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The Serpent's Part

Narrating the Self in Canadian Literature

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Canada is a country in which the issue of identity has always been a prominent concern, and one that has frequently been explored in the literature of that nation. The theme of identity often merges into that of language, the forging of names and the elaboration of narratives being perceived as means through which identity is constructed in both the private and the public spheres. This study examines the relation between identity and language as this is evidenced in a number of works of Canadian literature, ranging from Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* to Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words*. Particular attention is dedicated to the telling of stories in these books, both as an existential strategy on the part of particular authors or the characters they create, and as an explicitly thematized concern. It is argued that while the works under discussion dramatize the paradoxes and the perils inherent in the endeavour to construct the self by narrative means, they also insist on the primacy of narrative in imparting a coherent pattern to experience, and on the centrality of the role it plays in humanity's quest for meaning.

Contents: History and Identity in Canadian Literature - The Divided Self in Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* - Sounding Silence in O'Hagan's *Tay John* - Myths Made Flesh in Hodgins's *The Invention of the World* - Naming the World in Bowering's *Burning Water* - Role-Playing in Davies's *Deptford Trilogy* - Making History in Atwood's *The Robber Bride* - Writing on the Wall in Findley's *Famous Last Words*.

The Author: David Lucking is Professor of English at the University of Lecce, where he teaches both English and Canadian literature. His full-length publications include *Ancestors and Gods: Margaret Laurence and the Dialectics of Identity*, *Plays upon the Word: Shakespeare's Drama of Language*, *Beyond Innocence: Literary Transformations of the Fall*, and *Conrad's Mysteries: Variations on an Archetypal Theme*.