Chapter VI

CONCLUSION
This study has maintained that a literary historical account of Modernist poetry will benefit considerably by reading the anthologies. Such a reading, I have assumed, will not only help us reconsider the name and nature of this movement, but also will let us see for ourselves how the literary and theoretical methods for reading "new" Anglo-American poetry came into being in the first place, and subsequently, were entrenched in the popular academic mind as "New Critical." The anthologies studied here show us that the assumptions underlying literary studies, chiefly those based upon the impersonality of poets (and the critics who read them) and the supposed autonomy of the textual objects are not wholly true. (The anthology, I argue, advances the "personal" and undermines the autonomy of the texts it collects, and presents after its fashion.) These assumptions are not true, or true enough to warrant the "Modernist" tag, because the movement so designated is more of an academic invention, a retrospective labelling that enabled historians to view Modernism as a fine story with an Aristotelian plot that resolved itself by the Second World War.

The first anthologies of Anglo-American poetry were, in fact, preparations and rehearsals that needed no name or postal address, except certain "programme" sheets and manuals, which came to be called *manifestos*. These manifestos made movements, all avant-garde, whose spirit was described variously as "Georgian," "Edwardian" "Blast," *vers lihrist*, "Futurist," anarchist, etc. That every anthology was, at the time of its birth, an experimental exercise, and much of what we call "Modernist" is only an *ex post facto* attribution of methods and values we see as central to such a movement, is an important idea for students of literary history to remember. This idea is best endorsed by Peter
Nicholls's *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* that surveys the whole gamut of competing experimental initiatives and energies that fill the period between 1909 and 1922. Nicholls, of course, modestly claims that his book provides only "a conceptual map of different Modernist tendencies" (Nicholls viii).

While the story of the making of big reputations and landmark publications of Modernism and its continuities has often been told, we haven't quite heard the other story of how the early samples of Modernist poetry were read and discussed by the poets themselves and their charmed circle of collaborators and critics. This study has engaged with both the makers and readers of anthologies. The advantage I have found in this approach is that the readers now could be seen in a continuum, the readers as forming a family of reading relations. This was, indeed, the sense of literary history which the poets themselves propagated. The poetry, they believed, emanated from such relations of readers and readership, of publishers and publications. This study, therefore, has tried to construct an "interpretive community" from within the Modernist reading relations, *unlike* the interpretive communities constructed and imposed from without by literary historians and critics. In other words, I have sought to read the anthologies themselves as making and remaking such communities of readership in their pages. The poets themselves and their "first" readers before their poems reached the magazine pages, viz., their fellow-poets, were not quite inimical to popular tastes and audiences as they are sometimes made out to be. In other words, the anthologies I have looked at persuade me to believe that Modernism's antagonism towards less scholarly audiences—the readers of newspapers and magazines, such non-specialist readers as factory or clerical labour—is
more imagined than real. The Modernist anthology was the first and the last compromise
the poets were willing to make, for they knew much more than their editors the power of
an anthology to secure or alter their place in literary history. (A more detailed and
persuasive argument than mine regarding Modernism's flirtations with popular audiences
has recently been advanced by a large number of studies, the most representative of
which are Andreas Huyssen's *After the Great Divide*, Michael C. Fitzgerald's *Making
Modernism*, Joyce P. Wexler's *Who Paid for Modernism?* and Laurence Rainey's
*Institutions of Modernism*.)

Now we know that the "Modernisms" of Nicholls have contributed significantly
to future anthologies and the future of anthologies. In Chapter II, therefore, I have made
the little magazine the subject of an extended essay. Although the little magazine itself
has received scholarly attention in the past, I have studied the magazines as anthologies
*manqué* or work-in-progress-collections. In fact, many little magazines and reviews of
the period evolved along a series of other initiatives to make poetry new. They not only
brought poets, but readers of various persuasions together. As evidence of their
fellowship and devotion to a common cause, I have offered small summaries of select
letters exchanged between such poets as Ezra Pound, Harriet Monroe, and D. H.
Lawrence; literary prizes for the best creative work; manifestos published in magazines
and the working of the Poetry Recital Society of London. In sum, the anthology seemed
to have been at the back of every enterprising poet-editor's mind.
The number and frequency with which the poets themselves edited anthologies are truly remarkable during the early phase of what we now call "Modernism." Not surprisingly, the anthology came to be regarded as the maker and marker of tastes and preferences. Ezra Pound, for example, regarded his *Des Imagistes* (1914) and *Profile: An Anthology* (1930) as milestones to measure how far their contributors had progressed in the sixteen years between them. Chapter III, "Anthologies in the Making: English Modernism 1912-1936," surveys the revolutionary uses poets and editors made of the anthology, stretching its devices to the limit and anticipating the later academic anthologies in providing introductions and bibliographies. These poets appeared in such varied collections as Edward Marsh's *Georgian Poetry, Some Imagist Poets* (1915, 1916 and 1917), Harriet Monroe's *The New Poetry* (1917), Alfred Kreyemborg's *Others* (1917) and Louis Untermeyer's *Modern American Poetry* (1919) and *This Singing World* (1923). The responses of the poets to contemporary collections and the advantages they found in them prompt us to conclude that the anthology had, by then, indeed emerged as the single most important aid in their attempt to resuscitate poetry and the arts. Aiming to effect a revolution in the way poetry was produced and consumed, the poets found in the anthology a radical form that suited every need, whether as preserver or selector. Their aim to facilitate discussion and through it a better awareness of poetry was an unqualified success. Entire movements were inaugurated, sustained, and kept in the reading public's notice primarily on the number and strength of the anthologies they published. In the introductions that these anthologies sometimes occasioned, the poets, against their grain, directly addressed the readers in an attempt to expound their poetics. Working within ideologically avowed and distinct traditions, Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell, for example,
attempted to challenge an older tradition or enlarge, revise and even remake traditions of their own. Often the older tradition itself was represented by an anthology that enjoyed a canonical status such as F. T. Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1861), which Ezra Pound sought to replace with yet another anthology of his own. Beginning with the five editions of *Georgian Poetry*, I have traced, through a study of a few more select anthologies, the bewildering variety of diction, themes and styles that Modernism lends its name to. The "Georgian" Anthologies have been routinely and somewhat unfairly accused by many hostile critics of purveying an outdated poetry. The central and common aims and methods of the Georgians were sometimes the same as those of the Modernists, such as the emphasis they placed on concision in expression, and the avoidance of adjectives that served no purpose. Marsh's anthologies enjoyed a long life even after he stopped publication, as witnessed by the influence they have had on both sides of the Atlantic, and through the lessons and hopes that some of their contributors and denigrators have drawn from them. I have also attempted to sketch the amazingly wide and varied areas contemporary anthologies came to encompass, from preserving to popularising poetry—anthologies that were programmatically elitist, like *Some Imagist Poets*, to frankly populist ones such as Louis Untermeyer's *Modern American Poetry*. Here, I have also examined collections like *Some Imagist Poets*, whose studied silence, in a disdain of introductions and prefaces, at least in their first edition, left the readers to deduce for themselves the poetics and the themes behind the poems. There are yet other anthologies like Harriet Monroe's *New Poetry* that were engaged, in all their multiple editions, in "educating" apathetic readers to turn them into the "great" audiences necessary for the survival of poetry. Towards this end, they wrote detailed introductions addressing the
concerns and problems of the ordinary reader which they had learned about through letters to their magazines, meetings, and poetry readings. We need to revise our opinion that the Modernists were uncompromisingly elitist in their choice of readership, for like the Poetry Societies, the little magazines and anthologies were meant as much for the ordinary reader as for the highly educated. As Harold Monro put it, "Poetry is said to be unpopular—generally by those who dislike it themselves. Good poetry is as much read now as at any time since the invention of printing, and bad poetry is certainly read a great deal too much" (Quoted in Morrisson 8). His magazine was explicitly aimed at "dispelling this illusion" (Quoted in Morrisson 8).

Two anthologies of note that occupied centre-stage between 1936 and 1957 and continued to influence readers from all walks much later are W. B. Yeats's *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* and Michael Roberts's *Faber Book of Modern Verse*, both of which appeared in 1936. Chapter IV considers these as the first anthologies that appeared after "Modernism" was consolidated and confirmed as an "age" in the histories of literature. In their own different styles, both editors were concerned with literary history, differently, if polemically surveyed. Roberts was more sympathetic to the common reader designing his Introduction to accommodate detailed explanations of the methods and themes of modern writers, with some attention to literary history. Yeats, in contrast, provided a very personal view of the themes and trends in the history of literature with choices that reflected his poetics and temperament. His view of the anthology included a conviction that it could begin a renaissance not only in English but in European letters, and thus have an impact that is inestimable. Hence I have attempted to survey his ideas and beliefs
in the context of his anthologies, especially the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. The controversies the Oxford anthology aroused at the time of its publication gave great pleasure to Yeats. They are sufficient evidence that the anthology served its purpose of arousing the interest of the reading public. The fact that literary historians still quote his Introduction with respect, and analyse his inclusions and exclusions polemically, attests to the enduring significance of this collection. This Chapter has tried to study in some detail the influential anthologies of these two editors who were also poets themselves.

What is more, three major poets, Laura Riding, Robert Graves and T. S. Eliot, albeit in an advisory capacity, were involved in making the Faber anthology. Dorothy Wellesley and Eliot, again, to a lesser extent, influenced Yeats’s anthology which, however, is the Yeatsian world-view gathered in one book. I have briefly traced the planning and execution of these anthologies and examined the two anthologists' views of "Modernism." Roberts, for example, saw poetry as inevitably being concerned with social and political issues, issues that Yeats regarded as "impurities" (Yeats 1936 xii).

The examination of their conflicting ideas again enables us to arrive at a better understanding of the varieties and forms of Modernism. While Yeats was interested in a poetry that was not merely technically innovative, but also was thematically heroic, Roberts saw the prospects of poetry that was engaged with the possibilities imagining and remaking the language. With Yeats's and Roberts's collections, we can realize, for the first time, the growing power of the anthology to make or unmake poetic reputations or at least delay the canonization of writers whom the editors neglected, as Wilfred Owen's eclipse through the fifties, thanks to Yeats's *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, proves. The importance of these collections also lies in their anticipation of future trends in poetry and
literary history, including the "Anthology Wars" more than two decades later. Partly
designed with the classroom in mind, they played a crucial role in forming the tastes of
many generations of readers of English Poetry-

Two related questions I ought to have considered, but have not, are: T.S. Eliot's
stature as a proxy-anthologist, and Philip Larkin's "alternative" to Yeats's *Oxford Book.*
Eliot's whole career may be seen as that of a poet disguising himself as an unofficial
chronicler of English verses, assembling fragments and formats for an anthology for
future use. His exercises were guided by his sense of literary history being shaped by
anthology pieces of the mind (where presumably his "historical sense" coheres) and by
his faith that "tradition" itself is an imagined anthology *par excellence.* Philip Larkin's
*Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse* (1973), set beside Yeats's, would have
yielded other interesting insights. How a poet's own work figured/featured among other
poets of his generation—Yeats among his precursors, peers and progeny for example—
matters more as a tradition-and-talent question than as a personal curiosity the poet
perhaps wanted to explore. The Eliot-Yeats-Larkin anthologies—two published, the other
to be gathered from a *live* tradition—are fascinating subjects for future research.

From the earliest phases of twentieth-century poetry, there has been the
recognition of the primacy of the classroom in developing attitudes and skills that would
lead towards *understanding* poetry. The anthology came to be seen sometimes as a
generator or transmitter of poetry, though teachers have mercifully used it for both
purposes. In Chapter V, "The Classroom Anthology and the Anthology Wars/Walls," I
have sought to examine Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's *Understanding Poetry: An Anthology for College Students* in all its editions beginning in 1938. We ought to note that in spite of its declared claim to be an anthology, it is more in the mould of a textbook with its elaborate notes and explanations and the direct addresses to the teachers and readers it includes. Its primacy in the academic curriculum engendered a "teachable" poetry according to some critics, a poetry that invited interpretations that could be ideal for a fifty-minute session in the classroom. Brooks and Warren were the first editors to produce an anthology based on their classroom experiences and continuously revise it over a period of forty years. Their notes and introductions to the poems they collected raise important questions about the extent of help which might be legitimately offered to the student. With the introduction of the idea of the "speaker," or "sayer" in the editors' terms, a revolutionary change was introduced into the manner the poem was read and the way the poet was now perceived. In other words, the poem came to resemble a "dramatic" situation. The overwhelming influence of the anthology led to many clones such as Lawrence Perrine's *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry* (1956) that, like *Understanding Poetry*, took experience to be the subject of poetry written strictly in a formal pattern. Brooks and Warren were innovators in the introduction of a few ideas that we associate with New Criticism: the uncompromising focus on the text itself, the close attention to form and the stress on experience which led them to look at every poem as a dramatic event and regard the poet as a "speaker." I have also highlighted here the unique methods that the editors used to teach a poetry they considered "good," and the carefully graded selections that were intended to help the student-reader graduate to more difficult forms until, in the exercise of a democratic spirit, they favoured, Brooks and Warren left
some modern poems completely unmediated. These were ideas of revolutionary significance and *Understanding Poetry* seemed to sweep away everything before it. The revolt against Brooks and Warren that followed seems inevitable in retrospect. These "Anthology Wars," were sparked off by the rival parties in an attempt to broaden the canon in the academy. Donald M. Allen's *New American Poetry* (1960) and Donald Hall's *Contemporary American Poetry* (1962) formed the vanguard. These editors valued a poetry that was less concerned with what was perceived to be an obsession with a constraining form, and was more committed to the authenticity and individuality that the early Modernists recognised as central to the art. The editors from both groups were, again, clearly concerned with the classroom. The separation of American poetry from its British counterpart is a turning point in literary history and it is nowhere more clearly evident than in these anthologies. First effected in David Cecil and Allen Tate's anthology, *Modern Verse 1900-1950* (1958), the separation entailed two different introductions. The story becomes more complicated when we read in Donald Hall that the white editor cannot feel at home in African-American poetry which he explicitly recognizes as "alien." What needs to be noted here is that the anthology is the occasion for the parties involved to array themselves along their ideological lines. In Chapter V the polemical poetics of these anthologies have engaged my attention. A third view, from the perspective of non-mainstream poets, is offered by Cary Nelson's *Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory 1910-1945* (1989). The repression of these poets is a continuing process in spite of the good intentions of those in charge of literature and literary history. Nelson's project is situated in the context of the changes in literary history and theory that have occurred in the mid-
and late eighties of the twentieth century. He identifies and emphasises the harm that can be caused by "an unqualified devotion to a single master narrative" (Nelson 7), the implied suggestion being that literary history has many perspectives and is more credible in an anthological format. Following this, it is no surprise that the writer should suggest we go back to the little magazines, pamphlets, broadsides and other publications of the writers he wants to recover in all their "diversity" (Nelson 8), a project that is in no way at odds with canonical Modernism whose writers too went back to the little magazines and other non-mainstream publications of their time. In fact, such an enterprise, in a world caught up in the aftermath of inexpressible events like the Holocaust and Hiroshima, affords us newer perspectives, and a fresher language developed by the forgotten poets that is uncontaminated by ordinary use to try to understand these events. These poets were committed to a cause, whether it was feminism or communism, and carrying on from here, he attempts "to propose a general reconsideration of the relations between poetry and the rest of social life" (Nelson 19). In sum, he wants a canon that is actively and continuously revisionist in a way that reflects an awareness of present needs and the pressures of the past especially in an academy that is addicted to an exaggerated form of New Criticism that has come to deny the validity of history in literary studies. Nelson does not name the anthology, but he turns instinctively towards it in its role as a preserver when he declares, "We can never be certain what kinds of texts should be included within or excluded from "literary history," let alone what their number might be" (Nelson 6). This project materialised in his Anthology of Modern American Poetry (2000), published by Oxford.
I have presented his view not only because Nelson's is a highly judicious and brilliantly presented survey of poetry and poetics which standard literary histories have forgotten or wilfully ignored. The poets championed by Nelson were either non-white and non-American or the labour class. Nelson's survey lists and illustrates vibrant tendencies from the other side of Modernism, especially the Depression years. Nelson's work is interesting to me because he puts very minor and marginal literary magazines and anthologies in the constitution of a usable past, for long deemed unusable by mainstream literary historians.

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Seven years ago, when this study was proposed to the Department of English at the University of Hyderabad, my intention was mainly to look at two related phenomena: 1) the making of Anglo-American poetry by the makers themselves; and 2) the making of readers (chiefly, their classes and tastes) by the makers of the new poetry. I should think that this modest study has achieved much of what I have set out to do besides noticing *inter alia* some activities on the rear and fringes of anthology-making, and the reading relations they foster. For fear of losing the focus and integration I have given this study, I have not taken other roads although they seemed less travelled and therefore worth exploring. One such is the study of anthology types and kinds variously known to scholars as "sequences," "cycles," "collections," "selections," and the Collected/Complete works of poets. Contributions to each of these kinds are not difficult to find in twentieth-century English poetry, but I have not studied the fascinating
phenomenon of 'gathering' itself or the sleight of gathering hand. The Poem-in-place or
the status of the collected and selected poem, or its possible influence on public reception
is, however, an interesting subject in itself.

Where and how poems appear, for example, are important considerations for the poets
themselves. While I have indicated this in the study on a number of times, how important
this might be for the readers might be shown in another study bearing another focus. It
would be rewarding to examine, for example, a much anthologised poem like "The Lake
Isle of Innisfree" or "Birches" in a variety of anthologies edited by several hands, or how
a lyric-portrait of a Prufrock or a Crazy Jane might appear within the folds of an
anthologist's portraits of Modernist characters or types, all of whom seem exiles from
their makers' first collections. Other related, but equally important, considerations
include the reading contexts of posthumous publications, and poems transferred from
authorized collections to anthologies. Readers have sometimes frowned at the dislocation
of poetry cycles and sequences that are sometimes broken and reclassified in the
anthologies with no ideological concerns of their poets. Excerpts from long poems often
project their editor’s/complier’s preferences and concerns rather than their poets’.

Through the seven years this study has been in progress, two significant books on
the anthology were published; Jed Rasula's The American Poetry Wax Museum (1995)
and Anne Ferry's Tradition and the Individual Poem: An Inquiry into Anthologies
(2001). Ferry has examined at length the influence of anthologies on practicing poets, a
subject still open for another detailed examination with Modernist poets and their
precursors as the immediate context. The early anthologies of modernism and those that came after them, as we have seen, were exemplary in not only drawing the English line clear, but in keeping it straight. Jed Rasula’s book has virtually made another look at post-War anthologies largely superfluous, but British and Commonwealth anthologies and market of the same period still await detailed study. And so do "group" anthologies of the 1950s like New Lines, serial-turned-anthologies like \( L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E \), as well as those published by ethnic/minority/gender/nation groups. All these studies, when undertaken, are likely to tell us more about Anglo-American verse culture, official and other, about which readers often know very little. If poets are the best imaginative creatures, their readers often imagine traditions. Anthologies tell us how traditions are made and unmade by compulsions of the market and public culture.