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Women, Celebrity, and Literary Culture between the Wars (Literary Modernism)

Faye Hammill

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As mass media burgeoned in the years between the first and second world wars, so did another phenomenon—celebrity. Beginning in Hollywood with the studio-orchestrated transformation of uncredited actors into brand-name stars, celebrity also spread to writers, whose personal appearances and private lives came to fascinate readers as much as their work. *Women, Celebrity, and Literary Culture between the Wars* profiles seven American, Canadian, and British women writers—Dorothy Parker, Anita Loos, Mae West, L. M. Montgomery, Margaret Kennedy, Stella Gibbons, and E. M. Delafield—who achieved literary celebrity in the 1920s and 1930s and whose work remains popular even today.

Faye Hammill investigates how the fame and commercial success of these writers—as well as their gender—affected the literary reception of their work. She explores how women writers sought to fashion their own celebrity images through various kinds of public performance and how the media appropriated these writers for particular cultural discourses. She also reassesses the relationship between celebrity culture and literary culture, demonstrating how the commercial success of these writers caused literary elites to denigrate their writing as "middlebrow," despite the fact that their work often challenged middle-class ideals of marriage, home, and family and complicated class categories and lines of social discrimination.

The first comparative study of North American and British literary celebrity, *Women, Celebrity, and Literary Culture between the Wars* offers a nuanced appreciation of the middlebrow in relation to modernism and popular culture.

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