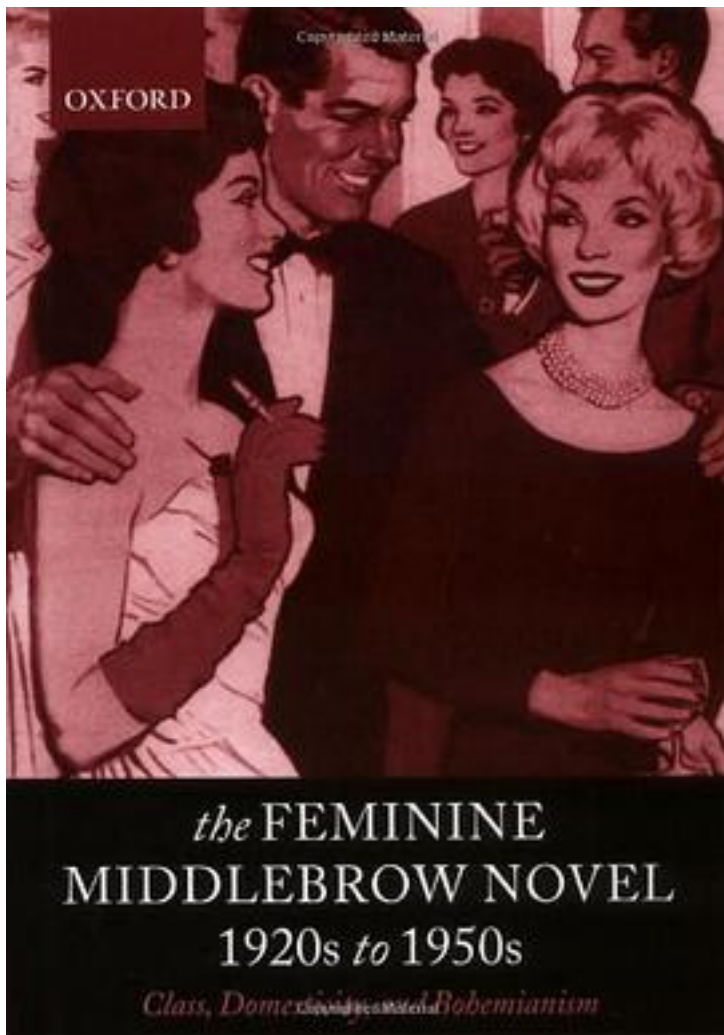


# The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s



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'Middlebrow' has always been a dirty word, used disparagingly since its coinage in the

mid-1920s for the sort of literature thought to be too easy, insular and smug. Yet it was middlebrow fiction - largely written and read by women - that absolutely dominated the publishing market in the four decades from the 1920s to the 1950s. Neglected by subsequent critical fashion in favour of the work of literary elites, this literature has only recently begun to be reassessed. Aiming to rehabilitate the feminine middlebrow, Nicola Humble argues that the novels of writers such as Rosamund Lehmann, Elizabeth Taylor, Stella Gibbons, Nancy Mitford, and a host of others less well known, played a powerful role in establishing and consolidating, but also in resisting, new class and gender identities in this period of volatile change for both women and the middle classes. The work of over thirty novelists is covered, read alongside other discourses as diverse as cookery books, child-care manuals, and the reports of Mass Observation. Investigating the nature of the feminine middlebrow and its readers, the author considers its variously radical and conservative remakings of ideas of class, the home, the family and gender. Defining her period as running from the end of the first world war to the mid-1950s, she challenges the prevailing convention that sees the second world war as effecting a decisive ideological and cultural break, and offers a revision to the way we currently map the changing politics of femininity and the domestic in the twentieth century. The first work to insist on the centrality of the concept of the middlebrow in understanding the women's writing of this period, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel* uncovers a literature simultaneously snobbish and bohemian, daring and conventional, marked by an ideological flexibility that is the product of its paradoxical allegiance to both domesticity and a radical sophistication.

作者介绍:

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