



The Book of the Courtesans: A Catalogue of Their Virtues

Susan Griffin

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They charmed some of Europe's most illustrious men, honing their social skills as well as their sexual ones, and accumulating wealth, fame, and power along the way. Unlike their geisha counterparts, courtesans didn't live in brothels or bend their wills to suit their suitors. They were the muses who enflamed the hearts of our most celebrated artists--Raphael, Manet, Dumas, and Proust, to name just a few--as well as becoming artists in their own right. Offering the first comprehensive tour of their worlds, Susan Griffin celebrates these first feminists and hails their virtues: Timing, Beauty, Cheek, Brilliance, Gaiety, Grace, and Charm.

From Veronica Franco, who graced the palazzos of sixteenth-century Venice, and Madame de Pompadour, the arbiter of all things fashionable at Versailles during the reign of Louis XV, to La Belle Otero of the grand boulevards of Paris in the Gay Nineties and Marion Davies, who took Hollywood by storm in the 1920's and 1930's, *The Book of the Courtesans* enticingly illustrates the intricacies of their lavish lifestyles and incredible life stories. Fascinating true tales and enlightening snippets from courtesans' memoirs further reveal how these cunning women seized their opportunity to become the West's first liberators, free to choose their own lovers and command remarkable respect.

Delving into his scintillating world, *The Book of the Courtesans* is an impeccably researched, beautifully crafted portrait of some of the most intriguing figures in women's history.

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