

Literary Culture and Female Authorship in Canada, 1760-2000

"There are two ladies in the province, I am told, who read," writes Frances Brooke's Arabella Fermor, "but both are above fifty and are regarded as prodigies of erudition." Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) was the first work of fiction to be set in Canada, and also the first book to reflect on the situation of the woman writer there. Her analysis of the experience of writing in Canada is continued by the five other writers considered in this study – Susanna Moodie, Sara Jeannette Duncan, L.M. Montgomery, Margaret Atwood and Carol Shields. All of these authors examine the social position of the woman of letters in Canada, the intellectual stimulation available to her, the literary possibilities of Canadian subject-matter, and the practical aspects of reading, writing, and publishing in a (post)colonial country. This book turns on the ways in which those aspects of authorship and literary culture in Canada have been inscribed in imaginative, autobiographical and critical texts by the six authors. It traces the evolving situation of the Canadian woman writer over the course of two centuries, and explores the impact of social and cultural change on the experience of writing in Canada.

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