IN PRAISE OF THE ANTHOLOGIST’S CRAFT

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Anthology [Medieval Greek, anthologia, literally, “gathering of flowers”] A selection of literary, musical, or artistic works or parts of works.

Merriam-Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature

It might well be said of me that here I have merely made up a bunch of other people’s flowers and provided nothing of my own but the string that binds them.

Michel de Montaigne, “Of Physiognomy”

At a recent celebration of the publication of his seventh and latest anthology of American plays at the Martin E. Segal Theatre of the City University of New York, New Downtown Now: An Anthology of New Theater from Downtown New York (University of Minnesota Press, 2006), Mac Wellman (co-editor with Young Jean Lee), commented wryly, “It’s an odd thing to be an anthologist.” For some time I have been delving into the history of anthologies of modern drama, trying to fathom the secrets of the anthologist’s craft, asking myself the following questions: What are the reasons for putting together an anthology? How is it done? And who are anthologists? As a result of pondering these questions, I think I am beginning to understand why the anthologist’s profession is an odd one. The paradox is that the anthologist is a writer whose books are written by other people.

The anthologist of modern drama is a go-between who pairs off readers with playwrights. To be an anthologist one needs to join the creative sensibility of an artist to the analytical spirit of a critic. Whoever would anthropologist modern drama must play the role of a proselytizer and prophet willing to take risks. I believe that anthologies serve to define the nature of modern drama, and anthologists may even influence its course. A look at the history of modern drama anthologies is the best way to test my hypotheses. When did anthologies of modern drama first start to appear, who made them, for what audiences, for what purposes, and according to what principles? What functions do such collections serve? What has been their role in shaping our ideas about what modern drama is?
Because of their length traditional full-length plays do not lend themselves to the anthology format as readily as poetry. From the beginning the purpose of an anthology—a Greek word, meaning collection of flowers—has been to offer many short examples, usually of poetry, as in the case of *The Greek Anthology*, *Tottel’s Miscellany* (1557), or *Palgrave’s Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* (1861). Although anthologies can be made according to many different principles of selection and to serve a wide variety of purposes, one of their most important uses is the introduction of new and unknown writers to the public. The prominence given to the one-act form by the American Little Theatre movement and the European Independent Theatre movement (starting with Antoine’s Théâtre Libre) served to advance the anthologizing of modern drama. The short form, which was integral to the aesthetics and the ideology of the modern theatre, was a radical departure from the entrenched formulas of dramatic composition, performance practice, and audience reception that held sway in the commercial theatre. The evening of one-act plays had far-reaching consequences and diverse implications. It was egalitarian in permitting five or six authors to be heard instead of a single voice; it was democratic in authorizing a plurality of styles and declaring that anything goes. Unlike hierarchically categorized full-length plays with their genre rules and expectations, the one-act play had no a priori structure; rather, by breaking with past assumptions coming from the well-made heritage that plays had special principles of construction whose laws only professional playwrights could master; the one-act threw open the question of what a play is, de-emphasized commercial success, encouraged risk-taking, and welcomed newcomers, strangers, and outsiders: novelists, painters, poets, musicians, and women.

The short form itself, as Strindberg argued, was modern, particularly suited to the nervous, hurried new age that had no time for slow-paced exposition or tedious minor characters. Short forms made possible the anthologizing of drama, which in turn encouraged the writing of one-act plays. Of course there had been short plays in the history of Western theatre before 1900, but they had been farces or slight comedies that had occupied only an ancillary and subordinate position in theatrical programs, as curtain raisers, interludes, or afterpieces; according to classical aesthetics, shortness was synonymous with insignificance and triviality.

Now let us return to the Little Theatre movement at the time of the First World War. That’s when it all began. Anthologies of “modern” drama first started to appear in America—nearly a hundred years ago—in the second decade of the twentieth century. Although modern drama itself was born and grew up on European soil, the anthologizing of it has been largely an American business: these are practical matters of selection, presentation and distribution, promotion and dissemination, designed to facilitate and encourage consumption. Europeans issued manifestos, Americans made anthologies.

That such anthologies of modern drama are almost exclusively an American invention is the result of a complex set of circumstances that I can only briefly outline here. The modern drama anthology came into existence as a consequence of the close ties that developed in the early-twentieth century between American universities and
the new theatre movements. Professor playwrights, with connections to amateur and semi-professional drama societies and to community and little theatres, became involved in the production and publication of new American plays (including their own) and began teaching courses in modern drama and in playwriting in English departments at universities such as Harvard, Wisconsin, and Yale, where eventually departments of theatre arose. The professor playwrights, who traveled to Europe and kept abreast of developments there, were well versed in the European roots of the new American drama and urged its teaching and study within this broader international context.

The two professor playwrights who pioneered the anthologizing of new drama were George Pierce Baker and Thomas Herbert Dickinson, and it is their contributions that I wish to discuss now. It is important to remember that at this point the concept of modern drama had not yet been defined. There was no pre-existing, easily identifiable body of work—it was still being written. At first the works in question were simply called new plays or contemporary plays. The terms modern and modernism did not become current in the Anglo-American literary world until later in the 1920s.

The first collections of new plays to be published were regional, originating with the small independent theatres that had produced them or from the playwriting workshops or laboratories out of which they grew. It is worth noting that the earliest anthologies of contemporary work were of short plays, permitting the inclusion of three or four plays in a slim volume.

The first anthology of new American plays is *Wisconsin Plays*, edited by Dickinson in 1914, and chosen from the repertory of The Wisconsin Dramatic Society that had been established in Milwaukee and Madison by Dickinson in 1910. The three plays by Wisconsin authors are *Neighbors* by the novelist Zona Gale, Dickinson’s own *In the Hospital*, and the poet William Ellery Leonard’s *Glory of the Morning* about native Americans. The aim of the collection is to “encourage the study, criticism, and writing of plays.” Writers, Dickinson maintains, need the freedom “to experiment with a rapidly changing art,” and this means freedom “from commercial necessities, from professional trammels, even from too insistent social purposes.” The volume is dedicated by the playwrights to the director, player, and writer Laura (Case) Sherry (1873–1947) who ran the Workshop of the Wisconsin Players and edited the second volume of *Wisconsin Plays* in 1915. In 1916 the Provincetown Players and the Washington Square Players in New York brought out their own collections, contributing to the formation of a tradition of theatre-based anthologies.

The most famous early anthologist was George Pierce Baker (1866–1935), the first professor of dramatic literature at Harvard and originator of a course in playwriting in 1905 that eventually became the 47 Workshop. He considered theatre a contemporary phenomenon worthy of academic study, and he published new experimental plays by young American playwrights that grew out of his workshops and laboratories at both Harvard and Radcliffe as the best way to get them read and staged. Baker’s anthologies of new American plays include *Plays of the 47 Workshop* (1918), *Plays of
the Harvard Dramatic Club (1919-20), and later collections of contemporary one-act plays and modern American plays. Although he wrote about European theatre as a critic, Baker limited his play collections to new American writing.

The pioneer anthologist of international modern drama was Thomas Herbert Dickinson (1877–1961), one of the Wisconsin playwrights and a professor at Baylor in 1901–2 (where he taught stagecraft), the University of Wisconsin from 1909 to 1916, and later at the Institute of the Theatre of the Mohawk Drama Festival (Union College, Schenectady, New York). Like Baker, Dickinson wished to promote the dissemination and staging of new plays. In his Insurgent Theatre (1917) he presents the case of those “who venture on experiments into new forms of theatrical activity,” arguing that “the old theatre must be destroyed and a new theatre be built up in its stead.”

With his series Chief Contemporary Dramatists in three volumes, published by Houghton Mifflin (Boston) in 1915, 1921, and 1930, Dickinson created the first modern drama anthologies that brought together new American, English, and Irish plays with continental European drama. Two volumes of Continental Plays followed in 1935. With these collections, it has been argued that Dickinson did more than any other teacher “to encourage the growth of college courses devoted to the study of living playwrights.” The college courses in turn produced new generations of play readers, who then bought and read the anthologies.

For the anthologies to thrive there had to be created a new public trained “in mind and imagination” for the challenges of play reading. During the nineteenth-century as literature and theatre moved in opposite directions, play reading went out of fashion in England and America. The play scripts of popular melodramas and farces with their technical stage directions were never intended to be read as literary texts, but rather were designed to be used as actors’ prompt books. The Little Theatre movement had attracted a new generation of literate spectators to the theatre. Reading plays became popular once again, and the anthologists presented new American and European plays as something exciting to read.

The first Chief Contemporary Dramatists of 1915, at 676 double-columned pages of small print, contains 20 plays of a very heterogeneous nature, some old-fashioned nineteenth-century works, others recent and experimental. Lady Gregory, Chekhov, Strindberg, Hauptmann appear for the first time in an international anthology. Because no canon and no precedent existed, the plays made accessible in Dickinson’s anthology were genuine discoveries, many never before available (at least in English) and some written no more than a few years earlier.

But recognizing that the new was constantly changing, Dickinson wrote in the “Preface” to his second volume of Chief Contemporary Dramatists in 1921 that the old thesis and problem plays were now obsolete, that drama did not have to be “socially serviceable,” and that arts outside the theatre were bringing new techniques and viewpoints to the craft of playmaking. Modern drama had become interdisciplinary.
“In a generation the theater has changed from a highly professional institution, with the door closed on all extraneous experiments, to a workshop of painters, novelists, and craftsmen generally.” Dickinson implies that anthologists must constantly update their collections or risk having them discarded as old-fashioned.

Might it be that anthologies of “modern” drama by their very nature age quickly, grow dated, and need to be replaced? Should each new generation have its own anthologies? If we look back at such collections over the past century, we are surprised at the presence of authors once deemed important who are now scarcely remembered and at the absence of playwrights then totally unknown who are now recognized as major figures.

Not only do new authors constantly appear and demand to be included, but with the passage of time there are huge shifts in perspective and sensibility, revealing playwrights, countries, and continents previously ignored that suddenly become essential and others, once indispensable, now consigned to oblivion. In addition to his work as teacher and anthologist, Dickinson continued his career as a writer and playwright. In 1929 the Provincetown Players presented his Winter Bound (about a veiled lesbian relationship) at the Garrick Theatre, and in 1937 he edited Theatre in a Changing Europe, a collection of essays written by leading European critics.

In the 1920s and 30s anthologies of modern drama began to proliferate. As had been the practice of the Wisconsin Dramatic Society and the Provincetown Players, many theatres and theatrical organizations put out their own collections, such as Theatre Guild Plays, Federal Theatre Plays, Moscow Art Theatre Plays, and Eva Le Gallienne’s Civic Repertory Plays. Professors (who often were no longer playwrights) continued to produce anthologies that were now starting to be produced as classroom textbooks, such as Montrose J. Moses’s Dramas of Modernism and their Forerunners, Samuel Marion Tucker’s Modern Continental Plays, and E. Bradlee Watson and Benfield Pressey’s multi-volumes of Contemporary Drama, American and European. John Gassner did a more popular series of Best Plays of the Modern American Theatre.

There were now so many collections that they inevitably started to duplicate one another, have overlapping selections, and gather together what had appeared in previous anthologies. Eventually these textbooks were no longer presenting the new, but taking a backward look at what—by the mid-twentieth century—had emerged as the modern canon. This was the modernist tradition—as understood in the American academy—running from Ibsen and Strindberg through Shaw, Chekhov, Gorky, Pirandello, to O’Neill, Miller, Williams, and eventually to Beckett and Ionesco. By the late 1940s and early 50s modern drama had lost some of its bite and dangerous indeterminacy and become a known entity, its boundaries already defined, rather than being constantly pushed forward.

In the mid-twentieth century a new professor playwright, Eric Bentley, arrived on the scene and refused to tolerate the status quo. Bentley blew the dust off anthologizing, introduced a different, more personal approach, and proposed a new configuration
for our understanding of what modern drama is. Attacking his predecessors, Bentley complained that there were too many mediocre anthologies that repeated one another and that the whole enterprise of anthologizing modern drama had acquired a bad name, for which apologies were in order. These bulky double-columned volumes were devoted to the commercially active repertory consisting of narrow ephemeral pieces, scripts of the moment, and a very limited and repetitious number of modern classics.

Totally avoiding principal playwrights and over-anthologized masterpieces, Bentley opts for plays chosen for neither commercial nor academic considerations, plays which do not represent anything, but which perpetuate the creative tradition of writing that will be of interest to readers, playgoers, actors, directors, and above all young writers eager to break with old forms and seek new ones. With the three-volume *From the Modern Repertoire* (Indiana University Press, 1949–1956), followed by the six-volume *The Modern Theatre* (Doubleday Anchor, 1955–57), which reprints some plays appearing in the earlier collections, Bentley sets out to teach us what modern drama really is. He writes as a connoisseur whose aim is to enlarge the concept of the modern and to reveal a hidden modern repertory whose plays are waiting to be staged.

Modern drama is a vast continent that has existed for many years, Bentley argues; we are simply ignorant of its dimensions because our notions of important theatre have been captive to success on Broadway. There exists an alternative tradition of the modern—modern in spirit regardless of date—that is new and unknown. Instead of starting with Ibsen and going to Arthur Miller, we should seek the origins of modern drama at the beginning of the nineteenth century with Büchner and Musset and then discover the richness and diversity of plays and playwrights that follow in their eccentric footsteps.

Bentley brought to his work as anthologist deep learning, a knowledge of languages and a sensitivity to the importance of translation, distinctive personal taste, and, most important of all, he brought Bertolt Brecht, an active writer whose work was as radical and disruptive as Ibsen’s and Strindberg’s had been 75 years earlier. Although by 1949, when *Three Penny Opera* appeared in the first volume of *From the Modern Repertory*, he had written almost all his major work and there had already been some translations and productions of his work in America, Brecht had never before been anthologized and was hardly known to the broad public. Brecht was now to become a cornerstone of the modern and a central figure in all future anthologies.

In addition to redefining the scope and nature of modern drama, Bentley reconceived the feel and texture of the anthology. *From the Modern Repertory* volumes were still somewhat stodgy in size and color (despite drawings and production photographs), but the five Doubleday Anchor *Modern Theatre* volumes are paperbacks (perhaps the first modern drama paperbacks) that are light and lithe and can be held in one hand. They are appealing to the eye, with attractive pictorial cover design and typography. For the first time anthologies of modern drama look modern, not old fashioned. The
translations or English versions are often new—by Bentley himself or by friends like Jacques Barzun. In his discussion of translation versus adaptation in volume two, Bentley brings to the forefront key issues that future anthologists will have to face. Bentley redefined the territory of modern drama by extending it back to Büchner and bringing it up to date with Brecht, a revolutionary theatre practitioner and living embodiment of the new. Modern drama again becomes something alive and exciting. Bentley rehabilitated the anthology.

The 1960s were the heyday of the modern drama anthologies. As courses in modern drama became widespread in American universities, ever bigger and better anthologies were produced to serve this market. The principal aim now is no longer to introduce new authors and plays to readers or to persuade theatre companies to make adventurous choices and enlarge their repertories. It is now assumed that there is a common body of modern drama that can be put into a large textbook for undergraduate courses. The prescribed body of dramatic literature, starting with Ibsen and going to absurd, Beckett and Ionesco, has become familiar and classifiable.

These academic anthologies are textbooks designed for students and teachers; as such, they must include the familiar classics of the modern repertory in order to fulfill academic expectations. One anthology tends to repeat another, although each must have at least one or more novel feature. As competing products from rival publishing firms, these anthologies now offer special features, and accessories in the form of critical apparatus, study guides, essays about the plays, footnotes, and bibliographies.

In the “Foreword” to his Norton Critical Editions *Modern Drama* (1966), Cornell University Professor Anthony Caputi declares, “Modern drama, as any list of recent publications will tell you, is an anthologist’s heaven” because of “its wealth of playwrights and plays, its great variety of styles and modes, and its inevitable lack of hierarchical categories and time sanctioned judgments.” Unfortunately, rather than take advantage of this variety (which Bentley had promoted), the textbook anthologists for the most part play it safe and stick to the tried and proven. Instead of variety, a self-perpetuating canon running from Ibsen to the absurd has been institutionalized. Professor Caputi is a case in point. He asserts that modern drama is “still a living drama” that is too much with us for certainty to be possible in the choice of plays. And yet at the time of the publication of Caputi’s collection, all the authors in the volume—Ibsen, Chekhov, Shaw, Strindberg, O’Neill, Pirandello—were dead and the plays in the volume were already warhorses. For the second edition in 1991 of Caputi’s Norton anthology, now called *Eight Modern Plays*, Brecht and Beckett were added, and several previous weak choices were replaced by better examples.

Somewhat belatedly in 1981 Grove Press, which since the 1950s had published in separate volumes many of the most important works of contemporary theatre, both American and European, brought out a “big name” collection, *Nine Plays of the Modern Theatre*, with an introduction by Harold Clurman. It included the major
playwrights in the Grove catalogue: Brecht, Beckett, Dürrenmatt, Genet, Pinter, Ionesco, Mrozek, Stoppard, and Mamet.

The two heavyweights of text book anthologies of modern drama are Block and Shedd’s *Masters of Modern Drama* (1962) with 43 plays by 35 authors, 1198 pages, and Corrigan’s *Modern Theatre* (1968) with 40 plays by 35 authors, 1287 pages. Published respectively by Random House and Macmillan, large commercial houses, these are “trade” volumes intended to go into multiple printings and show healthy profits. Weighing in at seven and eight pounds, these unwieldy and oversized anthologies are not books to be read in bed, held in one hand, or carried to class; they must be spread out and read on a large, sturdy desk.

Block and Shedd stress the greatness and landmark nature of their choices, offer newly commissioned translations, and furnish photographs of productions. Confessing that he wanted to include 75 plays, Corrigan provides “a good representation of the established masterpieces,” plus a few previously unexplored areas and 16 new or unpublished translations. Even within the Western tradition, the oversights and imbalances in these two exemplary anthologies are today glaring to us in hindsight—no Russian plays beyond Chekhov and Gorky, no Scandinavians past Ibsen and Strindberg, no Eastern European plays, no Latin American or South American plays, no black playwrights, and no women playwrights, except for Lillian Hellman, whose *Little Foxes* Corrigan includes in *Modern Theatre*. Later in the 1960s Corrigan, an indefatigable anthologist, brought out nine paperback volumes of *Masterpieces of Modern Theatre*, arranged by country or geographic area, using some of the plays and translations from his *Modern Theatre* and adding a mixed bag of dated and forward-looking plays in an effort to broaden the range of choices.

With *The New Theatre of Europe*, three volumes brought out by Dell from 1968 to 1970, Corrigan and Martin Esslin attempted to revive the commitment to the new and to return to the initial aim of the original anthologists of modern drama: the introduction of new voices.

From the mid–1960s to the mid–1970s, George Wellwarth, who for many years edited a journal of new translations, *Modern International Drama*, created, either single-handedly or with Michael Benedikt, a number of anthologies devoted to European playwrights. These include *Modern French Plays*, *Post-War German Theatre*, *Modern Spanish Theatre*, *New Generation Spanish Drama*, *Three Catalan Dramatists*, and *Underground Spanish Drama*, a volume which promoted writers banned during the Franco years.

The big anthologies that attempted to be all inclusive and cover modern drama in its entirety had of course charted but one line of an extremely complex story, and that only partially. By the 1970s the monolithic modern drama of the big anthologies no longer existed in the present and therefore had ceased to be modern. A single common body of plays representative of the modern could no longer be authoritatively imposed. There had been and would continue to be waves of the new, one
coming after the other, in different places and at different tempos and times. There are many different kinds of newness to be explored.

The new generations of anthologists who appeared in the 1970s and 80s staked out smaller, more specialized territories. Multiculturalism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism furthered the fragmentation of anthologies into enclaves, outposts, and settlements. The age of the specialized anthologies began when plays became grouped by linguistic and geographical areas, by country, by theme, by gender of authors, or by their ethnicity, nationality, sickness, or disability. New kinds of anthologies emerged to cover those aspects of modern drama that had been underrepresented, neglected, or ignored previously. There were also plays from theatres (as there had been at the beginning of the twentieth century), from festivals, and special occasions. Black theatre, African theatre, Latin American theatre, plays by women—these were all areas previously ignored that became the subjects of dozens of new anthologies.

The later 1960s saw the explosion of a new generation of American playwrights. Theatres and theatrical organizations and directors continued to play an innovative role in creating anthologies of works that their companies produced and promoted. For example, a collection of 18 short plays, entitled *Collision Course*, by Duberman, Feiffer, Melfi, Dexler, Shepard, Horovitz, McNally, and others, was edited by Edward Parone, who had directed a production of eleven of these at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles in 1967 and at the Café Au Go Go in New York in 1968.

In his collection *Theatre Experiment* (1967) the poet Michael Benedikt includes works by Stein, Lowell, Cummings, and Drexler among the 13 American plays that make up the volume. In 1956 and 1966 James Laughlin at New Directions made an important contribution to the publication of plays by literary figures, poets and novelists with two volumes of *Play Books*, “Plays for a New Theatre,” that include works by Robert Hivnor, Lionel Abel, Jack Hawkes, and I.A. Richards, and translations of Ivan Goll, Boris Vian, and Junji Kinoshita—one of the few cases in which an Asian writer appears in a modern drama anthology. The largest (over 500 pages) and best-known anthology of new American plays in this period was Albert Poland and Bruce Mailman’s *Off-Off-Broadway Book*, published by Bobbs-Merrill. Among the 37 plays, organized by theatre, are Baraka’s *Slave Ship*, Stein’s *What Happened*, and works by Ed Bullins, Charles Ludlam, Megan Terry, Ronald Tavel, and almost all the other creators of theatrical ferment in the 1960s.

In 1971–72 Joseph Papp’s Public Theatre began publishing a series called *Scripts*, edited by Erika Munk and Bill Coco. Each volume contained three to five plays by American writers like Sam Shepard, Adrienne Kennedy, Megan Terry, and David Rabe, as well as works in translation by the likes of Wolfgang Hildesheimer, Peter Handke, and Le Théâtre du Soleil. Scripts had an impressive rooster of play readers that included Ed Bullins, Richard Foreman, Rochelle Owens, and Murray Mednick. Mednick, who in 1978 founded the Padua Hills Playwrights Workshop and Festival, starting in 1982 published several volumes of *Plays from Padua Hills*, which
featured writers who worked there at the theatre lab, such as Maria Irene Fornes, John O’Keefe, and Mednick himself.

Since 1976, when the Humana Festival of New American Plays was founded by John Jory at the Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Festival has published 28 *Actors Theatre Anthologies*. Other festivals that were publishing anthologies include the *Off-Off Broadway Short Play Festival Plays*, now in its 30th series. Since 2001 Martin Denton, director of The New York Theatre Experience, has been publishing annual collections, *Plays and Playwrights*, each containing ten to 12 plays recently produced Off-Off-Broadway. Founded in 1949, The New Dramatists, a non-profit organization for the development of drama, began in 2000 publishing annual volumes of plays by their “graduates.”

For 20 years, from 1982 to 2002, the Ubu Repertory Theater under the direction of Francoise Kourilsky presented a wide range of new Francophone plays and commissioned translations, publishing over one hundred plays and creating a number of original anthologies, including three volumes of *Women’s Plays, Playwrights of Exile, Theater and Politics, Afrique 1: New Plays from Congo, Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Zaire* and *Afrique 2: New Plays from Madagascar, Mauritania, and Togo*.

Theatre Communications Group, representing the national network of nonprofit professional theatres, has made available new American work through the plays published in *Plays in Process* and the magazine *American Theatre*. The best of these, chosen from nominations by the participating theatres, have been collected in *New Plays USA*, edited by James Leverett, a series of four volumes published from 1982 to 1988. Each volume included a newly commissioned translation, and the playwrights received USA awards, assuring future production. TCG’s anthologizing actively promoted staging. In addition to numerous volumes devoted to individual authors, TCG also publishes a number of contemporary drama anthologies focusing on ethnic, gender, and thematic subjects and issues, such as *Plays by African American Women, Plays of the Holocaust, Native American Plays*, and *Contemporary Plays by Disabled Playwrights*.

Non-profit and small independent presses play a special role in the business of anthologizing since they are willing to undertake projects shunned by commercial houses because they will sell only a very limited number of copies. For example, Glenn Young’s Applause Theatre Books is an small independent publisher devoted exclusively to theatre and film that features, among its many general anthologies, a number of collections of modern plays by women. These include: two volumes of *Lesbian Plays*, two volumes of *Plays by American Women Playwrights, 1900–1930* and *1930–1965*, and *Avant-Garde Plays by Women*.

Publisher-generated anthologizing can result in the development of important play collections, when the publishers have clearly thought-out goals, formulate a coherent program, and then entrust the preparation of individual volumes in each series to inventive editors. Such has been the case with Bonnie Marranca and Gautam
Dasgupta who in 1976 founded *Performing Arts Journal*, where over a period of 30 years they have published nearly 100 modern and contemporary plays, including many works in translations by writers such as Yourcenar, Bernhard, Fassbinder, and Müller, as well as Mac Wellman, Maria Irene Fornes, and Charles L. Mee. When in 1978 the journal also became a publishing house, Performing Arts Journal Publications, it was natural for the editors to create anthologies based at least in part on the plays that had first appeared in the journal.

Designed for readers and theatre practitioners, *PAJ* anthologies have been sharply focused in subject and theme and broadly interpretive in exploring and advancing knowledge about significant areas of modern and contemporary theatre. In their anthologies the editors have been innovative in advancing an aesthetic of the future by recognizing new talents and new trends in American drama, recovering aspects of the early twentieth-century avant-garde, and calling attention to the contemporary drama of Europe, particularly that of countries that have been neglected.

In choosing to cover these three areas in their modern and contemporary drama anthologies—modernism and the historical avant-gardes, contemporary European drama, and experimental American—the editors of *PAJ* have argued their beliefs. The ten volumes devoted to modernism and avant-garde movements and styles, ignored or under-represented in the textbook anthologies, reveal that these seemingly ephemeral movements are the true basis of modern theatre and still live on in present-day theatrical practices. Rather than being short-lived byways as the textbooks would often have us believe, these early twentieth-century movements prove to be foundational. *PAJ* provides a corrective re-interpretation by making available the texts not included in previous anthologies because they were too short (sometimes very short) and because they were connected to performance and the visual arts rather than to literature.

In their anthologizing *PAJ* has moved away from an exclusively Anglo-American focus and gone into previously uncharted regions, such as Symbolism, Bauhaus, Cabaret, Dadaism, and Surrealism. Where, as in the case of Futurism, an excellent anthology already existed but was no longer in print, *PAJ* brought out a new edition of Michael Kirby’s *Futurist Performance* (first published by Dutton in 1961). The other volumes in this series were new. The one area of the avant-garde already represented by anthologies was German Expressionism. In 1963 Walter Sokel had published *An Anthology of German Expressionist Drama*, reprinted in shortened form by Cornell in 1981. In England Calder and Boyars had published *Vision and Aftermath: Four German Expressionist War Plays* (1969) and *Seven German Expressionist Plays* (1970). However, whereas the emphasis in Sokel and in the Methuen volumes is on literary texts, Mel Gordon has chosen both plays and performance pieces, and he includes a variety of documentary and pictorial material illustrating Expressionist production and acting styles in his *PAJ* volume. In 2001 Yale University Press brought out an anthology that attempts to bring together in one volume all the experimental modernist movements, combining plays and critical documents; *Theater of the Avant-Garde 1890–1950*, edited by Bert Cardullo and Robert Knopf,
includes performances pieces by Kandinsky, Boccioni, Marinetti, Tristan Tzara, and the Russian Oberiu and omits Brecht and Pirandello as essentially mainstream.

In *PAJ*’s international Symbolist collection, which I edited, there are previously untranslated short plays by Russian and Polish poets as well as the first appearance in English of Madame Rachilde as a playwright. The eight volumes of foreign theatre, DramaContemporary, cover countries never before represented, such as Hungary and India, as well as countries like Spain, still underrepresented, and those like France whose most recent dramatic literature remains largely unknown. Starting in 2007 *PAJ* is planning to publish new volumes of plays in translation that will include *Act French: Contemporary Plays from France, The Barcelona Plays* (featuring Catalan writers), and a forthcoming collection of new European Drama.

The *PAJ* collections of contemporary American drama devised and realized by the publishers themselves have as their goals to promote actively the reading and production of new plays—aims similar to those of the early twentieth-century anthologists. Appearing from 1980 to 1986, the five volumes of *Word Plays: New American Drama*, include plays which have been selected as innovative approaches to writing for the theatre, whether or not they have yet been produced. The authors may or may not be well-known. Emphasis is on verbal experiments with theatrical form that are sometimes provocative and difficult. As both Dickinson and Bentley had maintained at earlier points in the century, the *PAJ* publishers believe that changes in dramatic form produce the most fundamental impetus for the creation of the new by authors both known and unknown. These collections were among the most influential of the decade.

*PAJ* also brought out two volumes of *The Women’s Project*, edited by Julia Miles, and *Theatre of the Ridiculous*, a collection of the work of a celebrated theatre that has come to represent a style. Bonnie Marranca’s *Theatre of Images* (originally published in 1977 by Drama Book Specialists, and reprinted by Johns Hopkins University Press during the nineties in an edition now available through *PAJ*) is a collection of three plays by Robert Wilson, Richard Foreman and Lee Breuer that use the visual arts as both means and end.

In 1996, 15 years after the first *Word Plays*, Bonnie Marranca edited a new anthology of American drama, *Plays for the End of the Century* (identified as volume 6 of *Word Plays*), whose title suggests the sense of crisis and need for a new beginning that is the guiding spirit of the collection. The plays that Marranca selected for the anthology are symptomatic of a new direction in America drama that she detects and hails at the turn of the century, as innovative writers turn away from the social and psychological toward the spiritual. American drama should be free to explore the poetic language of forms and to address metaphysical issues, rather than stay captive to journalistically formulated issues of identity, race, and gender. Here the anthologist intervenes directly in the course of modern drama and offers models to follow.
A look at a recent all-inclusive textbook collection indicates how the art of anthologizing has evolved. Published in 2003, the Longman Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Drama: A Global Perspective, edited by Michael Greenwald, Roberta Promo, Anne Marie Welsh, and Roger Schulz is an attempt to combine in one large paperback volume of over 1,000 pages the old modern drama model with the new specialized multicultural, ethnic, and feminist collections. Equipped with special pedagogical features, mini-lessons, showcases, and historical background material and cultural contexts, the Longman Anthology is a textbook designed to appeal to new constituencies of students and teachers. The changes in patterns of cultural dominance are striking. More than half the authors are Anglophone, and 12 of these are from the United States. From the global perspective, the continental European canon has shrunk to a mere six plays in the first sections of the collection, and previously underrepresented regions—Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean—now assume a prominent place in the contemporary panoply. The European heritage is now primarily a background for understanding our present.

As an epilogue to my exploration of the anthologist’s craft, I shall return to Mac Wellman, with whom I began these reflections. In addition to his latest collection, New Downtown Now, he has published Theatre of Wonders: Six Contemporary American Plays, Slant Six: New Theater from Minnesota’s Playwrights Center, and From the Other Side of the Century II: A New American Drama 1960–1995 (co-edited with Douglas E. Messerli), at 1,200 pages and 36 plays the largest and most comprehensive anthology ever of new American plays.

If there is symmetry in the story of anthologists and anthologies that I have told, it is that the beginning of the twenty-first century in some significant ways resembles the start of the twentieth century. The editor and writer Bonnie Marranca and the professor playwright Mac Wellman are continuing the original initiatives of George Pierce Baker and Thomas Dickinson.

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