



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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