

THE FEMALE DRAMATIST



*Profiles of Women Playwrights from
the Middle Ages to Contemporary Times*



ELAINE T. PARTNOW

With Lesley A. Hyatt

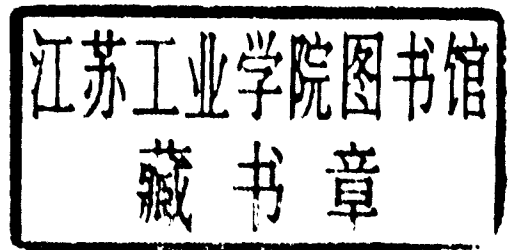
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FOREWORD



by Karen Malpede

This book is a vast compendium of information about women playwrights. The lives and works of more than 200 women from ten centuries are profiled here: a nun who defied the Catholic hierarchy to write; freedom fighters censored and jailed for their words; Renaissance women who had their character impugned for revealing the truth about the marriage market; Victorian women who dressed and lived as men to write; contemporary women who founded major experimental theaters and whose own plays are seminal works of the avant-garde; women who had great popular success, who won Pulitzer Prizes and Academy Awards; women called mad, who perished in obscurity, their life's work lost. Many of the lives sketched here read like modern myths—women born of their own desire to speak true, writing words to set actors in motion on the stage.

Here are women whose work I have long admired for its sheer excellence, and women whose life stories I have often turned to for the sustenance bold example gives. Some are women I know personally, with whom I've shared a piece of the century, but there are many, many others whose lives and works I was introduced to for the first time. The experience was dizzying, as if stepping suddenly out of a dank, dark cave where for years I had busily been making up my own half-truths from the shadows on the walls, and walking into the hot sun, I found the ground alive with women. "A lovely sight to see; all as one,/the old women and the young and the unmarried girls . . . they fastened their skins of fawn with writhing snakes/that licked their cheeks," as Euripedes' Messenger dares report in *The Bacchae*. After all, we exist. The Earth does vibrate to the rhythms of our speech. Only out of fear of our powers have women been silenced and ignored. No writer has been kept more invisible or isolate, has been more denigrated or despised than the female dramatist, whose matrilineage is

suddenly rendered plain thanks to these brief incisive portraits by Elaine Partnow.

Now, I am sitting in the company of my sisters, thinking as I have thought before, that if women's plays were produced with the frequency, financial backing, and critical understanding accorded the plays of men, would this change the culture, or would it herald a culture already changed? And how do women envision culture? Is there any commonality among our diversities of history, style, vision, craft, class, country, ethnicity, and race? Indeed, over and over, one reads in this book, how one writer after another has sought to write the lives of women, to bring them into history, to explore a woman's interior self, to tell the story of the universe in a woman's voice. If we have something in common besides our rebellious natures, for one cannot escape the feeling that we have been rebels, each and every one, our commonality lies in our flesh. We are writing from within a female body, writing the stories of women's bodies, bodies subject to a culture's rage. We are writing our own desire, knowledge, shame, and strength.

The woman playwright listens, and her ear to the self, her "I" a tuning fork, she takes the measure of her time. Then, because she is a playwright, she makes forbidden knowledge public. She exteriorizes the inner life, speaks the hidden truths, exposes nightmare doubts of the culture in which she lives. Because she is a playwright, what she knows cannot remain hidden between the covers of a book, to be picked up surreptitiously, and read under the sheets as many women have learned to read. Because she is a playwright, her voice must live inside actors and reach up from their bellies through their voices to the ears of many people. Language spoken to an audience fuses them with a common knowledge and instant experience. They live together through events they can both contemplate and share. The theater offers space to reflect upon lived experience, to find

that you are suddenly not alone, but bound together in community. When women's plays are staged, women's truth becomes universal.

Women's plays have not often fared well with critics; women playwrights have often been vilified, their works willfully misunderstood. The weakest most predictable plays by women have frequently been most highly praised. Comfortable plays that depict woman's frustrations, that show her inner life as limited, that watch her settling or solving her struggle through romance, or plays that show women killing, committing suicide, or being killed, plays that support the violence of our culture, are most likely to win awards. A woman who experiments with form, who expresses dense, unruly feeling, who glories in sexuality, who attempts to write of history, philosophy, or make a social protest, a woman who sets her characters on a culture-changing mission, may often find herself the most outcast and ignored. Even a woman who does these things with undisputed brilliance—Marguerite Duras, for example, whose theater poetry is as rich as Samuel Beckett's, or Gertrude Stein, as funny and fine as anyone—will be

revered by only a small coterie, staged and taught relatively rarely, and often denied her historical role.

If women's plays were produced in numbers equal to the plays of men, human beings would be suddenly advantaged by a fuller vision. Though an individual never has full knowledge of where she came from, who she is, all drama is about the search against the odds for such self-knowledge and the need to act in the world despite not knowing who we are. Women dramatists inhabit the realm of the unfinished. We don't know what our lives would be if we had lived them fully, without terror, without disrespect. We struggle to imagine wholeness—an earth undefiled; a strikingly new balance between nature and culture; a greater tolerance for difference; a spiritual renewal untouched by fundamentalist violence and cant; and personal relationships based upon mutual respect. Women playwrights struggling to invent the female character equally are culture-changing agents, imagining beyond the known. Their plays attempt to tell us not only who we are, but what we might become.

PREFACE



Today's women playwrights have become a force to be reckoned with, both in the United States and Canada and in Europe. Though this may seem a new phenomenon, it is not: The same occurred during the Restoration in England and again during the suffrage movements in both England and the United States. What is also not new, despite these recurring booms, is how few women have emerged as members of the canon of dramatic literature. What is also not new is the same old neglect and dismissiveness with which women of talent in so many pursuits have been treated. Of the seventy-eight Pulitzer Prizes for drama awarded since the inception of the prize in 1910, eight have gone to women (ZONA GALE, 1921; SUSAN GLASPELL, 1931; ZOË AKINS, 1935; MARY CHASE, 1945; KETTI FRINGS, 1958; BETH HENLEY, 1981; MARSHA NORMAN, 1983; WENDY WASSERSTEIN, 1989). It is interesting to note that the longest gap between Pulitzer Prizes to women playwrights was 1958 to 1981—from the late fifties through the rise of feminism and the arrival of this century's "new woman."

Susan Faludi maintains in *Backlash*, her watershed 1991 book, "It has not been unusual that during periods when women have made great social strides they have been ignored or vilified." Looking back to the first great period of women playwrights, the Restoration, when, between 1660 and 1720, some sixty plays by women were staged, talented and popular playwrights such as APHRA BEHN, SUSANNA CENTLIVRE, HANNAH COWLEY, and DELARIVIERE MANLEY were scathingly abused by the press. There was an expression in that day, the "Salic law of wit," which derived from an ancient penal code, the Salic law. It contained, among other things, some civil law enactments, one of which declared that daughters could not inherit land. The Salic law took on critical importance under the French Valois dynasty in the sixteenth century when it was incorrectly cited as authority for the existing assumption that women should not succeed to the crown. Its derivative, the unwritten Salic law of wit, was, according to Nancy Cotton,

"sometimes enforced by audiences who heckled women's plays because of the author's sex."¹ This helps to explain why so many prologues and epilogues by women playwrights of the day were filled with a defense of the author's sex. Play writing was a threat to women's reputations in that day because of its very public aspect: Playwrights had to attend rehearsals, readings, performances, benefits. The backstage atmosphere of theater at that time was not as we now know it. It was often an unruly place filled with drunkenness, fisticuffs, even an occasional murder. Long banned from the boards in Great Britain, actresses began to appear on English stages at about the same time as women playwrights began their ascent in the 1660s. The actresses were inexperienced performers who were assigned roles as objects of beauty or sexuality, regardless of talent. Often, with all the resulting male attention, they took on lovers; some, like Nell Gwynne, became famous courtesans. The reputation of actresses became tarnished; women playwrights were guilty by association. (Some of this attitude has carried over right into this century: I can remember when, as a teenager, I stated my desire to become an actress. My father was disgusted. They were all prostitutes, as far as he was concerned. It took my own struggling career, with its concurrent friendships, to demonstrate to him that this was not so.) The historic connections harken back to the late Middle Ages when, as noted by Susan Case, "the Church had secured the notion that such immoral sexual conduct was the province of women: that is, that prostitutes caused prostitution. Therefore the control of prostitutes would control prostitution, or, more specifically, banning women from the stage would prevent the stage from becoming the site for immoral sexual conduct."² Such association was sometimes spoofed by the playwrights themselves in their plays. In the epilogue of Aphra Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy*, she quips, "Quickest in finding all the

¹ Cotton.

² Case (1).

subtlest ways/To make your Joys, why not to make your Plays?"

If female dramatists were not shunned as whores, they were accused of plagiarism, insinuating that women had no ideas of their own. In the preface to MARY DAVYS's *The Northern Heiress*, she writes, "As a Child born of a common Woman, has many Fathers, so my poor Offspring has been laid at a great many Doors . . . I am proud they think it deserves a better Author." When a woman's works were praised to be of exceptional quality, comments abounded as to how she wrote "like a man." Patronizing to today's ears, these remarks must be heard in the context of a time of strict patriarchy: Even the few women critics of the day made similar allusions.

The next great surge of women playwrights came between 1900 and 1920, when about 400 women wrote plays. Many of these works were concerned with the campaign for female suffrage, as well as the growing crusade for women's inclusion in higher education and the professions. Some of the propaganda plays were written by women such as Mary Shaw, the actress, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the noted sociologist and writer, MERCY OTIS WARREN, RACHEL CROTHERS, RIDA JOHNSON YOUNG, and SUSAN GLASPELL. The majority of these plays, however, were written by women who were neither writers nor theater professionals, but were active in the women's movement. Because most of these 400 women did not consider themselves playwrights and did not build any body of theatrical work, they have been excluded from this book. Bettina Friedl, in her fascinating and comprehensive collection *On to Victory: Propaganda Plays of the Woman Suffrage Movement*³, gives voice to this unique phenomenon that theatrically documents the rise of the women's movement from 1848 through 1920.

Although plays about women have existed since the origins of drama, and plays by women have been written and performed in the western world at least since the time of Sappho,⁴ only in the last fifteen years or so have playwrights in significant numbers become self-consciously concerned about the presence—or absence—of women as women on stage. "Every time a woman writes a play about women, then, she is implicitly challenging the men still at center-stage," writes MICHELENE WANDOR. "She may not be a conscious feminist, she may want to take no part in changing things for other women in the theatrical profession, but she will still in some way be justifying her existence as a woman playwright, and justifying the existence of her subject matter as valid."⁵ The author of *Understudies*, pub-

lished in 1981, which took an intriguing look at sexual politics in the theater, Wandor goes on to note that while women playwrights may tend to write about their own sex, so do male writers. "It is just that they rarely see that that is what they are doing," she remarks. I might add, the public does not usually see it either.

Wandor, an avid anthologizer of plays by women, asks "Why an anthology of plays by women? If one looks at the contents page of any play anthology, one is already halfway to the answer."⁶

The 1992 edition of the *International Directory of Theater* contains "the greatest and most performed plays in the world": 350 works are documented, including all thirty-seven of Shakespeare's plays, thirteen by Ibsen, nine each from Molière and Brecht, and one by a woman—Lillian Hellman, a white, American, middle-class woman. An investigation of other anthologies that embody what is considered the "dramatic canon" yields similar results: In John Gassner's *A Treasury of the Theatre*, the anthology used when I was a student of theater arts at UCLA in the late 1950s, early 1960s, thirty-nine plays are anthologized, two of which are by women (LADY GREGORY and LILLIAN HELLMAN); in a supplemental index, "A List of Modern Plays" cites 425 plays worldwide, of which seventeen are authored by women. Two decades later, when I was teaching theater history at a private school, Haskell M. Block and Robert G. Shedd's *Masters of Modern Drama* was the Baedeker of the day. In it, forty-five plays by thirty-five playwrights are anthologized; none is by a woman. Women have been writing plays since the time of Sappho; their contributions to the commedia dell'arte troupes in sixteenth-century Italy were an essential part of the evolution of classic comedy; some of the most beloved comedies of the Restoration were written by women; eight American women have received Pulitzer Prizes (Hellman is not among them)—however, these facts are grossly overlooked by the scholars who collect and critique these anthologies. And it is anthologies such as these that shape public perception of who the world's major playwrights have been. "The very concept of the 'writer' implies maleness, so that the sub-category 'woman writer' had to be developed in the nineteenth century to cover a species of creativity that challenged the dominant image. To a great extent we still live under the cloud of gender-confusion in our image of the 'writer,' especially in the theater."⁷ This book is one response to Wandor's observation. By eliminating the choice of one gender over another, the biographical profiles assembled here offer readers the opportunity to examine the lives and works of playwrights whose stoutness in the body of theater demands their inclusion.

³ Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987.

⁴ While it is known that Sappho wrote dramas as well as poetry, all that remains of her works are scattered fragments; thus, she has not been included among these profiles.

⁵ Wandor (1).

⁶ Wandor (2).

⁷ Ibid.

Critics, too, have had their part in the repression of the works of women playwrights. For decades male drama critics—from George Jean Nathan to Heywood Broun, from Norris Houghton to Whitney Bolton—have been railing against women playwrights, either for portraying men as ineffectual, or women as too strong, too melodramatic, or too absolutist. In the seventeenth century, JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ penned, “Critics: in your sight/no woman can win:/keep you out, and she’s too tight;/she’s too loose if you get in.” Yet so-called “feminist” plays, more often than not, merely “attempt to pay attention to the lives of women—as individuals, in relation to each other, and in relation to men.”⁸

Lastly, even though there has been an influx of production and publication of women’s plays in the last two decades, the networks of money and power that bring drama to the public remain primarily in the hands of men: That glass ceiling has yet to be shattered.

My goal has been to simply allow women playwrights throughout history to resurface, as well as to introduce some of the great female dramatists writing in other languages. My basis for inclusion encompassed a broad range of criteria: Some playwrights, for example, were part of the maturation of the theater of their day; others brought an original approach, pioneering a form or setting a precedent. Certainly, the entrants had to be playwrights of note. To be included, a playwright need not have been prolific, but her work must have made a significant contribution to the theater of her day. Almost without exception her plays must have been produced professionally and, with rare exception (see KATHERINE OF SUTTON, the 14th-century English baroness), published, and must still be available (even if only in archives), preferably in English. It was also preferable that her work had been considered critically, and that there was some body of work about her and her plays. If her plays addressed some feminist issues of her day, that, too, was desirable, but not necessary.

Although American and English dramatists comprise the bulk of this English-language anthology, a special effort was made to include foreign playwrights. Some of their works are available in English translation, which was preferable, but not in all instances possible. This book includes a smattering of playwrights from such countries as Germany, France, Finland, Israel, Italy, Ghana, Mexico, and Chile; in no way, however, is the work intended to be representative of the contributions made by women playwrights in those countries.

Playwrights from the Middle Ages—from whence derived the first extant dramas by a woman playwright, HROTSVITHA VON GANDERSHEIM—through the Restora-

tion to the twentieth century are represented. Receipt of an award, such as the Antoinette Perry or the Obie (off-Broadway) Award in the United States or the Olivier in England, for example, was a strong consideration, though not a necessary criterion for inclusion.

Asked to define “major playwright” by an editor of *People* magazine, playwright VELINA HASU HOUSTON could only reply how subjective that definition must be, with the exception of such contemporary giants as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, Stephen Sondheim and Andrew Lloyd Webber (the latter of whom may be considered “major” due to box office receipts rather than critical reception). Perhaps we must rid ourselves of this desire to consider major playwrights, and instead consider major plays (after all, not all plays by major playwrights are in themselves major). One might ask oneself, as Houston has, what makes a play important? She says,

The kinds of plays that are important to me are plays that give something to the world in which we live, that recycle our emotions, spirits, and intellect to refuel and improve the world—not destroy it. Important plays are rich with cultural and political substance. They reflect a social consciousness without losing a sense of the personal. Their vision remains inextricably tied to the never-ending exploration and excavation of the human condition. For theater should not only entertain but also enlighten.⁹

Theater is a democratic art form—it speaks to the myriad complexities of mood, intellect, station, age, and social status that make up an audience. If it succeeds in moving that amorphous body, whether to laughter, tears, reflection, or anger, it is good theater. If it happens to speak particularly to the members of “the ruling class”—upper class, white, powerful—it may garner the reputation of great theater. But greatness is mostly personal. Although Shakespeare consistently created many great plays, it is rare that a play, even by a great playwright, is so great that it moves those beyond its evident ken. Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* and LORRAINE HANSBERRY’s *A Raisin in the Sun* come to mind as rare exceptions.

Success in theater is most often measured by box office receipts. The relationship of feminist drama to commerce and public attention in many ways follows a predictable pattern. While some of the most innovative and challenging plays by feminists are produced in obscure venues and are heralded by a relatively small group of supporters, the dramas by women that have achieved commercial success in the West End or Broadway tend to take fewer theatrical risks and to be less threatening to middle-class audiences than those performed on the fringe of the theater establishment. Thus we juxtapose the better-known Wendy Wasserstein and Beth Henley against the lesser-known

⁸ Keyssar.

⁹ Houston.

Maria Irene Fornés and Megan Terry. A rare exception to this rule of risk is Caryl Churchill, whose cutting-edge works have actually achieved a modicum of commercial success.

Many talented and important women were left out of this collection because, though they were intrinsically involved with the creation of many plays—such as those of the many collaborative feminist theaters begun in the 1970s—they had not specifically authored a play. The one exception I have made is JOAN LITTLEWOOD, who was instrumental in helping to create a number of plays by heralded male and female dramatists.

A brief note with regards to my use of the word *theatrician*. There are some members of the theatrical community so multitasked, so accomplished that hyphenates describing their contributions might be endless: to wit, playwright-director-actor-designer-producer . . . , etc. This became apparent to me many years ago when I was doing research for my first book, *The Quotable Woman*, originally published in 1977 and now in its fifth edition (New York: Facts On File, 1992). I coined the word at the time, making conservative use of it in the biographical index. Since that time I have noted its use elsewhere on occasion, as in Jack Kroll's introduction to *Transients Welcome*, a collection of ROSALYN DREXLER's plays (New York: Broadway Play Pub., 1984). Language is a living, breathing element in our lives and if my use of "theatrician" causes some eyebrows to rise, I ask that you recall the words of the great Emily Dickinson: "A word is dead when it is said, some say/I say it just begins to live that day."

The trouble with creating a work of this nature is knowing when and how to place boundaries on it. It could just continue and continue, there are so many talented and worthy women playwrights in the world. Perhaps to assuage my distress more than anything else, I have created a Supplemental Index listing 140 playwrights: that they were not profiled in the body of the text has to do with the fact that either I was unable to find sufficient information to write a meaningful sketch or the entrant has not yet created a sufficiently significant body of dramatic works to warrant inclusion, or the entrant's foray into theater has been an insignificant part of her career.

Even with the inclusion of the Supplemental Index, I am fully cogent of the many omissions that are bound to surface in relation to a work of this nature, and I fully assume all responsibility for such. Were it not for the help and support of many individuals and the theater-rich community of Seattle, however, there would have been far more oversights. I should like to specifically thank staff members at the Intiman, The Empty Space, Seattle Repertory Theater, A Contemporary Theatre, Seattle Children's Theater, and The Group for supplying me with program notes. Individuals associated with these theaters who

were especially helpful were Gary Tucker, Richard Menna, Barry Alar, and Janet Berkow. My old high school friend Michael Krieger supplied me with fascinating information, and my good friend, stage director and theater maven Aaron Levin contributed a careful eye and expertise. Gary Krebbs, my former editor, launched me on this fascinating journey and provided much needed encouragement and support. Several editors were subsequently assigned to the project, but Hilary Poole, who made many useful suggestions, and James Chambers, who saw it to its conclusion, have been especially helpful. My agent, Faith Hamlin, as always, patiently answered my questions and concerns and buoyed me up when I felt I was sinking.

Several publishers were kind enough to send me vital reference works that enhanced my research: Facts On File, New York; Cambridge University Press, New York branch; University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.

A special note of appreciation goes to Michelle Ish-shalom, who read and then wrote synopses of many of the plays noted throughout this text. Her careful consideration and insightful interpretations of these works have been invaluable to me, and I have made great use of them. Michelle has worked as a teacher, a workshop leader in self-development, and an arbiter of black-white relations in the business world; she has followed a unique and varied path in life, and I am proud to call her my friend. She has returned to her native South Africa to continue the much-needed healing in that land; I shall miss her.

Also of great assistance was Selah Brown, my secretary in 1994. Without her organizational skills, her enthusiasm, and her sympathy (I was writing much of this book under great personal duress), I could not have completed the work in anything even approaching a timely manner. Alexandra Saperstein, a recent Mills College graduate, did much to help organize my notes and brought her special brand of humor to brighten up several gray Seattle days.

Since 1995, Gina Hicks has been the secretary and office manager for the small business run by me and my husband. She has done "yowoman's" duty in helping piece together this work. Specifically, she created the time line and organized the supplemental index; she masterfully managed the computer aspects of this large and cumbersome manuscript. Most important, her calm and expertise kept me from going mad when the computer acted up.

Last goes a note of tremendous gratitude and respect to my beloved niece, Lesley Anne Hyatt, who worked with me on this project. She displayed an excellent eye for detail and a gift for extracting the most unique aspect of a woman's life or work. Her way with words in putting the final polish on these profiles certainly impressed me. I am so proud to have such a talented niece, and thrilled at this opportunity to have worked with her. I also must thank, as always, my

PREFACE

dear husband, Turner. First of all, he did a masterful job as the photographic editor on this work, making a special effort to find images rarely seen. But even more important to me, his supportiveness and forbearance created the windows of time in which I could work. He always seemed to know when to tear me away from the computer for a break—and he always made sure I ate something!

It is my sincere wish that this book will inspire and encourage those in a position to do so to produce the unknown yet laudable plays of some of the incredibly talented but unsung playwrights in this book.

—Elaine Partnow
Seattle

TIME LINE



Name	Nationality	Life Span
Hrotsvitha von Gandersheim	German	935?–1000?
Katherine of Sutton	English	1363–1376 (fl.)
Mary Sidney Herbert	English	1561–1621
Christopher Marlowe	English	1564–1593
William Shakespeare	English	1564–1616
Ben Jonson	English	1572–1637
Lope de Vega	Spanish	1582–1635
Elizabeth Tanfield Cary	English	1585/6–1639
Caldéron	Spanish	1600–1681
Pierre Corneille	French	1606–1684
Henrietta Maria of France (queen of England)	French-English	1609–1669
Molière	French	1622–1673
Margaret Cavendish	English-French	1623–1673
Katherine Fowler Philips	English-Irish	1631–1664
Jean-Baptiste Racine	French	1639–1699
Aphra Behn	English	1640–1689
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz	Mexican	1651–1695
Anne Kingsmill Finch	English	1661–1720
Mary Griffith Pix	English	1666–1709/20?
Delariviere Manley	English	1667/72–1724
Frances Boothby	English	1669 (fl.)

Name	Nationality	Life Span
Susanna Centlivre	Irish-English	1667/9–1723
William Congreve	English	1670–1729
Mary Davys	Irish-English	1674–1732
Catherine Trotter	English	1679–1749
Eliza Fowler Haywood	English	1689/93–1756
Ariadne	English	1695 (fl.)
Charlotte Charke	English	1710–1760
Catherine Clive	English	1711–1785
Mary Leapor	English	1722–1746
Frances Brooke	English	1724–1789
Mercy Otis Warren	American	1728–1814
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing	German	1729–1781
Oliver Goldsmith	Irish	1730–1774
Hannah Cowley	English	1743–1809
Hannah More	English	1745–1833
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe	German	1749–1832
Richard Sheridan	Irish	1751–1816
Frances Burney	English	1752–1840
Elizabeth Inchbald	English	1753–1821
Susanna Haswell Rowson	English-American	1762–1824
Joanna Baillie	Scottish-English	1762–1851
Hannah Brand	English	1794–98 (fl.)
Nikolai Gogol	Russian	1809–1852
Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda	Cuban-Spanish	1814–1873
Ivan Turgenev	Russian	1818–1883
Anna Cora Mowatt	French-American	1819–1870
Dion Boucicault	Irish-American	1820–1890
Alexandre Dumas	French	1824–1895
Henrik Ibsen	Norwegian	1828–1906
Leo N. Tolstoy	Russian	1828–1910
Henry Becque	French	1837–1899

Name	Nationality	Life Span
Lydia Koidula	Estonian	1843–1886
Minna Canth	Finnish	1844–1897
August Strindberg	Swedish	1849–1912
Augusta Gregory	Irish	1852–1932
Oscar Wilde	Irish	1854–1900
Gabriela Zapolska	Polish	1857–1921
Anton Chekhov	Russian	1860–1904
James Barrie	Scottish	1860–1937
Anna Brigadere	Latvian	1861–1933
Arthur Schnitzler	Austrian	1862–1931
Gerhart Hauptmann	German	1862–1946
Maurice Maeterlinck	Belgian	1862–1949
Frank Wedekind	German	1864–1918
Martha Morton	American	1865–1925
W. B. Yeats	Irish	1865–1939
George Bernard Shaw	Irish	1865–1950
Luigi Pirandello	Italian	1867–1936
Edmond Rostand	French	1868–1918
Maxim Gorky	Russian	1868–1936
Aspāzija	Latvian	1868–1943
Zinaida Gippius	Russian	1869–1945
Else Lasker-Schüler	German	1869–1945
John M. Synge	Irish	1871–1909
Josephine Preston		
Peabody	American	1874–1922
Hugo von Hofmannsthal	Austrian	1874–1929
Zona Gale	American	1874–1938
Gertrude Stein	American-French	1874–1946
Anne Crawford Flexner	American	1874–1955
María Martínez Sierra	Spanish-Argentinian	1874–1974
Rida Johnson Young	American	1875–1926
Susan Glaspell	American	1876/82–1948
May Roberts Rinehart	American	1876–1958
Elizabeth Baker	English	1876–1962

Name	Nationality	Life Span
Georg Kaiser	German	1878–1945
Ferenc Molnár	Hungarian	1878–1952
Rachel Crothers	American	1878–1958
Christopher (Marie) St. John	English	188?–1960
Maria Jotuni	Finnish	1880–1943
Sean O'Casey	Irish	1880–1964
Jean Giraudoux	French	1882–1944
Sofija Čiurlionienė		
Kymantaitė	Lithuanian	1885–1958
Edna Ferber	American	1885–1968
Alice Gerstenberg	American	1885–1972
Sophie Treadwell	American	1885/90–1970
Hella Wuolijoki	Finnish	1886–1954
Zoë Akins	American	1886–1958
Georgia Douglas Johnson	African-American	1886–1966
Clemence Dane	English	1887/8–1965
Clare Kummer	American	1888?–1948
Eugene O'Neill	American	1888–1953
Maxwell Anderson	American	1888–1959
Vicki Baum	Austrian-American	1888–1960
T. S. Eliot	American-English	1888–1965
Anita Loos	American	1888–1981
Jean Cocteau	French	1889–1963
Enid Bagnold	English	1889–1981
Karel Čapek	Czechoslovakian	1890–1938
Agatha Christie	English	1890–1976
Marc Connelly	American	1890–1980
Zora Neale Hurston	African-American	1891–1960
Anne Nichols	American	1891/6–1966
Marina Tsvetayeva	Russian	1892–1941
Edna St. Vincent Millay	American	1892–1952
Ugo Betti	Italian	1892–1953
Djuna Barnes	American	1892–1982
Mae West	American	1893–1980

Name	Nationality	Life Span
Dorothy L. Sayers	English	1893–1957
Jean Devanny	New Zealand- Australian	1894–1962
Oscar Hammerstein II	American	1895–1960
Rose Franken	American	1895–1988
Gordon Daviot	Scottish	1896–1952
Robert Sherwood	American	1896–1955
Carl Zuckmayer	German	1896–1977
Ruth Gordon	American	1896–1985
Dodie Smith	English	1896–1990
Thornton Wilder	American	1897–1975
Frederico Garcia Lorca	Spanish	1898–1936
Antonin Artaud	French	1898–1948
Elina Zālite	Latvian	1898–1955
Bertolt Brecht	German	1898–1956
Gertrude Berg	American	1899–1966
Noel Coward	English	1899–1973
Bella Spewack	American	1899–1990
Marieluise Fleißer	German	1901–1974
Clare Boothe Luce	American	1903–1987
Vera Fyodorovna Panova	Soviet Russian	1905–1973
Dorothy Fields	American	1905–1974
Jean-Paul Sartre	French	1905–1980
Lillian Hellman	American	1905–1984
Clifford Odets	American	1906–1963
Samuel Beckett	Irish-French	1906–1989
Mary Chase	American	1907–1981
Daphne du Maurier	English	1907–1989
William Saroyan	American	1908–1981
Eugene Ionesco	Rumanian-French	1909–
Jean Anouilh	French	1910–1987
Tennessee Williams	American	1911–1983
Max Frisch	Swiss	1911–1991
Yang Chiang	Chinese	1911–

Name	Nationality	Life Span
Anne Ridler	English	1912–
Albert Camus	Algerian-French	1913–1960
William Inge	American	1913–1973
Bridget Boland	English	1913–1988
Marguerite Duras	French	1914–1996
Joan Littlewood	English	1914–
Ketti Frings	American	1915–1981
Aldona Liobytė	Lithuanian	1915–
Arthur Miller	American	1915–
Natalia Ginzburg	Italian	1916–1991
Fay Kanin	American	1916?–
Eve Merriam	American	1916–
Carson McCullers	American	1917–1967
Isadora Aguirre	Chilean	1919–
Ellen Bergman	Swedish	1919–
Betty Comden	American	1919–
Doris Lessing	English	1919–
Alice Childress	African-American	1920–1994
Eeva-Liisa Manner	Finnish	1921–
Vinette Carroll	African-American	1922–
Paddy Chayefsky	American	1923–
Dorothy Hewett	Australian	1923–
Jean Kerr	American	1923–
Efua Sutherland	Ghanian	1924–
Wakako Yamauchi	Asian-American	1924–
Rosario Castellanos	Mexican	1925–1974
Pam Gems	English	1925–
Beah Richards	American	1925/8–
Rosalyn Drexler	American	1926–
Dario Fo	Italian	1926–
Gerline Reinshagen	German	1926–
Ann Jellicoe	English	1927–
Neil Simon	American	1927–
Jane Wagner	American	1927/35–

Name	Nationality	Life Span
Edward Albee	American	1928–
Griselda Gambaro	Argentinian	1928–
Adalet Ağaoğlu	Turkish	1929–
Brian Friel	Irish	1929–
Elaine Jackson	African-American	1929–
John Osborne	English	1929–
Denis Bonal	Algerian-French	193?–
Franca Rame	Italian	193?–
Lorraine Hansberry	American	1930–1965
Julie Bovasso	American	1930–1991
Maria Irene Fornés	Cuban-American	1930–
Harold Pinter	English	1930–
Stephen Sondheim	American	1930–
Kathleen Collins	African-American	1931–1988
Thomas Bernhard	Austrian	1931–1989
Adrienne Kennedy	American	1931–
Athol Fugard	South African	1932–
Shirley Gee	English	1932–
Megan Terry	American	1932–
Maruxa Vilalta	Mexican	1932–
Maureen Duffy	English	1933–
Corinne Jacker	American	1933–
Fay Weldon	English	1933–
Margaretta D'Arcy	Irish	1934–
Gretchen Cryer	American	1935–
Myrna Lamb	American	1935–
Dacia Maraini	Italian	1935/6–
Françoise Sagan	French	1935–
Zulu Sofola	Nigerian	1935–
Martha Gross Boesing	American	1936–
Nell Dunn	English	1936–
Rochelle Owens	American	1936–
Sharon Pollock	Canadian	1936–
Jane Chambers	American	1937–1983