



Edna Ferber's America

Eliza McGraw

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From the 1910s to the 1950s, Edna Ferber (1885--1968) published a series of bestselling novels that made her one of Doubleday's highest-paid authors, earned her a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1925, and transformed her into a literary celebrity. She hosted dinner parties covered by the New York Times, lunched at the Algonquin Round Table with Dorothy Parker and Alexander Woollcott, and collaborated with George S. Kaufman on hit plays such as *Dinner at Eight* and *Stage Door*. In *Edna Ferber's America*, Eliza McGraw provides the first in-depth critical study of the author's novels, exploring their innovative portrayals of characters from a diverse range of ethnicities and social classes.

Best remembered today for the movies and musicals adapted from her works -- including classics like *Giant* and *Show Boat* -- Ferber attracted a devoted readership during her lifetime with engaging storylines focused on strong-willed individuals reshaping their lives, set amid a panorama of regional landscapes. McGraw reveals that Ferber's novels convey a broad, nuanced vision of the United States as a multiethnic country.

Framing her study with the theme of ethnic unease and insecurity, McGraw performs close readings of twelve Ferber novels: *Dawn O'Hara* (1911), *Fanny Herself* (1917), *The Girls* (1921), *So Big* (1924), *Show Boat* (1926), *Cimarron* (1929), *American Beauty* (1931), *Come and Get It* (1935), *Saratoga Trunk* (1941), *Great Son* (1945), *Giant* (1952), and *Ice Palace* (1958). McGraw explores the entwined topics of racial mixing and class as she argues that in *Ferber's America*, ethnic and social mobility challenge the reigning order, creating places that foster vitality and promise hope for the future.

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