



LITERARY IMPOSTORS

Canadian Autofiction of the Early Twentieth Century

Rosmarin Heidenreich

"Rosmarin Heidenreich treats the subjects of 'literary imposters' and autofiction with great understanding and knowledge, making them comprehensible and captivating to the reader. This is a wonderful book that examines its characters with great insight. A considerable advancement."

-Diana Birchall, author of *Onoto Watanna: The Story of Winnifred Eaton*

"An entertaining and well-written study of the reinvention or re-engenderment of the lives of the surprisingly high number of 'impostors' in early Canadian literature. Heidenreich makes convincing points through suspensefully told detective work."

-Martin Kuester, Philipps-Universität Marburg Foreign Languages Institute of English & American Studies



In the first half of the twentieth century, a number of Canadian authors were revealed to have faked the identities that made them famous. What is extraordinary about these writers is that they actually "became," in everyday life, characters they had themselves invented. Many of their works were simultaneously fictional and autobiographical, reflecting the duality of their identities.

In *Literary Impostors*, Rosmarin Heidenreich tells the intriguing stories, both the "true" and the fabricated versions, of six Canadian authors who obliterated their pasts and re-invented themselves: Grey Owl was in fact an Englishman named Archie Belaney; Will James, the cowboy writer from the American West, was the Quebec-born francophone Ernest Dufault; the prairie novelist Frederick Philip Grove turned out to be the German writer and translator Felix Paul Greve. Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, Onoto Watanna, and Sui Sin Far were the chosen identities of three mixed-race writers whose given names were, respectively, Sylvester Long, Winnifred Eaton, and Edith Eaton. Heidenreich argues that their imposture, in some cases not discovered until long after their deaths, was not fraudulent in the usual sense: these writers forged new identities to become who they felt they really were.

In an age of proliferating cyber-identities and controversial claims to ancestry, *Literary Impostors* raises timely questions involving race, migrancy, and gender to illustrate the porousness of the line that is often drawn between an author's biography and the fiction he or she produces.

Rosmarin Heidenreich is professor emerita at the Université de Saint-Boniface.

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