



Theatre and AutoBiography: Writing and Performing Lives in Theory and Practice

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That both autobiography and biography have acquired a position of unprecedented importance over the past 30 years is now obvious. Less obvious are the reasons for this phenomenon. Theorists and students of AutoBiography, a research subject now viewed as respectable in academic circles, have recently mapped the contours and shifting parameters of the autobiographical and the biographical processes, thereby contributing to the profile and stature of both.

This collection brings theatre practitioners together with academics from three continents in a groundbreaking exploration of the interdisciplinary realm of Theatre and AutoBiography. On the theoretical side, the contributors draw on a range of contemporary theorists: from Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze and Emmanuel Levinas to Judith Butler, Mieke Bal and Homi Bhabha; from Elin Diamond and Jill Dolan to Leigh Gilmore, Paul John Eakin and Philippe Lejeune.

In general terms, auto/biographical performances have become hugely popular forms in Europe and North America because we live in a culture of me or I at a time when access to cultural production is easy. AutoBiographies satisfy our desire for story at the same time as they promise to give us truths (if not Truth). With the post-postmodern return of the author and the waning of a deep-seated antihumanism associated with modernist ideology and aesthetics, a desire for agency, voice, visibility and subjectivity has resurfaced with a renewed passion.

The playwrights discussed here could scarcely be more broadly representative of British and North American drama in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: from W. B. Yeats and Samuel Beckett to Michel Tremblay, Sharon Pollock and David Mamet; from Spalding Gray and Karen Finley to Linda Griffiths; and from Orlan to Sally Clark, R. H. Thomson, Monique Mojica and George Seremba, the range of styles performances and subjectivities is extraordinary.

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Editorial Review

Review

"... for the student of life writing in any genre, these essays will provide useful test cases and variations on a wide range of theories of auto/biography current in the field. And for the student of theatre, these studies of the narratives of real life will provide compelling material to think through the epistemologies of performance, ranging from suspended disbelief to political and representational efficacy."

— *Biography*

About the Author

Sherrill Grace

Sherrill Grace is a professor of English and theatre at the University of British Columbia. She is former President, Academy I, of the Royal Society of Canada. She has lectured widely in North America, as well as in Germany, Italy, England, Belgium, France, China and Japan.

A member of several professional associations, including the Association of Canadian Studies, the Canadian Association of American Studies, the Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English, the Canadian Comparative Literature Association, the Modern Languages Association and the International Association of Professors of English, Grace was awarded the prestigious Killam Teaching Prize in 2008, and in 2009 she received the Ann Saddlemyer Award for her biography *Making Theatre: A Life of Sharon Pollock*.

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