



# Redressing the Past: The Politics of Early English-Canadian Women's Drama, 1880-1920

*Kym Bird*

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Focusing on a body of lost and forgotten plays by women and situating them in the context of the early women's movement and its major discourses on suffrage, higher education, and social gospel, Kym Bird challenges the male-defined focus of recent historical studies into 19th-century Canadian drama. She argues that in a society that preferred to think of men and women as part of separate but complimentary spheres the woman naturally suited for the private world of the home and motherhood and the man for the public world of work and politics these plays advanced two forms of feminist politics. Liberal or equality feminism demanded the same rights and privileges for women as those accorded men; domestic or maternal feminism justified women's participation in the public sphere based on their natural materialism and moral superiority. the contradictory relations within these forms of feminism: on the one hand they represent women's social and political emancipation and, on the other, they affirm patriarchal structures and the status quo. Implicitly, this study calls into question what traditionally constitutes drama by treating plays written in non-canonical forms, mounted in nonprofessional venues, and published by marginal presses or not at all as important literary, theatrical, and historical documents.

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