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Sommario/riassunto	Femininity in colonial societies is a particularly contested element of the sex/gender system; while it draws on a conservative belief in universal and continuous values, it is undermined by the liberal rhetoric

of freedom characteristic of the New World. *Practising Femininity* analyses the ways in which Canadian texts by Catharine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie, Nellie McClung, Sinclair Ross, and others work to produce and naturalize femininity in a colonial setting. Drawing on Judith Butler's definition of gender as performance, Misao Dean shows how practices which seem to transgress the feminine ideal – the difficulties of emigration, physical labour, autobiographical writing, work for wages, sexual desire, and suffrage activism – were justified by Canadian writers as legitimate expressions of an unvarying feminine inner self. Early Canadian writers cited a feminine gender ideal which emphasized love of home and adherence to duty; New Women and Suffrage writers attributed sexuality to a biological desire to reproduce; in the work of Sinclair Ross, the feminine ideal was moulded by prevailing Freudian models of femininity. This study is grounded in the most important current gender theories, and will interest Canadian literary scholars, feminist historians and theoreticians, and students of women's studies.
