



It

Joseph Roach

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A consumer's guide to iconic celebrity and ageless glamour

“Strikingly original, wickedly witty, and thoroughly learned, Roach’s anatomy of abnormally interesting people and the vicarious pleasure we take in our modern equivalents to gods and royals will captivate its readers from the first page. I dare you to read just one chapter!”

—Felicity Nussbaum, University of California, Los Angeles

“*It* considers the effect that arises when spectacularly compelling performers and cultural fantasy converge, as in the outpouring of public grief over the death of Princess Diana. . . . An important work of cultural history, full of metaphysical wit . . . *It* gives us a fresh vocabulary for interpreting how after-images endure in cultural memory.”

—Andrew Sofer, Boston College

“Joseph Roach’s enormous erudition, sharp wit, engaging style, and gift for finding the most telling historical detail or literary quote are here delightfully applied to the intriguing subject of why certain historical and theatrical figures have possessed a special power to fascinate their public.”

—Marvin Carlson, Graduate Center, City University of New York

That mysterious characteristic “It”—“the easily perceived but hard-to-define quality possessed by abnormally interesting people”—is the subject of Joseph Roach’s engrossing new book, which crisscrosses centuries and continents with a deep playfulness that entertains while it enlightens.

Roach traces the origins of “It” back to the period following the Restoration, persuasively linking the sex appeal of today’s celebrity figures with the attraction of those who lived centuries before. The book includes guest appearances by King Charles II, Samuel Pepys, Flo Ziegfeld, Johnny Depp, Elinor Glyn, Clara Bow, the Second Duke of Buckingham, John Dryden, Michael Jackson, and Lady Diana, among others.

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