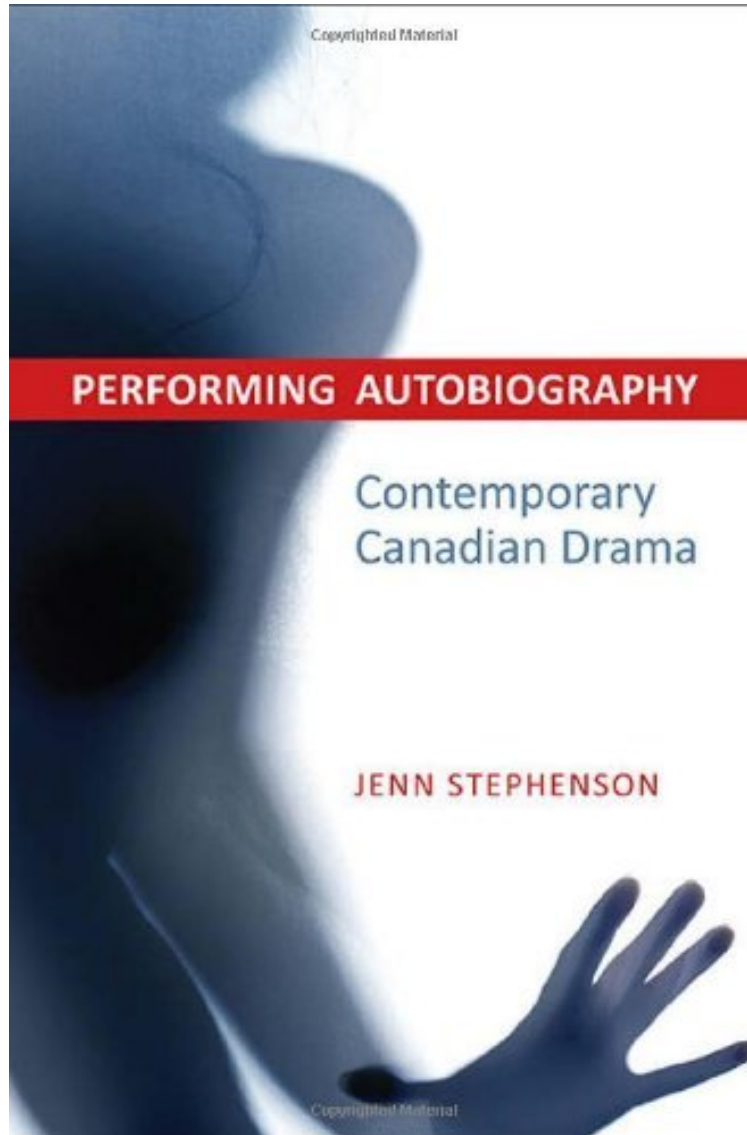


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# Performing Autobiography: Contemporary Canadian Drama

*Jennifer Stephenson*

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**Jennifer Stephenson : Performing Autobiography: Contemporary Canadian Drama** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Performing Autobiography: Contemporary Canadian Drama:

In Performing Autobiography, Jenn Stephenson presents an innovative new approach to autobiography studies that links the growing field of research to drama. Stephenson's analysis engages with performance histories to

demonstrate the extent to which the dramatic form, which recasts autobiography as ambiguously fictive, ensures that the experience of the plays remains open to revision, alteration, and interpretation. As such, *Performing Autobiography* understands this form not to be the impossible documentation of the backward-looking narrative of one's life, but rather an evolving process of self-creation and transformation. Stephenson explores the autobiographical form by analysing seven works by Canadian playwrights written and performed between 1999 and 2009, including Judith Thompson's *Perfect Pie*, Daniel MacIvor's *In On It*, and Timothy Findley's *Shadows*. Her analysis encourages us to see autobiography as a uniquely political act, one that, where enacted on stage, illustrates the variety of ways that self-reflection and interpretation has an expanding role in contemporary culture.

*Performing Autobiography* is a fascinating and important contribution to theatre and drama studies. Jenn Stephenson delivers incredibly in-depth analyses and discussions with a lucidity which is only rarely found. (Michael Heinze *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English* vol 2:2:2014) *Performing Autobiography* is a serious advance in state-of-the-art research in Canadian theatre studies, metatheatre, theatrical biography, and autobiography more generally. With considerable scholarly and intellectual rigour, Jenn Stephenson provides careful readings of key contemporary plays. Her study is meticulously researched, but employs that research carefully and wears its learning lightly. (Ric Knowles, Professor of Theatre Studies, University of Guelph) Smart, original, and important, *Performing Autobiography* is a model of dramatic criticism and a very well executed record of some contemporary Canadian plays. In this elegantly written study, Jenn Stephenson provides both the necessary information and a wonderful sense of texture so that both the expert and the general interest reader can feel thoroughly engaged. She is to be applauded for the scope of work selected and for her terrific case studies. (Susan Bennett, Department of English, University of Calgary) About the Author Jenn Stephenson is an associate professor in the Department of Drama at Queen's University.