

The Fame Lunches On Wounded Icons Money Sex the Brontës and the Importance of Handbags



BOOK DETAILS

- Author : Daphne Merkin
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BOOK SYNOPSIS

A wide-ranging collection of essays by one of America's most perceptive critics of popular and literary culture. From one of America's most insightful and independent-minded critics comes a remarkable new collection of essays, her first in more than fifteen years. Daphne Merkin brings her signature combination of wit, candor, and penetrating intelligence to a wide array of subjects that touch on every aspect of contemporary culture, from the high calling of the literary life to the poignant underside of celebrity to our collective fixation on fame. "Sometimes it seems to me that the private life no longer suffices for many of us," she writes, "that if we are not observed by others doing glamorous things, we might as well not exist." Merkin's elegant, widely admired profiles go beneath the glossy façades of neon-lit personalities to consider their vulnerabilities and demons, as well as their enduring hold on us. As her title essay explains, she writes in order "to save myself through saving wounded icons . . . Famous people . . . who required my intervention on their behalf because only I understood the desolation that drove them." Here one will encounter a gallery of complex, unforgettable women—Marilyn Monroe, Courtney Love, Diane Keaton, and Cate Blanchett, among others—as well as such intriguing male figures as Michael Jackson, Mike Tyson, Truman Capote, and Richard Burton. Merkin reflects with empathy and discernment on what makes them run—and what makes them stumble. Drawing upon her many years as a book critic, Merkin also offers reflections on writers as varied as Jean Rhys, W. G. Sebald, John Updike, and Alice Munro. She considers the vexed legacy of feminism after Betty Friedan, Bruno Bettelheim's tarnished reputation as a healer, and the reenvisioning of Freud by the elusive Adam Phillips. Most of all, though, Merkin is a writer who is not afraid to implicate herself as a participant in our consumerist and overstimulated culture. Whether ruminating upon the subtext of lip gloss, detailing the vicissitudes of a pre-Yom Kippur pedicure, or arguing against our obsession with household pets, Merkin helps make sense of our collective impulses. From a brazenly honest and deeply empathic observer, *The Fame Lunches* shines a light on truths we often prefer to keep veiled—and in doing so opens up the conversation for all of us.

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