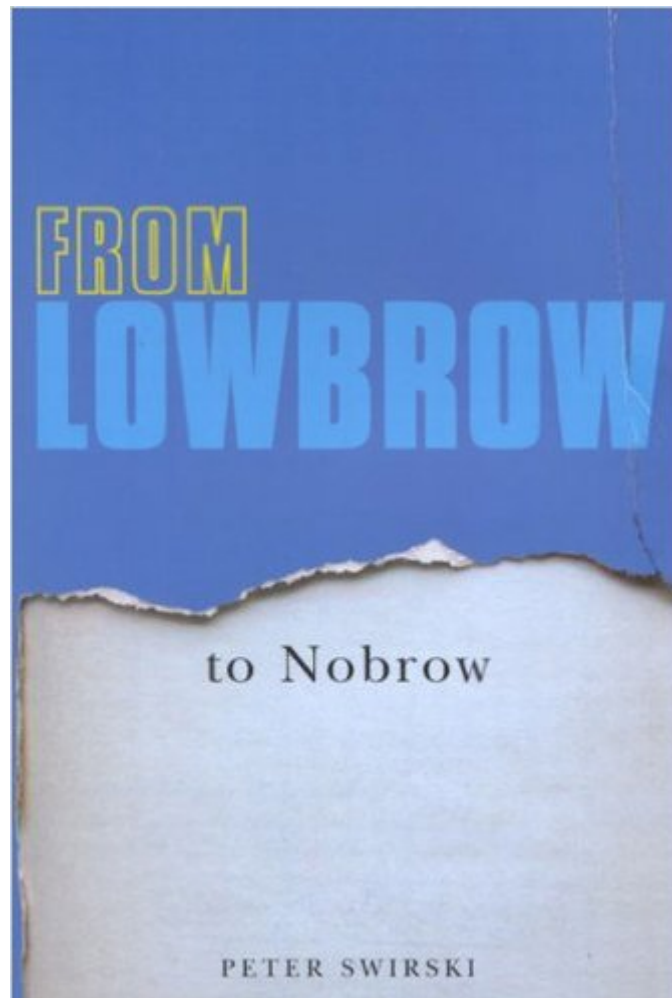


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From Lowbrow To Nobrow



Synopsis

Swirski begins with a series of groundbreaking questions about the nature of popular fiction, vindicating it as an artform that expresses and reflects the aesthetic and social values of its readers. He follows his insightful introduction to the socio-aesthetics of genre literature with a synthesis of the century long debate on the merits of popular fiction and a study of genre informed by analytic aesthetics and game theory. Swirski then turns to three "nobrow" novels that have been largely ignored by critics. Examining the aesthetics of "artertainment" in Karel Capek's *War with the Newts*, Raymond Chandler's *Playback*, and Stanislaw Lem's *Chain of Chance*, crossover tours de force, *From Lowbrow to Nobrow* throws new light on the hazards and rewards of nobrow traffic between popular forms and highbrow aesthetics.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Peter Swirski is on a mission! Peter Swirski's book *From Lowbrow to NoBrow* is a compelling and ambitious work in the area of literature studies. As has been mentioned, Swirski's main argument lies in the fact that he is trying to "wipe the brow" (pun intended) of distinction amongst works of literature, essentially calling for the banishment of the title "lowbrow" for those books deemed "not sophisticated enough for serious academic study". Swirski contends that while there are many books out there that don't warrant said serious academic study, there are just as many that do, and should be examined through an academic framework. It is my belief that Swirski is correct in this line of thinking; it is sad and indeed flippant to dismiss a novel and reserve academic study of it,

because it is considered "genre fiction" or simplistic. There is a great distinction in the halls of academia concerning what is studied and what is not, what is worthy and what is worth glossing over or not covering at all. Swirski is saying, and indeed proving with his examples, that many previously glossed over works, which would be looked at with disdain, and more than a little contempt, need to be truly examined, and not simply pushed to the side because of their sources or content. It is a very provocative idea indeed to challenge the academic snobbery that is present in the study of literature, and even more admirable to submit that not only should the "canon" be studied, but things like genre fiction, at that, should be examined also, expanding the scope of investigation and getting a look at the whole picture, not just a segment of it.

You would never forget such an impressive book cover, as it implies there is a need to turn over a new leaf in popular literature. As an English teacher with linguistics background at the University of Hong Kong, *From lowbrow to nobrow*, a recent bestseller, has enlightened me as to the crucial role of popular literature that has escaped most of the attention of both academic and general readership. While there is still widespread assumption that, popular literature (though the dominant art in our times) neither can be art nor would be so popular, *From lowbrow to nobrow* has set the scene for the rise of novel literary-cultural formation. The author, Peter Swirski, is Honorary Professor of American Literature at the University of British Columbia, and Associate Professor and Head of American Studies at the University of Hong Kong. Swirski is a brilliant literary critic and has written nine books in American Literature and Culture, and has contributed more than fifty articles in various places. Swirski's works have been highly praised by numerous scholars and literary critics. In *From Lowbrow to Nobrow*, you will see why Swirski deserves wide recognition as a scholar in American literature, in the way he writes clearly, quotes intelligently, argues provocatively, approaches his portrait of nobrow culture with originality ... What makes this book original and praiseworthy is Swirski proposes that both highbrow and lowbrow literary cultures have been interpenetrating each other from at least the early in the twentieth-century, i.e. decades before what John Seabrook proposes in *Nobrow* (2000). Swirski begins with some groundbreaking questions about the nature of popular fiction, defending with sound arguments an innovative way of viewing it as 'artertainment'.

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