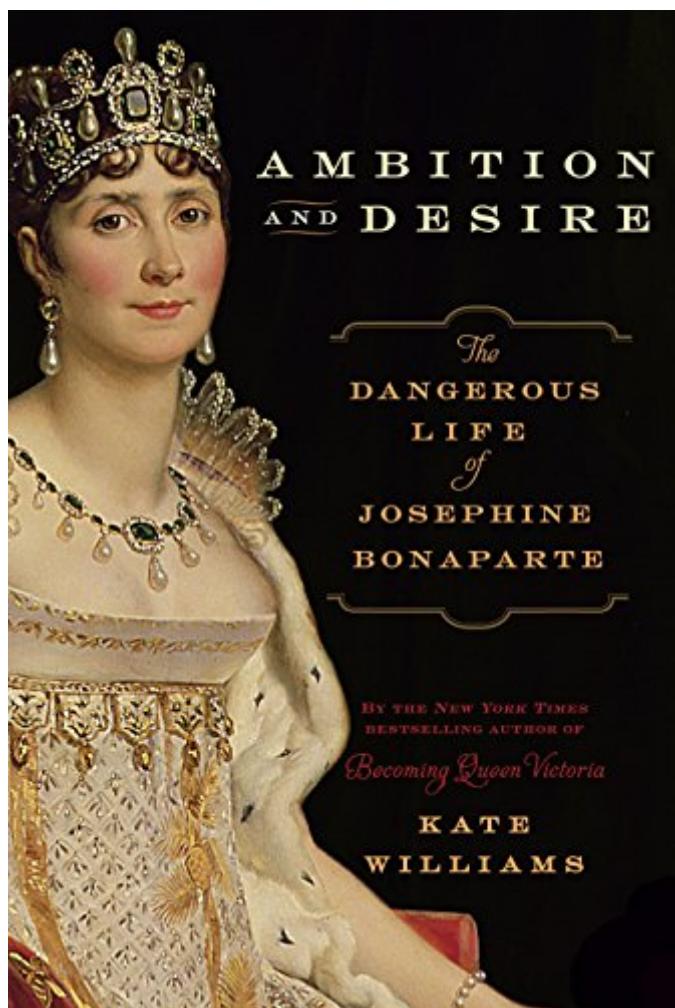


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Ambition And Desire: The Dangerous Life Of Josephine Bonaparte



Synopsis

From CNN's official royal historian, a highly praised young author with a doctorate from Oxford University, comes the extraordinary rags-to-riches story of the woman who conquered Napoleon's heart—and with it, an empire. Their love was legendary, their ambition flagrant and unashamed. Napoleon Bonaparte and his wife, Josephine, came to power during one of the most turbulent periods in the history of France. The story of the Corsican soldier's incredible rise has been well documented. Now, in this spellbinding, luminous account, Kate Williams draws back the curtain on the woman who beguiled him: her humble origins, her exorbitant appetites, and the tragic turn of events that led to her undoing.

Born Marie-Joséphe-Rose de Tascher de La Pagerie on the Caribbean island of Martinique, the woman Napoleon would later call Josephine was the ultimate survivor. She endured a loveless marriage to a French aristocrat—executed during the Reign of Terror—then barely escaped the guillotine blade herself. Her near-death experience only fueled Josephine's ambition and heightened her determination to find a man who could finance and sustain her. Though no classic beauty, she quickly developed a reputation as one of the most desirable women on the continent. In 1795, she met Napoleon. The attraction was mutual, immediate, and intense. Theirs was an often-tumultuous union, roiled by their pursuit of other lovers but intensely focused on power and success. Josephine was Napoleon's perfect consort and the object of national fascination. Together they conquered Europe. Their extravagance was unprecedented, even by the standards of Versailles. But she could not produce an heir. Sexual obsession brought them together, but cold biological truth tore them apart.

Gripping in its immediacy, captivating in its detail, *Ambition and Desire* is a true tale of desire, heartbreak, and revolutionary turmoil, engagingly written by one of England's most praised young historians. Kate Williams's searing portrait of this alluring and complex woman will finally elevate Josephine Bonaparte to the historical prominence she deserves. Praise for *Ambition and Desire*

"Not just a scholarly work, but a page-turner . . . Williams is no stranger to creating works on strong and influential women, and, as in those works, here she does an admirable job of demystifying Josephine. . . . This engrossing and accessible account is for all readers who enjoy historical biography."—Library Journal

"[A] riveting account . . . Williams perfectly illustrates all that was bizarre and maddening about French life during the reign of Josephine and Napoleon Bonaparte."—Publishers Weekly

"Intelligent and entertaining."—Kirkus Reviews

"An in-depth portrait of the substantive woman behind the throne."—Booklist

"Reading [Ambition and

Desire] is like watching *Silk Stockings*, the 1957 Hollywood masterpiece with Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse. The book flows and jumps, taking the reader by the hand through tormented times in French history without ever letting you go or losing itself in the intricacies of French politics. *The Times* • A sparkling account of this most fallible and endearing of women. *Daily Mail* • A whirlwind tour of French history. *The Telegraph* From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

This book was written as a biography of both Josephine and Napoleon with quotations and letters that were taken from each of them to each other and from others who knew them well. I found it a hard book to put down once I started it since the writer used outstanding skill in describing the revolution and the rise and fall of Napoleon. It was well written and carefully researched. It was one of the best books I have read about the French revolution.

I started off loving this book but it turned into a some kind of term paper with annotations all over

every page. It was ridiculous. I do not know how this made it into book form

What a book! The author makes Josephine entirely real, human, and psychologically understandable. I could hardly put the book down.

I enjoyed the book. History I find is far more interesting than fiction.

Well written. Very good story about an amazing and interesting woman.

Great page turner, very surprising and detailed history.

Great book for anyone who loves France or history. Really enjoyed this book on the history of Josephine and Napoleon.

Excellent History Read.

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