King George slowly losing his mind, his love-struck son ill-prepared to take the throne, and more bed-hopping than on a TV soap opera. Georgiana, who bore an out-of-wedlock child with politician Charles Grey, knew that her best friend was her husband's mistress, but that was the least of her problems. Prone to drinking, drug-taking and eating disorders, she also racked up gambling debts equal to \$6 million in today's dollars. Foreman's combination of exhaustive research and storytelling skill make Georgiana's story at once lurid, sensational and touching. (Jan.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal Sex! Politics! Intrigue! This Whitbread Prize-winning biography has all that and more; if it were fiction it would be a best seller. Georgiana (1757-1806) was the most accomplished social hostess of her day and a formidable, if behind the scenes, force in Whig politics. She and the Duke shared their life with Lady Elizabeth Foster in a *mnage ? trois*, the intricacies of which can only be guessed at. Together they raised a variety of children resulting from a number of liaisons. In addition to her work as a patron of the arts, Georgiana also wrote fiction, poetry, and a play, some of which was published in her lifetime. Brian Masters's previously published biography of the same title (now out of print) focuses mostly on her social activities. On the contrary, Foreman (a recent Ph.D. and researcher at Oxford) brings Georgiana's political savvy and influence into play against the backdrop of the American Revolution and the hostility between George III and the Prince of Wales. The names and titles tend to get confusing at times, but this well-written, well-researched book is finally a pleasure to read. For all libraries. A Julie Still, Rutgers Univ., Camden, NJ Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.