



A History of Mistresses

Elizabeth Abbott

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She has been known as the 'kept woman', the 'fancy woman' and the 'other woman'. She is both a fictional character and flesh-and-blood human being. But who is she, really? What do Madame de Pompadour, Heloise, Marilyn Monroe, Jane Eyre and Camilla Parker-Bowles have in common? Why do women become mistresses, and what is it like to have a private life that is usually also a secret life? Is a mistress merely a wife-in-waiting, or is she the very definition of the modern emancipated, independent female? In "A History of Mistresses" Elizabeth Abbott intelligently probes the motives and morals of some of history's most infamous and fascinating women. Drawing intimate portraits of those who have - either by chance, coercion or choice - assumed this complex role, from Chinese concubines and European royal mistresses to mobster molls and trophy dolls, "A History of Mistresses" offers a rich blend of history, personality and cultural study.

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