



# Celebrity Nation: How America Evolved into a Culture of Fans and Followers

Landon Y. Jones. Beacon, \$25.95 (208p) ISBN 978-0-8070-6565-5

In this hit-or-miss survey, former *People* magazine editor Jones (*Great Expectations*) contends that “the preoccupation with romanticizing celebrity has led to a coarsening of American culture” and a shift away from the “harder-won values of heroes—accomplishment, achievement, selflessness, inspiration.” There was a time, Jones recalls, when celebrity and heroism were more closely intertwined, and the book’s most successful sections detail the author’s encounters with Elizabeth Taylor, Princess Diana, and other famous figures who used their renown as a force for good. Though Jones acknowledges that the rise of social media has helped diversify “the halls of celebrity,” he takes a dim view of such stars as Kim Kardashian and Paris Hilton, for whom “becoming a celebrity was not an achievement but rather a condition—the condition of being talked about.” Other topics include the role of 19th-century theatrical portraits in fostering “the primacy of the celebrity image,” the rise of Gwyneth Paltrow’s Goop and other celebrity brands, and the advent of CGI influencers like Miquela Sousa, whose Instagram account describes her as “a 19-year-old Robot living in L.A.” Though Jones is an astute chronicler of celebrity culture, his observations don’t quite gel into a cohesive thesis. Still, gossip hounds will have much to chew on. (May)