PART I

Early modern dramatic canons

Origins

1 Excluding Shakespeare

Shakespeare and His Fellow Dramatists, edited by E. H. C. Oliphant and published by Prentice Hall in 1929, was the second large-scale, classroom-oriented anthology of early modern drama in the twentieth century. In two volumes, the anthology included forty-five plays arranged in best-guess chronological order from Lyly's *Campaspe* to Brome's *A Jovial Crew*. Unlike any anthologist before him – from Robert Dodsley to Charles Lamb to A. H. Bullen to Havelock Ellis – Oliphant included a selection of the works of Shakespeare alongside, indeed chronologically in among, the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries. In his introduction, Oliphant emphasized the anthology's function as both a pedagogical tool and as a representation of an historical field:

> There have been innumerable editions of the works of Shakespeare; but they have never been soiled with contact by the works of his rivals. From their collected plays various selections have been made, to give an idea of their general accomplishment; but into these the dramas of Shakespeare have never been permitted to intrude … [In universities] it is only very rarely that Shakespeare and his contemporaries are taken together; and for students who have taken such courses, there has been no single textbook: they have been compelled to have both Shakespeare's plays in one volume or a set of volumes, and the plays of the rest in another volume or set of volumes. The aim of this work is to give a student what he will need in both fields. (1929: vii)

Oliphant's experiment was truly radical: not only has it never been repeated, but a mere two years later, Prentice Hall published a one-volume re-edition of the anthology – with all the Shakespeare taken out.[1]

[1] For a list of the anthologies and collections on either side of Oliphant which are considered in this book, see Chapter 4.

Whereas Oliphant's introduction to the 1929 edition suggested that the form of the anthology might have a practical effect upon institutionalized representations of the field of early modern drama, his introduction to the 1931 edition (under the new title *Elizabethan Dramatists Other than Shakespeare*) suggested, somewhat irately, that the form of the anthology could only reproduce an institutionalized representation that was already in place.

> By confining the contents of this volume to plays not found in volumes of Shakespeare, two purposes are served. Students are not asked to pay for plays that they already possess, and teachers who, either for preference or for academic need, follow the old plan of keeping Shakespeare and his contemporaries in separate classes, will find their purposes adequately fulfilled. (1931: v)

The key word in this passage is "classes," a pun that neatly expresses the close relation between the pedagogical dissemination and the scholarly valuation of early modern dramatic texts. Oliphant's reference to students being asked to "pay for plays that they already possess" is no doubt an indirect expression of the publisher's rationale for reducing the size of the original anthology by half. The terse passive voice suggests that while the editor may not find the economic rationale convincing, it is nevertheless impossible to circumvent: ingrained, conservative standards of value will continue to collude with the means of production to create anthologies that represent a sharply bifurcated view of early modern dramatic literature and continue to ensure that Shakespeare remains unsoiled by contact with the works of his rivals.

History has proved Oliphant right. The anthologies published since his 1931 revision – from Brooke and Paradise, to Fraser and Rabkin, to Norton, to Routledge – look, in the most important respect, very much like the twentieth century's first anthology, published by Houghton Mifflin almost exactly a century ago: William Alan Neilson's 1911 *The Chief Elizabethan Dramatists, Excluding Shakespeare*.

2 Trollope's Dilke

In 1814–15, the English antiquarian Charles Wentworth Dilke produced a six-volume anthology of early modern drama which gave the world its first modern editions of (among others) *Dr. Faustus*, *Bussy D'Ambois*, *The Changeling*, and *A Trick to Catch the Old One*. Where previous anthologies

had been organized more or less chronologically, with earlier plays appearing in earlier volumes, Dilke's innovation was to subordinate chronology to the figure of the author. Two plays by "Marlowe" (*Dr. Faustus* and the wrongly attributed *Lust's Dominion*) opened the collection. These were followed by three Lyly plays, then three Marston, two Dekker, three Chapman, five Middleton, and three Webster. The collection concluded with three plays by Heywood. Dilke conceived of early modern drama as a single, self-contained moment of dramatic expression, its authors united by "the same peculiarities in their language, their manner of thinking, and their moral feeling" (1814–15: vi). Structurally, his collection represented the drama as a succession of authorial styles, where the essential character of a given style was not necessarily connected to the date of any particular work. Dekker's *Wonder of a Kingdom* (printed 1636, performed c.1631) could be placed before Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois* (printed 1607, performed c.1604) because each play was grouped with others by the same author and because the earliest Dekker play (*Old Fortunatus*, 1599) was earlier than the earliest Chapman (*Bussy*). "Dekker" was neither earlier nor later than "Chapman" but merely a discrete stylistic moment. And yet, this nonchronological representation of the period, grounded in an idea about its singular aesthetic greatness, was also most forcefully expressed in chronological terms. For Dilke, the

> gloomy bigotry of the interregnum stopped the course of dramatic literature; but the Restoration did what was infinitely worse, it poisoned the "pure well-head of poetry;" and from that period we have gradually descended to our present degraded and disgraceful level. (1814–15: viii)

Effaced by the physical organization of the collection, the chronological-evolutionary scheme re-emerges in the introduction's representation of literary history. That is why, we might say, Dilke *must* put Marlowe and Lyly first, Webster and Heywood last. The chronological dimension turns out to have subsumed the aesthetic.

Perhaps one of the last serious, nonspecialist readers of Dilke's anthology was Anthony Trollope, whose copy of *Old Plays* is in the Folger Shakespeare Library. Between 1867 and 1880, Trollope read and annotated the plays Dilke had collected: at the end of each play he indicated the day on which he read it and what he thought about it. It is fair to say that Trollope respected neither Dilke's aesthetic nor his chronological mode of representing the period. We learn from Trollope's notes that he read the anthology's last play (*A Challenge for Beauty*) last, but

beyond that he skipped around at will, reading (for example) *Bussy D'Ambois* (vol. III) on March 10, 1879; *A New Wonder, A Woman Never Vex't* (vol. V) on March 12; and *Endymion* (vol. II) on March 16. The form of the anthology, its schematic temporal and authorial representations of the field, did not determine the way Trollope, in reading, represented the field to himself.

The other thing we learn from Trollope's notes is that he hated almost everything he read. He found *Mother Bombie* to be "an exceedingly silly play" (I, 287); *Antonio and Mellida*'s plot "meaningless" (II, 191); *The Thracian Wonder* "wonderfully confused" (VI, 98); *The Royal King and Loyal Subject* to suffer from "an absence of life" (VI, 321); and so on. While Dilke, believing *Lust's Dominion* to be by Marlowe, found it a "much better play" than *Dr. Faustus* (I, 91), Trollope thought it "most absurd … One can understand that Marlowe should have been accredited with its bombast, though the doing so has done an injury to Marlowe's memory" (I, 195). Trollope is only one reader and was reading at a fifty-year remove from Dilke, when the vigorous antiquarian enterprise of collecting early modern drama was nearing exhaustion and when Shakespeare had been not only canonized but deified by the Romantics; above all, his notes simply record changes in the impetus for and modes of literary valuation. But they also serve as a reminder that the historical structure expressed in, and the canonical legitimacy conferred upon dramatic texts by the form of the anthology is always and only a representation, not a determination.[2]

Nevertheless, the anthology, as a formal *idea*, is a powerful instrument. Of Chapman's *Monsieur D'Olive* Trollope said, "This is a thoroughly bad play – very little worthy of being included in the collection" (II, 433). It is an odd thing for Trollope to say, since *Monsieur D'Olive* was one of the last plays he read (April 1, 1880), and by that time he had recorded his impatience with or distaste for over two-thirds of the other plays in the collection. By the light of Trollope's own reading experience, *Monsieur D'Olive* is *exactly* the kind of play he might expect to be included in, indeed "worthy of," the collection.[3] The anthology form itself implies an aesthetic canon that subsumes its historical canon and to which its historical canon will always be incommensurate.

[2] In the Folger Shakespeare Library you can also find Trollope's annotated copy of Charles Baldwyn's *The Old English Drama* (1825), a two-volume anthology containing eight plays and organized without any concern for chronology or authorship. Perversely, Trollope read this anthology in order, from beginning to end, over the course of just a couple of weeks.

[3] See Chapter 47 for my own reading of *Monsieur D'Olive*.

3 What is an anthology? (Part I)

An anthology, in the sense that I am concerned with the term in this book, is a representation of the field of early modern dramatic literature in its temporal and aesthetic dimensions. Throughout the book I use the term "anthology" more or less interchangeably with the word "collection," but it will be useful briefly to distinguish between them here. The term "anthology" – etymologically a "gathering of flowers" – has most typically been used to describe a collection of short poems or poetic excerpts.[4] The first explicit application of the term to a collection of early modern plays was in 1935, with Edd Winfield Parks and Richmond Croom Beatty's *The English Drama: An Anthology, 900–1642*. This text, like other one- and two-volume anthologies published since 1911, was quite different from, on the one hand, the multivolume collections spawned by Dodsley's 1744 *Select Collection of Old Plays* and, on the other, the most influential "true" anthology of early modern drama, Charles Lamb's 1808 *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets*.[5] Self-professedly uninterested in dates or facts of theater history or authorial biography, Lamb provided an aesthete's abstract of the multivolume Dodsley collection (and the larger collection of plays from which it had been selected) by plucking the choicest flowers from the field Dodsley had mapped. Lamb's *anthology* focused the aesthetic charge that could be felt only diffusely in the temporal structure of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century *collections*. In the twentieth century, as early modern drama entered the university classroom, the historical impulse of the *collection* persisted in the institutional requirement to represent the entirety of the field but was restructured in the image of the *anthology*, where each selected dramatic text represented a flower from that field. In the twentieth- and twenty-first-century anthology, then, the aesthetic dimension is metonymically related to the temporal.

Anthologies represent the temporal dimension physically and structurally: in general, earlier works are placed at the beginning, or in earlier volumes, and later works are placed at the end. Nowadays it looks strange

[4] In literary studies, the term was first used to refer to Meleager's anthology (or *Garland*) of epigrams, c.100 BC. The first use of the term in the title of a work of English literature was Joseph Ritson's *The English Anthology* (1793).

[5] The first edition of *Specimens* was published by Longman. The anthology was republished in 1813 (Hamblin & Seyfeng), 1835 (Edward Moxon), 1854 (H. G. Bohn), 1893 (J. M. Dent), and 1907 (George Routledge). Lamb's supplement to *Specimens*, the *Extracts from the Garrick Plays*, was first published in William Hone's *Table Book* of 1827; these extracts were incorporated into editions of *Specimens* from 1854 on. For a reading of Lamb's idea of the non-Shakespearean canon, see Chapter 11.

if, as is the case with the four-volume *Old English Drama* (1830), *Volpone* is printed right next to *Gammer Gurton's Needle* and *Edward I* is in a later volume than *The Broken Heart*. And even in anthologies of the nineteenth century and earlier, some interest in chronological order was more typical than not. Although Dodsley's *Select Collection* was quite unsystematic in its chronological arrangement, printing (for example) Brome's *A Jovial Crew* in vol. VI of twelve, the collection's first volume contained John Bale's *God's Promises* (printed 1538), John Heywood's *The Four PP* (printed 1545), Richard Edwards' *Damon and Pithias* (printed 1571), and the anonymous *New Custom* (printed 1573) and *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (printed 1575). These works were not arranged in chronologically precise order – in fact, *New Custom* and *Gammer Gurton* were separated by *George a Green* (printed 1599) – but Dodsley introduced the whole volume with a grand chronologizing gesture: "I hope the Reader will not imagine, I give any of the Pieces in this Volume as good; but only as Curiosities, and to shew from what low Beginnings our Stage has arisen" (I, 2).

While the later volumes of the *Select Collection* underwent extensive reorganization and reselection over the next 130 years, the structural idea of its first volume persisted and was reinscribed in later editions' representations of both textual and theatrical history. Dodsley's interest in beginning with the Beginnings was preserved and made more insistent when Isaac Reed revised the *Select Collection* in 1780 so that its plays were ordered according to printing dates. He rearranged the texts of Dodsley's first volume, inserted *Gorboduc* (printed c.1570), which Dodsley had put in vol. II, and moved *George a Green* to vol. III. When William Carew Hazlitt revised the collection in 1874, arranging the plays in order of composition, he added a large number of early Tudor plays (they filled the first four volumes), and eleven volumes (as in the previous three editions of Dodsley) were given to plays from the Elizabethan period and later. In the twentieth century, C. R. Baskervill's anthology (1935) and Russell Fraser and Norman Rabkin's (1976) both included *Gammer Gurton*, *Cambises*, *Gorboduc*, and *Supposes*, all grouped at the beginning.[6]

The aesthetic dimension of an anthology's selected plays is to some degree unmoored from the temporal dimension and comprises a view of both the historical and the contemporary period's formal predilections. A good example is provided by the anthology career of the plays

[6] The 1935 Parks and Beatty anthology is organized into four sections, the first of which is "pre-Elizabethan drama," covering works from early liturgical drama through John Heywood's *A Merry Play*. The revised second edition of the Blackwell anthology (2005) begins with a number of medieval plays, followed by Heywood's *Merry Play* and then the *Coronation of Queen Anne*.

of Thomas Middleton. Dodsley situated Middleton's *A Mad World My Masters* (printed 1608, performed c.1605) rather atemporally: a full volume later than *The White Devil* (printed and performed 1612) but right next to *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (printed 1633, performed c.1630). He introduced the text by referring to Middleton as a close associate of Jonson, Fletcher, and Massinger, "who have all of them wrote in conjunction with him, and therefore certainly thought him a Poet of no mean abilities" (V, 106). Unlike the plays in Dodsley's first volume, the rationale for Middleton's inclusion was essentially aesthetic: endorsed by the period's most canonical figures, this was a dramatist worth reading. *Mad World*, along with *The Widow* and *The Mayor of Quinborough*, represented Middleton in both of the next two Dodsleys and was accompanied in both by Reed's note pointing out that Middleton was an "Author of considerable reputation" (V, 309). Dilke included five Middleton plays (more than any other single author) in his *Old Plays*, among them *Women Beware Women* and *A Trick to Catch the Old One*. Both of these plays were reprinted – and were the sole representatives of Middleton – in White's *Old English Drama*, and both would become standard in anthologies of the first half of the twentieth century. Another play Dilke included was *The Changeling*. This play, and *Women Beware*, have remained standards into the twenty-first century, while *Trick* has been replaced by *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and *The Roaring Girl*.[7] While Middleton plays very generally tend to fall in the late-middle section of modern anthologies, he was distributed piecemeal throughout the Dodsleys; and in modern anthologies he is sometimes before Webster, sometimes after; sometimes next to Jonson and sometimes next to Fletcher; and in one case between Chapman and Webster. Middleton's plays, in anthologies, do not signify a precise idea about the temporal structure of the field but do function as an index to changing aesthetic ideas and priorities: to follow these plays through the anthologies is to see one manifestation of the evolution of literary-critical preoccupations as they move away from homosocial inheritance farce to comedies more specifically about women, and away from early Jacobean satirical comedy to later Jacobean tragedy.[8]

[7] *Chaste Maid* was first anthologized in the first Middleton volume (1887) of Havelock Ellis's Mermaid Series, then again in Fraser and Rabkin in 1976, Blackwell in 1999, and Norton in 2002. *Roaring Girl* was first anthologized in the 1780 Dodsley and reappeared in the Dodsley of 1825, in the second Middleton volume in the Mermaid Series (1890), then in Fraser and Rabkin, Norton, and Routledge.

[8] Middleton was not included at all in the Parks and Beatty anthology of 1935. In the editors' introduction to the "Contemporaries of Shakespeare" section, he is referred to somewhat backhandedly as a playwright whose work did "not uniformly" reflect the decline of the drama after Shakespeare (613).

4 Collecting early modern drama, 1744 to the present

In this book I am primarily concerned with about two dozen collections or anthologies of early modern drama published since 1744. These are:

1. *A Select Collection of Old Plays*, ed. Robert Dodsley, 12 vols., London, 1744.
2. *The Origin of the English Drama*, ed. Thomas Hawkins, 4 vols., Oxford, 1773.
3. *A Select Collection of Old Plays*, ed. Isaac Reed, 12 vols., London, 1780.
4. Charles Lamb, *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived about the Time of Shakespeare*, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees & Orme, 1808.
5. *Ancient British Drama*, ed. Sir Walter Scott, 3 vols., Edinburgh: J. Ballantyne & Co., 1810.
6. *Old Plays: Being a Selection from the Early Dramatic Writers*, ed. C. W. Dilke, 6 vols., London: Whittingham & Rowland, 1814–15.[9]
7. *The Old English Drama*, ed. Charles Baldwyn, 2 vols., London, 1825.
8. *A Select Collection of Old Plays*, ed. John Payne Collier, 12 vols., London: Septimus Prowett, 1825–27.
9. *Old English Drama*, printed by Thomas White, 4 vols., London, 1830.[10]
10. *The Works of the British Dramatists*, ed. John S. Keltie, Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1870.
11. *A Select Collection of Old Plays*, ed. William Carew Hazlitt, 15 vols., London: Reeves & Turner, 1874.
12. *Old Plays*, ed. A. H. Bullen, 6 vols., London: Wyman, 1882–85.
13. *The Chief Elizabethan Dramatists, Excluding Shakespeare*, ed. W. A. Neilson, Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1911.

[9] This collection was reissued in 1816 with the new title *Old Plays: Being a Continuation of Dodsley's Collection*.

[10] It is not clear who edited all of the texts in White's anthology. Bateson (1941) refers to this collection as "[Published] by Thomas White, who was perhaps the editor" (I, 488). White reprinted exactly Collier's texts of *A Woman Is a Weathercock* and *Amends for Ladies*, including his introductory notes and explanatory glosses, which had appeared in Collier's *Five Old Plays, Forming a Supplement to the Collections of Dodsley and Others* (London: Pickering, 1833). And he printed a modified version of the text and introductory note for *Edward I* included in Collier's 1825 edition of Dodsley (for which White was also the printer). Collier also may have edited *Ralph Roister Doister*; see Freeman and Freeman (1993: 4, n. 7). In annotations Collier made to his *Old Man's Diary* (1871–72), he says that "One or two" plays he planned for his edition of Dodsley, never completed in the form he had imagined because the publisher Septimus Prowett "broke down & broke up," had been "brought forth by White … The only one of which I remember the title was 'Englishman for my Money'." Collier's annotated diary is in the Folger Shakespeare Library, W.b.504–7. The quoted annotation is in W.b.507, on p. 92.