



# The Feminization of American Culture

By Ann Douglas

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## The Feminization of American Culture By Ann Douglas

This modern classic by one of our leading scholars seeks to explain the values prevalent in today's mass culture by tracing them back to their roots in the Victorian era. As religion lost its hold on the public mind, clergymen and educated women, powerless and insignificant in the society of the time, together exerted a profound effect on the only areas open to their influence: the arts and literature. Women wrote books that idealized the very qualities that kept them powerless: timidity, piety, and a disdain for competition. Sentimental values that permeated popular literature continue to influence modern culture, preoccupied as it is with glamour, banal melodrama, and mindless consumption.

This new paperback edition, with a new Preface, will reach yet more readers with its persuasive and provocative theory. Richard Bernstein of *The New York Times* said: "Her remarkable scholarship is going to set the standard for a long time to come."

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## The Feminization of American Culture By Ann Douglas Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

This classic of modern feminism is an ambitious attempt to trace certain present-day values back to cultural shifts of the 19th century. Historian Ann Douglas entwines the fate of American women, most notably those of the white middle class, with that of clergy marginalized by the rise in religious denominations and consequent dilution of their power base. No longer invited to wield influence in vital (some might say traditionally masculine) political and economic arenas, clergy were pushed toward more feminine spheres and rules of expression. Likewise, as growing numbers of middle-class white women lost their place as the indispensable center of household production, and many lower-class women became easily replaced industrial cogs, a none-too-subtle shift in perceptions about women's strengths and abilities occurred. Women lost voting rights and other legal privileges; barred from healing and midwifery, they were also less likely to appear in other increasingly male professions. Academies for wealthier girls imparted skills deemed to entice and soothe men without taxing supposedly tiny feminine brains; when Emma Willard offered geometry lessons to girls in the 1820s, one opponent harrumphed: "They'll be educating cows next." Douglas chronicles the rise of an overwhelmingly sentimental "feminization" of mass culture--in which writers of both sexes underscored popular convictions about women's weaknesses, desires, and proper place in the world--with erudite and well-argued scholarship. --Francesca Coltrera

#### Review

"Indispensable reading for . . . anybody of serious intelligence." *The New York Times*

"An exciting, readable book." *The New Republic*

"Admirably documented and ambitious . . . [The] examination of the perils of sentimentalism and the legacy it bequeathed modern culture is excellent." *Newsweek*

#### From the Publisher

A modern classic by one of the leading feminist thinkers of our time, *The Feminization Of American Culture* has been continuously in print since its original publication more than fifteen years ago. An Anchor backlist title since 1988, this book has been given a provocative new cover design to capture the attention of the readers who made *Sexual Personae* a best-seller. *The Feminization Of American Culture* seeks to explain the values prevalent in today's popular culture by tracing them back to their roots in Victorian times. Feminist scholar Ann Douglas examines the best-selling novels and magazines of the day to show how women exploited their feminine image and idealized the very qualities that kept them powerless: timidity, piety, narcissism, and a disdain for competition. Here is a major rethinking of the American past with shocks of recognition for everyone today.

### Users Review

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#### Catherine Williams:

The book The Feminization of American Culture make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You may use to make your capable far more increase. Book can to be your best friend when you getting stress or having big

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### **Bernice King:**

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### **Richard Kowalski:**

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