Chapter V

The Classroom Anthology and the Anthology
Wars/Walls

Omissions are not accidents.

—Marianne Moore,
Epigraph to Complete Poems
Poets and theorists of early Modernism laboured to make the anthology a programme, and in some respects, a manifesto of sorts. With the increasing number of English Departments across Britain and North America in the mid-twentieth century, the need for textbook anthologies became more urgent and crucial. In such departments congregated not only teachers and students of Anglo-American poetry, but professionals: critics, scholars, editors, circuit lecturers and certain propagandists of poetry. The opening chapter of Jonathan Culler's *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions* (1988) explains the inevitable rise of professionalism especially in the departments of English literature. Culler puts this in perspective when he contrasts two models of the University—the preserver/transmitter of cultural heritage model, and the producer of new knowledge model—professionals believe in and vouch for. The argument between these models goes like this: (1) the University is essentially a preserver and transmitter of cultural/national heritage; (2) No, the University is the place where new knowledge is produced.

Neither view is wholly contemptible, although pushed to the extremes, the transmitters do not have to write (produce new knowledge) and the generators (of new knowledge) do not have to teach. These views are still heard on academic campuses here and abroad but, mercifully, English teachers are seldom known to take such extreme positions. Now the anthology is sometimes seen as a compromise, if not a ready solution, albeit a reactionary one, in some quarters. And, if one were to go by the sheer number
and variety of anthologies produced by teachers of English, one would find equal number of radical and traditional hands on either side of the divide. There is yet another reason to consider the opposing professional models in the light of Anglo-American anthologies of poetry. If, through the 1940s and 1950s were heard the rumblings of a war between anthologists and teachers of poetry, through the 1960s and 1970s, it seemed, there raged a full-fledged war between/among the anthologists themselves. How did this happen? For one thing, the anthologists contended with their adversaries whether the anthology was primarily a transmitter of traditional heritage, or an advancer of new knowledge. For another, were not the anthologists both preserving/transmitting cultural heritage and advancing new knowledge? They did not find the format of the anthology contradicting the two models but in fact reconciling them.

This new role of the anthology, or the role as perceived by its users and makers in the pre- and post- World War II years, is easily expressed by the sociology of poetry. Dana Gioia wrote in an article called "Can Poetry Matter" (1991) that "by opening the poet's trade to all applicants and employing writers to do something other than write, institutions have changed the social and economic identity of the poet from artist to educator. In social terms the identification of poet with teacher is now complete . . . The campus is not a bad place for a poet to work. It's just a bad place for all poets to work" (Gioia 102). We shall see in the following pages a brief sketch of the progress of this debate between the transmitters and producers of poetic knowledge. That they have conducted this debate mainly through poetry anthologies is a point worth making. I have begun this sketch with a preserver/transmitter "anthology" par excellence—Brooks and
Warren's *Understanding Poetry*. They entered the scene in disguise with a book heavily annotated and illustrated, producing useful knowledge, in other words, *while* transmitting valuable heritage in the form of canonical poems of England and the U. S. From Brooks and Warren to their successors, transmitters and producers again, is a natural connection. We shall see how "natural" this connection seemed despite the so called "anthology wars."

It is remarkable that even in the early Modernist years, the teens of the twentieth century, anthologists were anxious to influence the classroom with their own canons and poetics. Harriet Monroe, for example, complained to her publisher that not enough was being done by way of publicity to promote her anthology *The New Poetry* (1917) while Louis Untermeyer could boast sales of up to one hundred thousand copies of his *Modern American Poetry* (1919) (Abbot 1984:90). Though they were attuned to the needs of the classroom, these anthologies did not exploit the anthological apparatus to the full to meet its requirements. While they did carry bibliographies and introductions, they did not supply the elaborate notes and glossaries that one associates with a classroom anthology or textbook of today. Perhaps the first true classroom anthology that harnessed its pedagogical potential to the full was Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's *Understanding Poetry*, a textbook that ran into four editions (1938, 1950, 1960 and 1976). The editors were greatly dissatisfied with the existing plethora of textbooks that, in the view of Brooks and Warren, were, at best, casual in their approach and poorly equipped to meet their purported aims. These textbook-anthologies had an "impressionistic" (*UP* 38 iv) vagueness in their explication of a work and often set the
In fact, Brooks’s dissatisfaction with contemporary classroom anthologies dates back to his own student days. In an interview (Hunter et al. Ed. Contemporary Literary Critics 20-43) he recounts how he frequently, along with other issues, wondered, "Why does [a good poem] capture my attention?" He had to discover the answers for himself because "the books I was reading did not address these questions" (Hunter et al. Ed. 41). Indeed, disappointment with the existing anthologies and textbooks lay at the root of many "anthology wars" that were to be waged subsequently. Brooks and Warren's Understanding Poetry was thus self-consciously aimed at helping the student comprehend poetry at a time when the very concept of literature was, as Brooks says in a martial metaphor, under "attack" (Brooks 1982 170) from the linguist and the psychologist who had invaded the academy through the textbooks that they (Brooks and Warren) complained against. This was one anthology that was born and nurtured in a war that was, in the minds of the editors at least, fought on many fronts. While the linguist was present in the philological studies, Brooks complained that "[t]he symbols that the average reader knows are not disciplined by traditional and concrete rituals. They are often the emanations of a popular vulgarized Freudianism" (Brooks 1964 2). Their immediate objective now was to focus attention on the text itself, and it was achieved, at
any rate, to Brooks and Warren's satisfaction: "I do know that Warren and I reached a lot of people through *Understanding Poetry*. Perhaps these were the vehicles (sic) of dissemination. The approaches taken by many teachers who had been influenced by the books may have opened up new doors and windows to the study of literature" and, Brooks adds modestly, "It is hard to say for sure" (Hunter et al. Ed. 40). While speculating over their role in opening up new vistas for the academy, Brooks also makes a much larger claim for New Criticism which is that its principles are universal and natural and, indeed, he implies that they are the rules that any good critic will have to learn to follow if s/he does not do it unprompted. As an illustration, Brooks refers to Laura Riding and Robert Graves, who in their extremely close analysis of Shakespeare's sonnet, "The expense of the spirit in a waste of shame," had applied recognizably New Critical principles in their *Survey of Modernist Poetry* (1927 62-72). Incidentally, Brooks mistakenly mentions that the analysis is in the authors' later book, *A Pamphlet Against Anthologies* (1928). What is more, William Empson, hearing I. A. Richards mention the analysis, declared that he could do the same for every poem in the English language, and upon being challenged, produced *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930). The point is that in Brooks's view, the academy was merely returning to its true function of criticism in the true way. From this perspective, the other textbooks were inadequate when not actually heretical, and had to be anathematized for the untold damage they did to critical studies in the classroom.

In contradistinction to the incomplete and unhelpful books that preceded it, *Understanding Poetry* was an all-in-one book which included not only the poems and
quite often their explications, but also a fairly lengthy glossary of selected literary terms appended at the end. And yet, ironically, it could not escape the very charges it levelled against other textbooks and sought to avoid. One reviewer, Walker Gibson, slams Brooks and Warren even as he praises them: "The questions and exercises have the faults of most questions and exercises in most of the books: they probe here and there, ask this and that in isolation and conclude nowhere. The teacher can take comfort in the 100-page collection of poems without exercises added to the 1950 edition. In sum, Understanding Poetry remains a decent, high-minded book that will embarrass you far less than most of the heavy-hands . . ." (Gibson 257). Brooks and Warren were thus lauded for what they did not do, rather than for what they did, the latter aspect getting only the faint praise of appearing to be the best of a bad lot. Understanding Poetry, however, could claim many firsts to its credit, though not all of them would have made the editors feel proud. It was, for instance, the first anthology to run the text of a poem and its detailed commentary together, an advance on anthologies that merely supplied bare texts or only a very general and perfunctory kind of an introduction. In fact, Understanding Poetry was specifically made to fill these gaps left by other anthologies which treated the poem in an inadequate or "wrong" way, as Brooks and Warren saw it. For example, quoting a line from a textbook that noticed the "subtlest kind of symbolism" in a poem by William Blake, Brooks and Warren assert that such subtlety "should not be flung at [the student] with no further introduction than is provided by this sentence" (UP 1938 vii). They continue: "In any case, the approach to poetry indicated in this sentence raises more problems than it solves" (UP 1938 vii). This is where the teacher comes in, playing a central role in taking the poetry to the students. Therefore, Brooks and Warren address the teacher directly in a
letter which is at once a statement of purpose and an apology, a plea that the explications in the anthology supplement, if not augment, the teachers' efforts, and in any case, do not supplant them. The teacher's view of the poem is, however, to be regarded as only one of the possible interpretations, and certainly not the final one. Brooks himself willingly admitted that his understanding of the poems he read and reread over the years was constantly evolving. In an apparent contradiction or dilution of the above assurance of not usurping the teacher's role in the "Letter to the Teacher," Brooks admits in the interview quoted that the decentralization of the teacher's authority was a positive achievement, a democratization of the study of poetry by providing the student with almost all that the "understanding" of a poem would require. Brooks and Warren, in putting forward the raison d'etre of their textbook, draw the attention of the teacher to the serious and common ailments of a reader of poetry as they see them: the tendency to paraphrase the poem, the fruitless efforts to glean biographical information about the author, and finally, moral-hunting, efforts that only eclipse the poem itself. Understanding Poetry undertakes to teach a poem in a systematic manner, in sequential steps. The editors acknowledge that a paraphrase might be "a preliminary and necessary step" and has some value, if only in a heuristic sense. The second tendency, searching for biographical details, serves the limited purpose of clarifying interpretations which, by implication, have to be arrived at by the reader independently and separately. The third tendency, moralizing, can be admitted, but only after the reader can "grasp the poem as a literary construct" (UP 1938 iv). The attempt seems to be not so much as to exorcise these regrettable tendencies as to transcend them. The first step towards a better understanding of poetry is to introduce the student-reader to narratives that are more amenable to independent interpretation. In later
editions, a section called "Poems for Study," a group of mostly modern poems, unmediated by the editors, is placed at the end. But the preparation of the reader for the independent appreciation of poetry includes some fairly detailed explications of select poems. As the editors explain, "The analyses . . . form parts of an ascending scale and should not be studied haphazardly" (UP 1938 x). However, they point out clearly that narrative poems too can have all the complexity of traditionally "difficult" poems such as those with psychological content, and the editors expect the reader to return to the narratives themselves with increased interpretive skill and knowledge. Inevitably, since Brooks and Warren are editing an anthology that is pedagogical, their selections too are bound to be pedagogical: "A poem, then, is placed in any given section because it may be used to emphasize a certain aspect of poetic method and offers it is hoped, an especially teachable example" (UP 1938 xi). The words "especially teachable" are a give away, drawing our attention to the most important weakness of the anthology—its narrow selection of only those poems that can be discussed in the classroom. What we have here is, in fact, a double diminution of a poem which is chosen for its "teachability," and is then studied in a "certain aspect." The editors go on to introduce a division between reader and poet, a division that has very serious implications for the reader in particular and for poetry in general. For the first time here, in Understanding Poetry, the poem is given a "speaker," or to use the editors' words, a "sayer," a detail to which we shall return. Sayers, of course, can be good, bad, or indifferent as the listeners too may be, and it is the duty of the anthologist to level the differences and close the gaps in the listeners' abilities to "understand" poetry. Towards this end, Brooks and Warren adopted many strategies, some of them unique.
"Understanding Poetry" is alone in analyzing bad as well as good poems to "educate" the reader by contraries to appreciate what the editors think is "great" poetry. Indeed, the New Critics can go further and argue for a formal education for poets too. "Poets may go to universities and, if they take to education, increase greatly the stock of ideal selves into which they may pass for the purpose of being poetical. If on the other hand, they insist too narrowly on their own identity and their own story, inspired by a simple but a mistaken theory of art, they find their little poetic fountains drying up within them" (Ransom 1938 2). Probably the single most significant effect of "Understanding Poetry" was that it seemed to have divided the constituency of readers into academic analysts making close studies, and Robert Lowell's "midnight listeners" whom it excluded from its purview presumably because they displayed an untrained gut reaction of sorts. This polarization was to evoke strong responses among critics and anthologists. For example, Robert Pack, one of the editors of the second edition of "New Poets of England and America" (1962), an anthology in the handbook line of Brooks and Warren, says, "The idea of raw, unaffected, or spontaneous poetry misleads the reader as to what is expected of him. It encourages laziness and passivity. He too can be spontaneous and just sit back and respond. A good poem, rather, is one that deepens on familiarity; it continues to release your feelings and engage your thoughts" (Pack 1962 178). This familiarity is presumably that which is nurtured by close and repeated readings. Coming after three editions of "Understanding Poetry", this is not surprising, but Pack fails to consider the possibility that the dead and routinised philological analyses of the earlier times can reassert themselves in a new way through New Criticism in its decadent forms. A close reading, for example, can result in a dissected, exploded view of the poem,
whose parts viewed separately can never recapture the whole, frustrating what Brooks
and Warren call the "massive effect" (*UP* 1976 9) of the poem on the reader. This is not a
new idea—Matthew Arnold, in the Preface to his *Poems* (1853) regards it the duty of
poets to produce works that culminate in a "total-impression" (Arnold in Cunningham
526), and urges the critic to demand the same as a matter of right and duty. At the other
end of the spectrum are anthologies like Donald Allen's *New American Poetry* (1960)
that collect poems which rarely have "form" in Brooks and Warren's sense. These, in
Arnoldian poetics, purvey a "true allegory of the state of one's own mind in a
representative history" (Arnold in Cunningham 526). The terms are new, but the issues
are pretty old.

The amazing success Brooks-Warren achieved soon set standards for everyone
concerned—the poem, the poet, and the student. Perhaps the emphasis in the classroom
on a philological study of poetry in a purely linguistic approach to the exclusion of
criticism as a policy in the period preceding the publication of *Understanding Poetry* may
have had something to do with this success. Brooks and Warren, by contrast, even in their
title, convey a sense of ambiguity and a suggestiveness which, while programmatic and
therefore limiting, did tell the student-reader what to expect. The title suggests that poetry
can surely be *understood* in the first place, because it had something inherent that *ought*
to be understood. It is of some interest that Brooks and Warren use the term
"grasp/graspable" (*UP* 1938 10) at least twice in their Introduction, as if gaining some
command of the poem was the primary aim. For the New Critic, this was of the greatest
importance and the poem could not be left unmediated for the reader to "understand" or
"grasp." The expert had to intervene and strengthen the reader's hands so the grasp could be more tenacious. In their "Letter to the Teacher" in the first two editions of *Understanding Poetry*, Brooks and Warren say: "These analyses [the poems they go on to analyze in their book] are intended to be discussions of the poet's adaptations of his means to his ends: that is, discussions of the relations various aspects of a poem have to each other and to the total communication intended" (*UP* 1950 xvi). As a title, *Understanding Poetry* has further implications for its users. It suggests also that we can "understand" what poetry is and what it is not, because poetry itself deals with the "objective":

Poetry ... is a response to, and an evaluation of, our experience of the objective, bustling world and of our ideas about it. Poetry is concerned with the world as responded to sensorially, emotionally, and intellectually. But—and this fact constitutes another significant characteristic of poetry that cannot be overemphasized—this response always involves three of these elements: a massive, total response—what we have called . . . the multidimensional quality of experience. As Coleridge put it, poetry 'in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul into activity.' A major concern of this book will be to investigate, directly or indirectly, how this massive effect is achieved and what it means in human experience (*UP* 1976 9; editors' emphasis).

Poetry is read and understood because it is rooted in reality: Brooks and Warren had nothing but scorn for the idea of "Art for art's sake." Poetry should reflect "experience" as its central concern, and it is astonishing how many textbook-anthologies of the fifties
and sixties subscribe to this poetic. Laurence Perrine's *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry* (1956), says that in literature, the "concern is with experience" (4; emphasis added). Norman C. Stageberg and Wallace L. Anderson's *Poetry as Experience* reflects the same concerns even its very title.

Brooks and Warren conflate the scientific and the poetic by basing both on the objective experience of the "bustling world and our ideas about it" and we might conclude that both (science and poetry) are engaged in making sense and order out of it. But poetry appears superior to science because while the latter is limited to a "sensorial" and "intellectual" experience, poetry is richer as it satisfies even the emotions and involves the soul too, leading to a more holistic effect upon the reader. The anthologist has the task of helping the reader realize this effect. It is interesting to note, incidentally, that such an arch anti-anthologist as Robert Graves also uses this contrast between the scientist and the poet to show the superiority of poetry over science (Graves 62 33). Having established the content of the poem, Brooks and Warren turn their attention to another distinguishing feature of poetry: form.

In Brooks and Warren's view the poem becomes "graspable" because it has form, or rather, *only* because it has form. Every teachable poem "... by the fact of its being 'formed' and having its special identity, it somehow makes us more aware of life outside itself. By its own significance it awakens us to the significance of our experience and of the world" (*UP* 1976 11; Brooks and Warren's emphases). The poem is thus open to a scientific kind of analysis, but not quite, because as the editors themselves acknowledge,
the poem "somehow," in some inexplicable way, does its work. By placing form at the
centre, Brooks and Warren were to create in readers an attitude that was indifferent
towards other kinds of poetry which had no recognizable form, such as that of the
Confessional and Beat writers, to take only two notable instances. The emphasis on
experience, as distinct from moralising, as a profound, significant and extraordinary
"situation" in life that inspires the poem, seems to have led them to posit an
"experiencer," who is also the "sayer," whom we may identify distinctly for the first time
in literary history, as the "speaker" of a poem:

The situation . . . provokes a response which is the poem, and so for the
poem to make sense, we must have some idea of the identity of the
"sayer" who responds to the situation. Ultimately, the sayer is, of course,
the poet . . . [S]ince the poem is a little drama, we must have some sense
of the identity of the speaker, that the voice of a poem is not heard in a
vacuum . . . Therefore, we must always begin by thinking of the identity of
the speaker as revealed in the poem, no matter whether the image is
identifiable only in the vaguest, most general way . . . or more specifically
identifiable in the actual poet . . . (t/P 1960 13-14).

But Brooks and Warren go on to tell us that the poet speaks through a "mask" (UP 1976
15). The readers have to answer for themselves the questions, "Who is speaking?" and
"Why?" (UP 1976 15). The assumption is that when the readers get a clear picture of the
identity of the speaker, we may assume that the idea of the poem, in all its nuances, will
be easily grasped or will be closer to being grasped. One of the poets to whom a large
amount of space and explication is devoted is Robert Frost, who, in a letter home from
England (February 1914) writes, "The ear does it. The ear is the only true writer and only
true reader. I have known people who could read without hearing how the sentence
sounds and they are the fastest readers. Eye readers we call them. They can get the
meaning by glances. But they are bad readers because they miss the best part of what a
good writer puts into his work." It is to catch this "best part" that Brooks and Warren
lavish considerable attention on the section called "Tone and Attitude" in the earlier
editions, and in the last edition, simply, "Tone."

Occupying seven separate sections, an innovation in the 1976 edition, the idea of
"tone" is also treated in the Introduction as well as in an appendix. "Tone," the editors
emphasise quite early on, is metaphorical rather than real, but is also the key to the
meaning of a poem. As if to highlight the significance of the concept, they describe it in
short staccato sentences: "Tone ... expresses attitudes ... A poem is an utterance. There
is someone who utters. There is a provocation to utterance. There is an audience ... even
if it is only the self (UP 1976 112-113). Without an "I," implicit or explicit, there is "no
poem" and it is that attitude that the poet expects us to take towards the poem (UP 1976
112-113). In other words, the poem is understandable only through tone. In a lecture
titled "The Primacy of the Author," Brooks bemoans the tendency in literary studies to
regard the writer merely as a medium through which "a particular culture or ... a special
climate of ideas" is expressed due to which the very notion of a specifically literary art
has been called into question" (Brooks 1982 170: Brooks's emphasis). However, the poet
and the poem are only two of the trinity in poetic experience, the third being the reader who is elevated to the level of a judge and a creator of sorts. For, it is after all, the reader who will reconstitute the words on the page into a meaningful poem: “. . . the reader also counts, for it is he who brings the literary work to full life in his own mind” (Brooks 1982 256).

If it is the reader who decides "the end and object" of the poem, we can see the "intentional fallacy" of William Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, one of the keystones of the new Critical arch, in clearer perspective and understand better the attempts of Brooks and Warren to "educate" the reader who now occupies a place of supremacy, and for whom now, the poem is deemed to be written. Thus by reversing the poet-reader relationship, they introduce a revolutionary change in literature. The speaker-poet, by an act of choosing the subject and form of the poem, can only "frame" the subject and that might be quite significant in itself, but, in Pound's terms, in what "gallery," this frame with its subject hangs, and what it is made to mean, especially in juxtaposition with the other "frames" in the "gallery," is, of course, the anthologist's and the reader's privilege. The "verbal icon" is no longer seen in reference to the artist who brought it into being. Examining their view of the identity of the speaker, we can notice the disturbing assertion that without him/her, the poem is heard in a "vacuum." The poet is reduced to a character in his/her own "drama" and the ludicrous in the etymological sense of the word (ludicrous) is never far away, but perhaps, for Brooks and Warren, this is one of the differences between "good" and "bad" poetry. Finally, to assume that simply by positing a "speaker" the vacuum would disappear strikes one as arbitrary, for echoing the Marxist
critics, one might assert that the "speaker" too is in a vacuum without reference to the socio-historical factors that shape and influence poetry. Of course such a reference to particularities of literary production would be heresy in New Criticism. This heresy is represented by Jacques Derrida whom Brooks, echoing M. H. Abrams, finds to be an "absolutist who cannot find an absolute" (Brooks 1982 18). Such a view is "devastating to any concept of humanistic value" (Brooks 1982 17). The anthology was the chief weapon to combat such literary nihilism as Brooks and Warren saw it.

The idea of the speaker's voice finds consenting echoes in many anthologists of the time. In Exploring Poetry, (1955) of M. L. Rosenthal and A. J. M. Smith, the first sentence reads, "In a good poem, we hear the voice of a person speaking" (quoted in Gibson 257) and Walker Gibson, the reviewer of the book, incidentally a teacher, approvingly writes, "Surely that is the place to begin" (Gibson 257). Towards the end of the Section on "Tone," Brooks and Warren themselves reinforce their point (the primacy of the speaker and the voice) through the first line of an Emily Dickinson poem, "Tell all the truth but tell it slant" by asking the question, "How can the first line be understood as a description of the method of all successful poetry?" (UP 1976 193). The answer, of course, is that it has an unmistakable sense of a speaker and a voice. In a lecture delivered in 1982, Brooks added a new dimension when he explained this line as literature's link with reality: "It (literature) tells the truth through a fiction" (Brooks 1982 25; Brooks's emphasis). A local and contemporary truth is universalised by the authors' mysterious ability to "write better than they know" (Brooks 1982 177).
If the speaker appears, the listener, as we have seen, cannot be far behind and if the speaker speaks with a carefully cultivated art, the listener/reader must develop his/her art of listening/reading. This forms the raison d'être of the anthology and the editors' efforts are directed at helping the reader "understand" poetry even better. Brooks and Warren themselves draw attention to the significance of the title, suggesting experience as their central theme:

The title of this book is Understanding Poetry. It might, however, with equal reason be called Experiencing Poetry, for what this book hopes to do is to enlarge the reader's capacity to experience poetry. What is at stake in the choice between the two titles is a matter of emphasis. The title Experiencing Poetry would emphasize the end to be hoped for—a richer appreciation of poetry, a fuller enjoyment. Our chosen title emphasizes the process by which such an end may be achieved (UP 1976 15).

But finally, the anthology will have served its purpose “only insofar as it can return readers to the poem itself—return them, that is, better prepared to experience it more immediately, fully, and, shall we say, innocently” (UP 1976 16; Brooks and Warren's emphasis). The guilt, presumably, lies in the acquisition of information the editors consider extraneous to the poem. No amount of experience, however, is enough and the reader may only be more or less ready for the poem. The writer's experience that goes into the poem is balanced by the reader's own experience that he/she brings to the work. "The privilege of interpretation accorded to the reader or hearer may also be looked upon as an obligation. In either case the work is literally delivered into his hands. He has the
privilege of responding to its invitation to use his own imagination to invest it with a fullness, with a richness, gleaned from his own experience” (Brooks 1982 26). The editors’ duty is to see that this privilege is enjoyed and honored in an appropriate manner. The reader, like Trofimov in Anton Chekhov's Cherry Orchard, is a "perpetual student."

To achieve their aim of "educating" the reader, Brooks and Warren deploy a variety of organizational and textual devices. With every edition, fortified and enriched by new experiences, the editors enlarge and innovate so that especially after the first two editions, the book becomes a completely different one in format, look, and size. Not only is the number of poems increased, but also a few new sections are added subsequently to aid the student. Parodies of poems, for example, are included in a special section at the end of the fourth edition (1976) so that they might enable the readers to come to a better understanding of the poems. A unique feature of Understanding Poetry is the deliberate inclusion of what Brooks-Warren think are "bad" poems to contrast them with the good ones. And just as some of the "good" poems are analyzed in detail, so are some of the "bad" ones. For example, in their analysis of Joyce Kilmer's "Trees," they excoriate the poem for its inconsistency in the flow of thought, whimsical imagery, and at least one illogical conclusion, which the student is expected to discover for himself/herself by answering questions like “Is there any basis for saying that God makes trees and fools make poems?” (UP 1960 290). Even more unusual are the diagrammatic representations of some poems, such as "Cleopatra's Lament," an excerpt from Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra (UP 1960 292-293). Another interesting technique that Brooks and Warren use is the rewording of some poems to bring out the beauty of the original, which
is not a new idea—even T. B. Macaulay had expressed a similar idea in one of his essays in which he attributes to the words of the poet the inevitability of the magical password to Ali Baba's cave. Brooks-Warren quote Shakespeare's "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" speech from Macbeth Act V. Scene 5, and follow it up with Davenant's version of the poem purged (in Davenant's view) of its offences against "correctness" and "reasonableness" (UP 1976 290-291). Asking the student-reader to analyze the passage from Shakespeare in detail, they also require the reader to compare the two versions somewhat elaborately. This is repeated a few times in the anthology when, for example in the Introduction, they alter Robert Burns's famous lines, printing them as [mis]quoted by Yeats: "The white moon is setting behind the white wave,/And Time, is setting with me, O!" (UP 1960 17). Brooks and Warren's alteration reads in the second line, "And Time, O! is setting with me" (UP 1960 17). They go on to note, "... the first version ... may be in itself more melodious than the second," but "is superior primarily because it contributes to the total effect, or what we might call the total interpretation, of the scene" (UP 1960 17). Yeats's summary of the poem is then given in full, followed by an even more drastically altered version, with a "gold moon" behind a "gold wave" and the second line now reading, "And Time is setting for me, O!" (UP 1960 17). Brooks and Warren surprisingly, do not draw the reader's attention to the fact that Yeats had misquoted the lines from Burns. The original line reads "The wan moon is setting ayont the white wave."

The influence of Understanding Poetry in its various editions over time is truly incalculable as it made itself seemingly inevitable in the classrooms. What Brooks and
Warren wanted to impress upon teachers was their volume's thoroughness and apparent ability to cater to the needs of the students, teachers, and teaching assistants. The "success" that Brooks and Warren achieved came, however, at the price of isolating poetry from the general reader. Perhaps it seemed to make the university somewhat the arbiter of the destinies of writers and literature. With its emphasis on form and an "understandable" content of which it made a "close study," the New Criticism of Brooks-Warren made poetry highly specialized, if not esoteric. Any writer who desired to be counted in the Brooks and Warren scheme was invited to the models they proffered along the formal and graspable lines of the poems praised in the anthology. Poems from now on valorized form since "[f]orm is the recognition of fate made joyful, because made comprehensible" (UP 1960 xiv). Form was to become a central issue in poetry, the cultivation and sustenance of which necessitated hard practice by the poet, for which again, Understanding Poetry offered numerous examples.

Yet the original intention of Understanding Poetry had been to make poetry simple, and thereby, popular: "Most of the modern poets treated herein (Modern Poetry and the Tradition of 1939), are regarded as being excessively difficult. This study provides, I hope, some sort of explanation for that 'difficulty.' But the best defense against the charge of unintelligibility is to submit detailed interpretations" (Brooks xxxi). This was how Understanding Poetry soon became a guidebook not only to the readers but also to the writers. New Criticism consolidated and legitimized the poetics of Modernism partly through the English classroom. A kind of a symbiosis between the poet and the academy emerged, and perhaps an incestuous production kept fresh blood out of
poetry. At least, this is a charge often made against their poetics. Understanding Poetry is a much larger mission than understanding the specifics of a given poem. A truer understanding of poets and poetry is also an understanding of larger subjects including language, culture, habits of thought and discursive practices a race or nation is known by. The latter idea of poetry as representing the "dialect of the tribe" underlay Pound's famous pronouncement, "Poets are the antennae of the race." Poets who wrote according to non-New Critical tenets were either ignored or forgotten, and even today, there are instances when New Criticism continues to dominate discussions of poetry. "The 'new criticism' of Brooks and Warren," says Paul Marcotte, "is old. Perhaps it is defunct or perhaps it is only playing possum. This judgment is difficult to make" (Marcotte 46). But Frank Lentricchia is even more forthright when he says that New Criticism "is dead in the way an imposing and repressive father is dead" (Lentricchia 1983 xiii). It still looms large in the background.

It has become a fashion to decry New Criticism as pedantic and pedagogical and so destructive of the pleasure of poetry since it creates an artificial division between the poet and the speaker and the close study it makes unravels the "mystery" of the poem. But one cannot help feeling that the New Critics do not always get a fair deal from most critics. Marcotte, for example, faults Brooks and Warren for dilating, if only unintentionally, beyond the limits they set themselves, by defining poetry, for example, something they had avowedly abjured. But one feels that this critic does not distinguish between what poetry is and what poetry does. If poetry is said to be "a mode of communication" (UP 1976 9), Brooks and Warren's words quoted are only an emphasis
on one of poetry's most significant functions. It is illustrative of the overt hostility that critics have towards New Criticism that Marcotte faults *Understanding Poetry* for doing and not doing the same thing. For example, while he laments that the expression "the effect intended by the poet" (*UP* 1976 18-19) is an encouragement to commit the "intentional fallacy," (Marcotte 52), he also regrets "how little [Brooks and Warren] have to say about the meaning of the word *intend* even after having singled it out for special attention" (Marcotte 53).

*Understanding Poetry*, despite its claim to merely aid the teacher, certainly overdoes the help. Very few poems stand alone here, unmediated, that is, except in the last section. This mediation may take different forms. A poem is often elaborated in great detail; its theme, technique, imagery and metrics are analysed closely. Thus in the third edition, Yeats's eight-line poem "After Long Silence" is explained and an exercise formulated in two full pages (*UP* 1960 164-166). Again, a poem might be printed only with some questions that the reader is expected to answer independently as in William Barnes's "A Brisk Wind" (*UP* 1950 88). This student/reader-centred attitude leads occasionally to an embarrassing amount of help. Sometimes Brooks and Warren are mere do-gooders who probably exceed the limit they had set for themselves. As mentioned earlier, the editors aimed at an "instructed innocence" with which the reader could return to the poems themselves. But echoing Eliot, one might wonder, "After *such* knowledge, what forgiveness?"
Now it is not difficult for us to see the sheer success and influence of *Understanding Poetry*. The book made it almost inevitable that the poetry of the academy should be cast in its image and many subsequent anthologies did follow its model. The revolt against Brooks and Warren also seems, in retrospect, inevitable. It is debatable whether the polemics generated by anthologies of the 60s onwards may be called "walls" rather than "wars." Small battles, which in retrospect became the war, wall in and wall out conformists and rebels respectively. Against this perspective, the so-called anthology wars that were waged between 1957 and 1982 sometimes make sense. They began with the publication of the *New Poets of England and America* (1957) edited by Donald Hall, Robert Pack and Louis Simpson, an anthology that perpetuated the Brooks and Warren canon. When in 1960, Donald Allen brought out his *New American Poetry* the war was joined in earnest. Another canon was fired by Hall through his *Contemporary American Poetry* (1962 and 1972). The "raw" anthology reply came with *The Postmoderns: The New American Poetry Revised*, edited by Donald Allen and George F. Butterick in 1982. The early Modernists too had fought their own "wars" in magazines and anthologies and there is nothing unique about the events that began in the late fifties and extended through to the early eighties. That such conflicts were called "wars" is, perhaps, indicative of the growing importance of the Anglo-American poetry anthology, which is now clearly a site rife with contest and power, and the maker of the canon almost exclusively in the post-World War II era.

By the late fifties, it had become evident that *Understanding Poetry* had come to constitute, if not an ultra-orthodoxy, at least an embarrassingly reactionary book. There
seemed to be none who had not seen and used it. And yet, none seemed to be entirely happy with it. That, perhaps, is the sure sign of success, no matter how dubious, for it clearly made readers think about poetry. This is recognized even by the academically-oriented anthologies, such as *Contemporary American Poetry*, whose editor Donald Hall says, "We do not want to substitute one orthodoxy for another—Down with *Understanding Poetry* Long Live *Projective Verse!*" (Hall 1972 25). That Brooks and Warren had to go could not have been more emphatically stated, a rejection of the overcooked, if not the merely cooked. Of course this was more easily said than done. In the second edition of the *New American and British Poets* (1962), for instance, we find the editors include parodies and a majority of the poems with regular rhyme with a recognizable narrative. Were they beginning to "understand Poetry" on Brooks and Warren's terms? In any case, the new poems of the 60's anthology were "especially teachable." Since they were including only poets under forty, it might be said that Hall and Pack were updating the section "Representative Poems of Our Time" in Brooks and Warren. Yet Hall's unequivocal recognition that the earlier Brooks and Warren type of anthology (*New Poets* 1957) of which he was one of the editors, symbolized an "orthodoxy" that was limiting poetry is a significant deflation of the "war" rhetoric. This idea is reinforced by his subsequent interviews, as will be mentioned later.

At the heart of the "war," again, is the *understanding* of poetry, what it is, and equally importantly, what it is not. Poetry is to be identified henceforth as having a formal structure and is written on select subjects in a manner that was hospitable to close study. So powerful did this method of analysis become that it is accepted tacitly even by
the most extreme rebels against a canon that is perceived to be notoriously biased and closed. Cary Nelson, for example, championing the poets carefully excluded from the mainstream, writes, ". . . we are unlikely to find [Horace] Gregory and [Marya] Zaturenska's essays satisfactory, since they do not include the kind of close textual analysis we now demand" (Nelson 18). Thus while the new poetic finds some aspects that are worthy of emulation in the old guard, there are significant points of divergence of views. This powerful and influential tradition is, of course, the one propounded by Understanding Poetry, which appears to its challengers such as Allen as a reactionary anthology that perpetuates its poetics through its immense popularity, which, perhaps was achieved fortuitously by being the first to arrive on the academic scene. Understanding Poetry debated and decided with the air of immutability how poetry should be written and read and the clones of the Brooks and Warren anthology, like the New Poets, further deepen this influence. The inclusion of Donald Hall, one of the editors of the latter anthology, in Understanding Poetry, for some time the youngest poet in the latter anthology, provides a continuity between them. And yet what we find is not so much of a "war" of irreconcilable ideas as a disagreement on emphasis. Nelson, again, illustrates this point lucidly when he says:

By the 1950s a limited canon of primary authors and texts was already in place. The names of the canon continued to change, but a substantial majority of interesting poems from 1910-1945 had already been forgotten. Academic critics had come to concentrate on close readings of a limited number of texts by "major authors." University course requirements were
increasingly influential in shaping the market for anthologies. And the professorate, largely white and male and rarely challenged from within its own ranks, found it easy to reinforce the culture's existing racism and sexism by ignoring poetries by minorities and women (Nelson 35; emphasis added).

Nelson's main quarrel is not so much with the canon itself as with its exclusivist attitude as evidenced by his criticism of a "limited canon" above. The "war" was thus the result of the attempt by some later anthologists to recover these lost or neglected works, and the academy's refusal to admit them or to believe that "[f]he cultural meaning of poetry is historically constructed, and it is often energetically contested" (Nelson 135). The problem is radicalized when some critics and readers begin to question whether what the old guard privileges is poetry at all. This is, of course, possible when a new poetry is written, engaging issues that concern it and which it perceives as unique. This explains the obsession of the anthologists with the idea of the "new" in their titles, suggesting that this poetry is different in form and content. Paradoxically, according to its critics, this kind of poetry forces the writers to repeat themselves in content and style and, in the process, closes the door on innovations.

The rival anthologies made it clear that there was an exuberance of poetry that prompted Donald Allen to name one group, somewhat confusingly, "the San Francisco Renaissance." In a surprising throwback to the 1820s when Samuel Kettell was editing his Specimens of American Poetry with the avowed aim of preserving them for posterity,
Allen too seeks to rescue his poets from such fugitive and ephemeral sources as little magazines, broadsides and manuscripts. Like Kettell again, Allen also aspired to boost a national literature and increase audiences for poetry. In the context of this abundant output, the limited canon of the academicians appears to Allen and others like him to be unnecessarily constraining. Hall and Pack, in contrast, were decidedly for the university as the sole and legitimate place for the study of literature. Their poems were collected from books already published by the writers or from such established magazines as the *Hudson Review* and the *Paris Review*. In a revealing Introduction in the second edition, Hall and Pack seem more concerned with rebutting Allen's poetics than they are with introducing their own poets. Even in their defence of their "academic" poetry against critics, they hark back to the prestige of such writers as William Wordsworth and Yeats from whom they trace the descent of the poetry they collect. This is a sure sign that the "raw" poetry had arrived and was being considered a force to reckon with.

Yet it is possible to argue that the Allen anthology, too, was aimed primarily at the classroom. Keith Tuma, for example, writes, "Only literary scholars . . . are especially interested in "chapters" of literary history" (Tuma 95). Allen, by referring back to Pound, Williams and other Modernist writers while tracing the artistic roots of his poets, implicitly acknowledges a concern with literary history and when he declares that the biographies and poetics in his anthology "are aids to a more exact understanding of literary history" (Allen xiii), he specifically reveals his academic leanings, or, in Tuma’s terms, his literary scholarship. In fact it is the literary historical divisions that save the poems from being dismissed as mere "anthology pieces" (Allen xiii). If Brooks and
Warren, and Hall and Pack after them, were leading us to understand poetry, Allen is taking us towards literary history. Herein lies one of the primary points of conflict between the anthologies: for Brooks and Warren, the canon is already made and will admit very few changes whereas Allen is committed to preserving poems and building up a literary history. This explains why he carries elaborate biographies and poetics. Evidently, both, the Hall-Pack and Allen anthologies are attempts at making poetry familiar to readers primarily in the academy. The success of the *New American Poetry* is recorded by David Perkins, who in his *History of Modern Poetry* (1987), declares that he had got used to referring to poets as the Black Mountain Group or the New York Poets, clearly appropriating Don Allen's terms. But the differences among the anthologists are quite considerable, making them rivals in significant ways.

Allen's selections do not compete with fiction for they are too deeply disquisitory or uncompromisingly anti-narrative, lacking the continuity and lucidity of Robert Frost's poems, for example. Sometimes, though, the reader gets the feeling that the techniques of surrealism and stream of consciousness have entered into poetry when Olson, in his "Kingfishers," jumps from one association to another. This poet can also seem very Kafkaesque as he probes the mind of a Gregor Samsa-like character who wakes up in bed "fully clothed" with his memories full of kingfishers (Allen 1960 2). In Olson's poetical ideas reprinted by Allen, he is concerned about the readership of poetry and suggests drastic measures to regain it, much like Pound, whom he explicitly acknowledges as master. Frequently he expresses Pound's ideas in Poundian terms. "Any slackness takes off attention, that crucial thing, from the job in hand, from the push of the line under hand
at the moment, under the reader's eye, in his moment" (Allen 1960 390; Olson's emphases). This is reminiscent of Pound writing to Harriet Monroe about the need to sustain poetry at a very high artistic level if the reader is not to be put off (Paige). When Olson writes, echoing Robert Creeley, that "FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT," (Allen 1960 387; Olson's emphasis), the New Critical attitude is unmistakable. Nor is this instance unique. The anti-narrative approach of the Allen anthology also requires a considerable amount of effort at disquisition by the reader who may be used to the linear story. This is explicitly recognized by the poets themselves and again, ironically, is phrased in terms that would have warmed the heart of the most committed New Critic. Robert Duncan, for example, declares, "A poem, mine or anothers (sic), is an occult document, a body awaiting vivisection, analysis, X-rays" (Allen 1960 400). Such pronouncements make one wonder what the "anthology wars" were about. The differences as such seem trivial as Olson, again, illustrates when he emphasizes the need to keep the "whole business" (Allen 1960 398) moving, "must must must MOVE, INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER" (Allen 1960 398; Olson's emphasis). It is perhaps these kinds of statements that make the "academic" or New Critical anthologists uncomfortable. At a superficial glance, the poetry that Olson lauds seems designed for the speed viewing of a blase television audience, and frustrates the carefully written and studied poetry preferred by New Criticism. But the unity of form and content, and the privileged metrics in Olson's poetics all go to stress the common ground that the two camps share. Indeed Olson regards the typewriter as having a revolutionary significance providing an opportunity to poets to compose in a strict form. What differences there are between the two camps are not irreconcilable though they are noticeable.
The poetics-based work in Allen's anthology prepared the reader for contemporary theories such as Deconstruction. The poets in the *New American Poetry* marked the return of theorizing poets who were rare among the Modernists after the Second World War. Perhaps this marks an attempt by the poets themselves to break the ivory tower and reach out to the reader by making the poetry simpler through their "frames" such as poetics and guidelines, a situation that may have been necessitated by the "difficult" poetry of Modernism whose advent was marked by *The Waste Land* and the *Cantos* which appealed to an elitist audience. One remembers that James George Frazer, the author of *The Golden Bough*, was unable to make any sense out of Eliot's poem and Amy Lowell herself had called it a "piece of tripe." A poetry that was marginalized was now attempting to reclaim its readers. That poetry had lost a substantial part of its readership is vouched for by the gloomy reviewers of the Hall-Pack and Allen anthologies, and poets themselves and these mutual recriminations boded ill for poetry. The reasons were many, ranging from the financial to the sheer apathy of the general reader. Donald Hall, editing the *Best American Poetry 1989*, notices that as many as forty-two million Americans admitted in a National Center of the Arts poll to having read poetry, but is shocked that Lawrence Ferlinghetti sold "only one million copies" (Hall 1989 xix; Hall's emphasis). He goes on to remark that those people who read poetry without buying any copies are "cheap sons of bitches" (Hall 1989 xix). The anthologies of Hall and Pack and Allen can be viewed as some earlier of the attempts to brighten this bleak situation by collecting poetry that could appeal to their own kind of readers. The poetics that Allen prints at the end of his collection is one of the main grounds for the "anthology wars." Brooks and Warren, and their imitators have little patience or space for
literary theory, either form the poets or from the critics. "... the discussion of literature, and particularly of literary theory, ought not to be allowed to overwhelm literature. Moreover, I agree that it may be useful for the reader to look at poems and novels with an innocent eye, to range about for himself, to experience the thrill of making his own discovery" (Brooks 1982 254). So where does the anthologist come in? "Nevertheless, it would be equally naive to believe that the innocent reader does not sometimes require help" (Brooks 1982 254). The qualification of "sometimes" notwithstanding, it is a major role that Brooks and Warren and their clones envisage for the anthologist and critic.

The academic anthologies, viz., New Poets (1957 and 1962) and Contemporary American Poets (1962 and 1972), are published on the belief that to win back the readers, poetry has to be orderly and systematic and present a "narrative." Their stock-in-trade is a poetry that resembled Robert Frost’s in its narrative structure and form. A linear, sequential story, like the one advocated in Understanding Poetry is privileged here. The editors, Hall, Pack and Simpson of the former anthology, and Donald Hall of the latter, were convinced that the university was the last and the best hope for poetry. It was a poetry that would be simple yet suggestive and to which the reader would repeatedly come back for a richer understanding and experience. These anthologies, however, largely left the readers to their own resources with barely any hints about the poetry and poets they were to read. It was a learned poetry that, by its parodies and allusions, presumed readers who had some knowledge or were willing to acquire it on their own, again preferably in the university. It is interesting to note that Hall and Pack collect poems that are comparatively short with few of them extending beyond two-and-a-half
pages and are, presumably, chosen because they can be taught completely in a single class. Allen, by contrast prints fairly long poems that are often difficult to teach. The anthology had come to be tailored perfectly for the classroom.

In their utilization of the anthological apparatus, Hall et al. and Allen differ in many significant ways. In the first edition, the editors were reluctant to write out an Introduction as they wanted the readers to judge the poems for themselves: "What characteristics are to be discovered in this poetry, we leave to the reader to determine. That poetry today is worthy of its inheritance, we hope we have shown . . ." (Hall et al. 1957 9). In this they are like the Imagist poets and Ezra Pound when they edited their early anthologies. The Introduction by Frost is intended more perhaps as an authenticator rather than as a true representative literary history of the times. It is meant to reassure the reader that the young poets in the anthology are by no means inferior to the older ones. Thus the newness of the poets collected in the anthologies is based partly on chronology and only then on the innovations of the authors. The first edition of the anthology did not divide British and American poets into separate sections, but printed them together in an alphabetical order. Only in the second edition did the editors separate them. While Allen carries a fairly detailed bibliography at the end of the anthology, Hall and Pack provide brief introductions to the writers along with their major works in the contents page. Allen follows the somewhat unusual method of getting the writers themselves to provide brief introductions to themselves and their poetics. Oddly enough, these are called "biographies" and they range in length from a few lines to one and a half pages as in the case of Gregory Corso. Some of them are whimsical, using sentences that run into
paragraphs and some that have a telegraphic abruptness and terseness. One cannot avoid the uncomfortable feeling that sometimes the poetry seeks validation from the aberrant lives that the poets have lived. Corso, for example, has a history of imprisonment.

Perhaps, by collecting poetry from varied and rare sources which were often difficult to obtain, and reaching out to a variety of readers between them, the anthologies of Hall and Pack and Allen increased the readership until, as the poll mentioned above shows, an unexpectedly large number of people read poetry. It is also true that the constituency of readers was riven along academic and amateurish or dilettantish lines.

That a critic like Donald Hall, at least partly, veered around to the "raw" kind of poetry later is, to a considerable extent, due to the presence of anthologies like Allen's. The titles of these anthologies involved in the so-called war draw our attention to the fundamental assumptions and principles that they were based on. Hall et al. seem to focus on the writers of the poems (New Poets) in their title, while Allen seems to stress on poetry itself (The New American Poetry). The former try to give a more comprehensive picture of a writer's work by including only those poets "of whom we could choose at least three or four pages of poetry" (Allen 1962, 22). Allen includes some poets who are represented only by one poem, supposedly to save the poetry from fugitive and ephemeral magazines. We cannot help noticing that while Anglo-American Modernism is marked by a bewildering variety of styles, themes, ideologies, and so on, Allen's anthology, with its definite article "The" seems to subsume the poetry of the period, at least in a representative way, under one banner, and between the same covers. Perhaps
the categorization by geography instead of their poetics, and the further grouping of the poets under their local affiliations in the Introduction and sections of the anthology can function under an overall American rubric, in Allen's view. Hall's own anthology, edited without collaborators, Contemporary American Poets (1962 and 1972), carefully eschews both "new" and "modern." The anthologists who rebel against Brooks and Warren do not have a sharply defined area that is mutually exclusive. In an interview, Hall acknowledges his European influences in emphatic terms, and his relationship as a critic and anthologist with the poetry of Eliot and Pound. The European influence has now become American and even international. As for the Eliot and Pound influences, he says, "I used to think that there was a total discontinuity between Eliot and Pound and what happens now. I no longer think so" (Hall 1986 146), and continues in a Freudian vein of the Oedipus complex: "Perhaps I needed to think that way. If your father existed, you would have to kill him, so it was easier to insist that your father did not exist. Now may be we can read The Waste Land as a surrealist poem—at least with a small s. Certainly it is not some historical, Christian assemblage of ironies" (Hall 1986 146). This civilized version of the Freudian complex, where the killing is done only by wishing Eliot out of existence, perhaps enabled Hall to be wiser than he thought he was when he edited the anthologies and acknowledged, if only in passing, Eliot's and Pound's influence even as he blamed them for an un-American and overly erudite practices. The old orthodoxy may have declared that "surrealism had failed," (Hall 1972 25) but was all the same, at least in retrospect, hospitable to surrealist interpretations, leaving a space to broaden the canon.
The notion of a war fought between the anthologists, with polarized views of nationalities, poetics and poets who published their editions from the late fifties to the early eighties, tends to obscure the important fact that the war was fought, perhaps inevitably, within the anthologies themselves as well, a situation that occurs as far back as the early decades of the twentieth century. The point is that the war has been oversimplified and its issues occluded by the individual views of critics and reviewers. Complicating the picture is the fact that one of the editors of *New Poets of England and America*, Donald Hall in his *Contemporary American Poets* made inclusions which go against the American part of the co-edited anthology. Thus, for example, Hall prints Allen Ginsberg in his second edition of the anthology in 1972, a poet left out by Pack who edited the American section of the *New Poets*. Hall admits that it was ridiculous not to have included the major Beat poet. The reason adduced in the earlier anthology for the exclusion was that the Beat group was the creation of the popular magazines like *Life* and *Time* whose only interests lay in the salacious and the exotic. These magazines tended to focus more on the poet than on the poetry. This is reminiscent of the contempt the writers of the early Twentieth century had for popular magazines. Another major failure in the *New Poets*, according to Hall, was the non-inclusion of Allen Ginsberg in the first edition of *Contemporary American Poets*, along with representative African-American poets. He and his co-editors of the earlier anthology had no regard for a poetry that was inward-looking and merely autobiographical—a poetry expressing only "neuroses," as Simpson, the third editor, was to say later in a review of Donald Allen's anthology in the *Hudson*
Review in 1963. Responding to a question, Hall gave a more detailed explanation of his then antipathy towards the Black Mountain Poets and the Beats:

"... [T]wo things are going on in any failure to recognize excellence when it first happens. One of them is that you have an idea of what poetry is; this is true whether you are being a poet or being critic or both. You are set; when something new comes along, instead of having the imagination or the energy to accommodate yourself to it, the easier thing is to deny it and to say that it's not poetry, its no good. This is what happened to Wordsworth when he published *Lyrical Ballads*. This accounts for some of my planned ignorance when new things began to happen in the late 1950s.

But there was also another thing; my own fear of poetry, my own fear of the looseness of the imagination, my fear of fantasy. Most of this new poetry was not fantastic, but a lot of it was considerably more loose and less conventional than mine, especially in intellectual and spiritual ways. So I feared the poetry not only because it attacked my stylistic set, but also it was a danger to my *emotional* set. Learning to read some of this poetry has been a liberation to me. I think of Allen Ginsberg, among others, although as my own writing has changed, I don't think it has come to resemble Allen's (Hall 1986 17-18; Hall's emphases).
Hall's anthology of 1962 had, as mentioned above, excluded the African-American poets but, after some criticism, he, like Brooks and Warren, admitted only two of them, Dudley Randall and Etheridge Knight, into his *Contemporary American Poets of 1972*. (LeRoi Jones, who appeared in the Allen anthology, refused permission). The editor made the somewhat strange plea that his understanding of black poetry was inadequate since it was "hard to judge these poems, as if I were trying to exercise my taste in a foreign language, which I am" (Hall 1972 37). One is left with the uncomfortable feeling that such tokenism, resorted simply to deflect criticism, is neither here nor there. It also suggests that nationality, since Hall chose and introduced the British poets in *New Poets*, is less of a barrier to appreciation than race.

Hall regards his anthology primarily as a platform from which to announce the demise of an orthodoxy that derived its strength mainly from T. S. Eliot and the new critics. Interestingly, Eliot himself, in a lecture in the United States, had warned of precisely such a situation. In his "Function of Criticism" he says, "These last thirty years have been, I think, a brilliant period in literary criticism in both England and America. It may even seem, in retrospect, too brilliant. Who knows?" (Eliot 1965 103). In spite of the non-committal "who knows?" Eliot appears a little uncomfortable at the success of his own criticism. Thus, Marvin Mudrick, for example, regards Eliot as "the legitimate successor to Dryden, Johnson and Coleridge" (Mudrick 599). If this is true, the Eliotian orthodoxy has a long history indeed. Hall acknowledges that the orthodoxy of Eliot still produces many good poems and what aids its survival further is, in his opinion, the lack of appropriate replacements, since only the popular magazines and the Beats are the ones
to oppose it. In other words, Eliot's orthodoxy survives only by default. Hall perhaps thinks so because Eliot frequently privileged works that echoed his own brand of Universalism over the local, such as the one found in William Carlos Williams. In "American Literature and the American Language," for example, he praises Mark Twain for his "strong local flavour combined with unconscious universality" whose "symbolism is all the more powerful for being uncalkculated and unconscious" (Eliot 1965 54). But, perhaps, Eliot would have denied Hall's charge because as he says in his lecture, "To Criticize the Critic" "... I do not believe that my own criticism has had, or could have had, any influence whatever apart from my own poems" (Eliot 1965 22). Eliot was probably suggesting that his criticism was designed to explain his own poetry or that it did have an effect in conjunction with it. Considering the centrality of his work to Modernism and the many imitators he had, Hall may have some substance in his allegation.

Demanding an eclectic attitude which is quite consistent with Modernism, Hall objects to the orthodoxy because it "prescribes the thinkable limits of variation" (Hall 1972 25). This is an implicit criticism of Allen's elaborate statements on poetics printed at the end of his anthology. In fact, Hall, as mentioned before, explicitly expresses fears over the possibility of Charles Olson's "Projective Verse" essay forming the core of a new orthodoxy. Hall, surprisingly, finds in Eliot an emphasis on the continuity of British and American poetry. Surprising because, in the lecture mentioned above, Eliot was clearly at pains to distinguish American literature from its relatively early beginnings in the nineteenth century. "... I assert that the term "American literature" has for me a
clear and distinct meaning . . . " (Eliot 1965 51). He found the concept indefinable except in a negative sense, and the differences between the two (British and American literatures) were truly vital to the development of both:

I do not think that a satisfactory statement of what constitutes the difference between an English and an American 'tradition' in poetry could be arrived at: because the moment you produce your definition, and the neater the definition is, the more surely some poet will turn up who doesn't fit into it all, but who is nevertheless definitely either English or American. And the tradition itself, as I have said long ago, is altered by every new writer of genius. The difference will remain undefined, but it will remain; and this is I think as it should be: for it is because they are different that English poetry and American poetry can help each other, and contribute towards renovation of both. (Eliot 1965 60)

Eliot's remarks show how early in the history of Modernism the two literatures came to diverge enough to require separate notices, a fact that goes against Allen Tate's assertion in the Modern Verse in English (1958) that "[t]he early reception in England of Robert Frost and the enormous international influence of Pound and Eliot and, later, of W. H. Auden, have at last produced an Anglo-American poetry that only by convention can be separated . . ." (Tate 1958 40). However, the fact that the two different anthologists had to share the editorial duties along national lines is witness to the enormity and diversity of the literatures.
It is thus surprising that Tuma should omit any references to the Cecil-Tate anthology and mark the separation of the two nations' literatures with the Hall-Pack anthology of 1962 when it had already been done in 1958. In fact, we could go back to the *New Poetry* of Harriet Monroe, who in the second edition (1927) writes: "In reading the poetry of the last ten years, we have become conscious of increasing divergences between the English product and that of the United States. This is, no doubt, inevitable and desirable—at least it is natural—that an anthology prepared in this country should follow with greater sympathy the American path in this divergence (Monroe 1927 1). If, as Tuma notes that Frost, in his Preface to the first edition of *New Poets* does not mention the British, it is perhaps because the anthology does not differentiate them, and perhaps his (Frost's) values are inflected in the same nationalist way as Monroe's. The latter further adds, "As American poetry ceases to be colonial, much of British poetry seems, by comparison, provincial" (Monroe 1927 li). Her statement is more enigmatic than epigrammatic. In the context of the American renaissance that her magazine predicted and propagated one wonders whether England itself has not become no more than the literary province of the United States. That thirty-five years later, American anthologists (Hall and Pack, for example) should still seek to embody this separation and that a critic (Tuma) should reassert it almost forty years further down, appears suspiciously like protesting too much. If Tuma thinks that modern British poetry is noticed only with something of a patronizing attitude by Americans, it is with a sense of *déjà vu* that British readers would recognize this approach. Conrad Aiken, who edited the *Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (1921), later remembered in his Preface to its second edition that his anthology "was primarily designed for publication in England, and in the pious hope of
enlightening that country, singularly uninformed about American literature, as to the state of contemporary American poetry” (Aiken 1944 xxi). Tuma, however, goes on to perpetrate another anachronism in locating the American independence of British poetry in Britain’s Suez fiasco (Tuma 91), smacking of whimsicality. Actually America did not have to wait that long, as the Second World War had already altered the power structure in the world and even earlier in 1942, President F. D. Roosevelt was putting pressure on the British to change their colonial policy, basing his demands on the American help Britain had received. Even Untermeyer in his *Modern Poetry: Mid-Century Edition* (1950) separates the British and American writers. Tuma mentions Aiken’s *Skepticisms* in his book, but, surprisingly, does not refer to his anthologies which had already addressed some of the issues that were to become the origins of the so-called "anthology wars." It would seem that by the Second World War, the two major streams of English poetry, far from merging themselves into the Anglo-American river of the standard literary histories, were esthetically diverging or perhaps even drying up. In the anthologies of both sides, we find an anxiety to reclaim the readers that poetry had lost.

The "anthology wars" were framed retrospectively by many critics through the black and white terms of Robert Lowell’s famous division of poetry in 1960 into the "raw" and the "cooked." His distinction, again, was not a new one. Others like Robert Graves had recognized similar polarities, as mentioned before. So influential did the Lowell distinction become that Robert Pack, in the second edition of the *New Poets* devoted some space to its evaluation and effect. He found that both the terms were pejorative because they both implied a poetry that was intended to be consumed, and
hence, was lacking in genuine inspiration (New Poets 1962 178). The “raw” and the "cooked" were pejorative because they were written to a carefully made programme, and thus automatically suspect.

III

The earliest anthology in the war, the Hall-Pack-Simpson New Poets of England and America of 1957, printed only poets who were forty or less at the time of publication. It carried an Introduction by Robert Frost in which the poet, known for his desire to appeal to readers "of all sorts," sounds rather non-committal and even wary of the anthology. The puns and word-play in the Introduction are reminiscent more of Louis Untermeyer than of Frost himself. We remember the letter to this editor (Untermeyer) that Frost had written in an almost perfect parody of Untermeyer's epistolary style, and it would seem that the latter was too much with him as he wrote the Introduction. Choosing to focus on the youth of the contributors, Frost called his Introduction "Maturity No Object," a title that suggests more of a defensive than a positive attitude, and it is a defensiveness that is maintained rather studiously and determinedly throughout the essay. Frost inveighs against an "academic" poetry, and cannot help regretting what the term had come to mean in negative terms. The former schoolteacher, it seems, is conscious of what a school can do. But Frost cleverly fuses poetic schools with schools in the more usual sense, and the individualist in him can only bemoan the influence of bad coteries of poets. The poet from such a group is like Shakespeare's medlar, "rotten before it is ripe" (Hall et al. 1957 10). Frost's first target is the poetry that preaches and moralizes:
"Overdevelop the social conscience and make us all social meddlers" (Hall et al. 1957 10). Opposing knowledge to instinct, Frost asserts that the swingers of birches should not "rhyme trivia" but find a "depth in the lightsome blue depth of the air" and that they will have "struck their chord long before forty" (Hall 1957 11). These poets have already proved their worth and need only wait until they become famous. As for the readers, they will have to look for good poetry both inside and outside the school in both senses of the term, and knowing schools as he did, Frost suggests that it might be more outside than inside. Plainly echoing the editors' own preface, Frost declares that the reader is on trial, having to identify which poems were genuinely inspired and which were Parnassian, poems which had been produced deliberately. The implicit admission is that there are poems of both kinds in the anthology. And finally, he hopes that the anthology would reach the school as well as the general reader. Perhaps it is due to this non-committal tone (when it is not cheeky openly) that the editors have chosen to drop the Introduction altogether in their next edition, though they still included poets under forty and might well have maintained "Maturity no Object." Instead of letting the readers come to their own conclusions as they did in the first edition, they choose to guide them this time by writing two Introductions separately, one for the British poets (Hall), and the other for the Americans (Pack). While the burden of Hall's Introduction is the apathy of the British reader towards poetry, Pack pushes for an academy-based study.

On the editors' own admission, the war of the anthologies began even before the publication—each of the individual editors had an anthology in his own mind and the poems he wished included were sacrificed for a "composite judgment"—and in any case
the anthology was not the final pronouncement on poetry and poets since subsequent editions might include those excluded now. As for the English poets included in the anthology, the editors plead that they cannot "claim to be familiar with all the work being done in England today" (Hall et al. 1957 9), and are reminiscent of Yeats's apology in the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* that he was unfamiliar with American poetry and so could not include it. Consequently, the British section of the anthology is not truly representative. Now the question may be legitimately asked as to why they were included at all. The answer can be found in the second edition where the editors say that the poets of England are doing good work, but are unknown to the Anglophobic Americans. Nor are many British readers themselves aware of this work. The anthology was thus implicitly meant to fill a gap in the knowledge of the reading public on both sides of the Atlantic.

The reviewers of these anthologies join the "war" in earnest. Discussing the origins of the two competing anthologies in a review (Simpson XVI 130), Louis Simpson, one of the co-editors of the first edition, reminisces somewhat inaccurately: "In the fifties appeared the university poets (*New Poets of England and America*) and the Beats (*The New American Poetry*)." (The latter appeared in 1960). Simpson continues, "The first group apparently came out of writing workshops taught by the Depression poets; the second merely expounded their neuroses. If the Depression poets were hardly aware of criticism, these were even less so. However, out of the university and Beat groups came the new poets we do have" (Simpson XVI 130). This Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis introduced into literary history appears vague if not
eccentric. It is also rather surprising that Simpson does not mention Hall's *Contemporary American Poets* (1962) even in passing, considering that it too was an anthology of "university poets" as it was based on much the same principles as the *New Poets*.

In all these comments, it is taken for granted that academic poetry is somehow bad and inferior, an idea echoed, ironically, by T. S. Eliot, the academic poet par excellence. "We cannot," he says, "relish the thought that our poems and plays and novels will, at best, be preserved only in texts heavily annotated by learned scholars, who will dispute the meaning of many passages and will be completely in the dark as to how our beautiful lines should be pronounced. Most of us, we know, have a pretty good chance of oblivion anyway; but to those of us who succeed in dying in advance of our reputations, the assurance of a time when our writings will be grappled with by two or three graduate students in Middle Anglo-American 42 B is very distasteful. As it would not have pleased a Latin poet in Southern Gaul to be told by a soothsayer that his language, over which he took so much trouble, would be in a few centuries be replaced by something more up-to-date" (Eliot 1965 49).

*The New Poets* was in the line of the tradition of anthologies which collected both American and British poets thus affirming a common tradition and character, begun by Harriet Monroe and Louis Untermeyer in the 1910s. Untermeyer's *Modern Poets of England and America: Mid-Century Edition* (1950) and David Cecil and Allen Tate's *Modern Poetry in English 1900-1950* (1958) were only two of the most important later anthologies in this series. The war of the anthologies began with the aggressively
nationalist Allen anthology, *The New American Poetry: 1945-1960*. While Hall and Pack saw a new renaissance in poetry arising in Europe (Hall 1957 21), Allen already claimed a great and prolific poetry existing in the United States. The latter stresses the *American* origins of the revolution that has come to be called Modernism, tracing it to Ezra Pound, H. D., William Carlos Williams, e e cummings, Marianne Moore, and Wallace Stevens. For Allen, American poetry is the more dominant one—the pendulum had swung to the other side of the Atlantic decisively. Allen, again, sees the richness of American poetry in its alliance with expressionist painting and jazz, which he declares, are acknowledged as the greatest achievements of modern America. Even as it is true that the anthologists locate the origin of the renaissance in English letters differently, they all agree that the renaissance itself is underway. As for the bases of the inclusions, Hall and Pack exclude the Irish poets, but include two Commonwealth poets, Dom Moraes of India, and Laurence Lerner of South Africa, since their criteria included not only nationality but also residence in London for a considerable time. In contrast to Allen, the European origins of the literary revolution were to be stressed again by Hall in his *Contemporary American Poets* (1962 and 1972) in which he asserts that American poetry was a part of the British tradition dating from the time of Queen Victoria up to his present. However, the publication of an exclusively American anthology marked for him the time when American poetry cut the apron strings and struck out on its own. Eliot had been even more direct. "I think it is just to say that the pioneers of the twentieth century poetry were more conspicuously the Americans than the English, both in number and in quality. Why this should have been must remain a matter of conjecture" (Eliot 1965 58).
Hall et al. and Allen include the younger poets in their anthologies suggesting that the new poetry was started by them. Yet, in both anthologies, one finds some very traditional poetry with such titles as "Ode to Joy" by Frank O'Hara (Allen 1960 250). Also present are archaisms and poeticisms in quite a few instances. This is not surprising because some of the most popular poetry of Pound and Eliot admitted such usages. Hall and Pack too have poems on conventional and mythical themes in keeping with the privileging of eclecticism. Even though didacticism is anathema, Allen includes philosophical poems like Charles Olson's "The Kingfishers." As recorders of literary history, Hall, in *Contemporary American Poets* spans three generations much like Allen. For both editors, the Pound-Eliot generation is the first one. Hall's second generation, aligning its loyalties to Walter Ralegh and John Dryden rather than to "Gerontion" and the *Cantos*, admired also John Donne, Andrew Marvell and Richard Herrick. These were Allen Tate, Yvor Winters, and John Crowe Ransom. Another group of poets appeared in the late thirties for whom W. H. Auden was the point of departure. The best of this group, according to Hall, were Karl Shapiro and John Fredrick Nims, and yet in their wit and formality, they were close to the orthodoxy. Allen's three generations were Pound, Williams, H.D., Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens and E. E. Cummings. The notable difference is that Eliot is absent from Allen’s canon. His second generation emerged in the thirties and forties. Prominent among these were Elizabeth Bishop, Edwin Denby, Robert Lowell, Kenneth Rexroth and Louis Zukofsky. Hall and Allen, as can be seen here, part ways in the second generation and the third generation is completely different and the "anthological war" appears to be raging fiercely. But such differences of opinion are expected and it seems an exaggeration to label these dissensions as wars.
Hall notes that the resident American poets of the time were already running a parallel movement in their native land with Alfred Kreymborg, Mina Loy, Stevens, Cummings, Marianne Moore, and Hart Crane in the vanguard. Allen and Hall's remarkably similar lists emphasize the convergence of views between the two editors. For Hall, these American poets were concerned more with what he called "experience" rather than with "civilization," and had to be subjective without being autobiographical. This privileging of experience shows how powerful the influence of Understanding Poetry was. It was a rejection of the past for a focus on the present, a turning to the subjective from the objective. It also repudiated the universal for the local, and a polyglot poetry for the colloquial. It is a telling example that Hall gives when he quotes the last lines of The Waste Land and declares that Eliot was never farther away from the colloquial which was adopted by Williams et al., than here. The poets drew their models from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth century writers such as Walter Ralegh and John Dryden and down played the influence of Pound and Eliot. Also significant were the influences of Andrew Marvel and Robert Herrick. It is perhaps a little ironic that the Metaphysical poets, especially John Donne, were popularized by Eliot himself. Hall identified the formal with the witty and the orthodox, and set them against the modern which he found to be very subjective in content and colloquial in diction. But unfortunately he does not elaborate on what the term formal signifies to him, though we can guess it. Hall indicates that if a poem is to be truly modern, it should not insist on irony and symmetry, but should be eclectic in approach and must always be well written (Hall 1962 20). It should also be subjective. Thus Hall attempted to free poetry from the limitations imposed by earlier, mostly Eurocentric writers who may have been
constrained to work within them for their own historical reasons. The valorization of the subjective in poetry was also noted earlier by David Cecil and Allen Tate in their 1958 anthology *Modern Verse in English 1900-1950*. This new importance of the subjective they saw as a response to the collapse of the beliefs and standards of taste that began at the end of the Augustan age.

Hall et al. and Allen aimed to attack the citadels of orthodoxy and in this they shared a common ground. Interestingly, they characterize the main trend of the age as expressionist—Allen traces the influences on his poets to an "abstract expressionist painting" (Allen 1960 xi). Hall too regards the expressionist influence as central to American poetry. But this common literary history resulted in different anthologies as the editors traced their formative influences to Europe (Hall) and resident Americans in their native land (Allen). But the main point of departure was the poetics each of the rival anthologists adopted.

In the Introduction to the American section of the anthology, Robert Pack makes a selection of American poets in a Yeatsian poetic as derived from Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater. He rejects the Beat Generation because they were mostly given to an indulgence in self-pity and self-indulgence (Hall-Pack 1962 181), much as Yeats rejected the War Poets. In fact, Pack quotes three lines from Yeats's poem "Adam's Curse" as a credo for all poets: "A line will take us hours maybe:/Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought/Our stitching and unstitching has been naught" (Hall-Pack 1962 180). These lines encapsulate perfectly the kind of poetry the editors were trying to take to the
readers: simple and colloquial in diction, rich in suggestion and including a pun or two for the reader to ponder over and unravel (the naught/knot word play, for example, blends seamlessly into Yeats's poetic fabric here). Hall, too, praised Richard Wilbur for his ability "shape an analogy, to perceive and develop comparisons, to display etymological wit, and to pun in six different ways" (Hall 1962 20). What is firmly rejected by both is the scholarly, esoteric poetry that the Modernists wrote. Hall and Allen place their trust squarely in the university, which, for them, provides the best opportunity to cultivate the love for poetry. Allen emphasizes the anti-academic verse his anthology enshrines, but he does not preclude the university as a hospitable place for poetry as can be seen in his biographies and bibliographies aimed at making poetry easy for the reader considering the novelty it claimed. Hall et al. reject the "literary cliques" who publish only in the "incestuous pages of little magazines" and cannot nourish any audience that is free from the vested interests they shared with the poets. The university "is alone the place where the past and the present live together. And one finds among one's students a genuine responsiveness, not yet spoiled, to art. They are there to give this response, to have it deepened through learning, and through sharing it, to have it encouraged that they may never lose their love for all forms of human knowledge and expression. Anyone who has had the privilege of teaching the young knows this is true. Of course there is pettiness, dryness, and reaction in the universities—as everywhere else—but the feeling which today draws so many poets to it is that here an audience may be cultivated which will be both passionate and detached, responsive and yet willing to judge" (Hall-Pack 1962, 182). Yeats, it will be remembered, valued the ordinary readers for their fresh approach to life, and continuing their Yeatsian view of poetry and its readers, Hall and Pack see in
the university students the peasants and the ordinary people whom Yeats looked to for an audience for his work.

Equally central to Hall et al. and Allen was the way the poetry of the times achieved its popularity. Hall was suspicious of a poetry that was canonized on the stilts of literary criticism as in the case of Eliot: "Probably his [Eliot's] influence was largely accomplished through his criticism" (Hall 1972 19). This subtle emphasis on a non-poetic source of influence is perhaps the most damning comment that can be made—it implicates both the reader and the poet. One wonders if Hall, by eschewing the word "popular" here, hints that Eliot was an ivory tower poet who disdained the masses and was consequently elitist and arcane. Michael Roberts, too, in *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* (1936), complains about poets who gratingly grind their axes by resorting to criticism in support of their poetry. However, for Allen, there are no problems with poets who directly elaborate their poetics and explain their works to the reading public. These are "interim reports" the poets send back form the areas they are engaged in and are relevant because in the end, they lead back to the poems. Thus they form valuable supplements and aids to the readers (Allen 1960 xiv). One might see in this an attempt to grant some autonomy to the readers and bring them into a direct relationship with the writers themselves making the teacher redundant. In Kenneth Koch's "Fresh Air," a fairly long exercise that is reminiscent of the boyish irreverence and mischievousness of Pound, we might recognize a poem that is not hospitable to academic discourse or interpretive activity. Many lines in the poem directly attack the icons of academic poetry such as Yeats, Eliot and Auden. He goes on to ask a rhetorical question after each poet's name
whether he is "of our time." The repetitive use of the words quoted makes the lines sound like some incantation or exorcism and the reader is somewhat mystified. This list smacks of an Anglophobic attitude and sure enough, in the next stanza, Koch bemoans the condition of American poets who are under this "baleful influence" (Allen 1960 231). The young American poets are "trembling in publishing houses and universities, /Above all they are trembling in universities, they are bathing the library steps with their spit" (Allen 1960 231). What seems to be under attack is the kind of erudite poetry with its literary historical roots in Europe. His plea appears to be for a poetry that is very native, even provincial and personal, and intense. For example, at the end of the poem, a barn girl comes in and the poet goes into rhapsodies about her, for she has brought in the much-needed "fresh air" into his work and life. The rural origins of the inspiration and the diction in the poem suggest that, perhaps, Dionysus has left the city. The issues that Koch raises are as puzzling as they are fundamental. If one has to read poets only "of our time" one wonders what precisely defines contemporaneity. Is it only temporal? Or is it based on the contemporary relevance of the work? "Fresh Air" is an interesting example of a poem that claims to be "Modern" with its literary past having been completed rejected and yet resorts to the simplest kinds of symbolism. In fact, quite a few Modernist writers themselves have raised many of the issues Koch addresses. The poet wants the reader to simply look at life around without searching for any symbolic meanings when, for example, he says, "I am afraid you have never smiled at the hibernation/Of bear cubs except that you saw some deep relation/To human suffering and wishes" (Allen 1960 229). This is not very different from Gertrude Stein's famous "A rose is a rose is a rose." Nor is Koch averse to the use of poeticisms like "visage" (Allen 1960 229). The point is
that while the poet does raise important issues, he is neither the first nor surely will he be the last to oppose such formulaic poetry. In fact, we can see this poem as a narrative in which there is a struggle between the "reactionaries" and the "liberals" for the liberation of poetry and the struggle ends happily with the victory of the latter, thanks to the barn girl and the headlong flight of the "professors" enabling the five or six true poets to take over the "Poem Club." To continue with Koch's Poem Society, which, at the beginning of his poem might be reminiscent of a Phi Beta-like organization cast in the mould of the PMLA, is yet the place where a poem "though influenced by Mallarmé, Shelley, Byron and Whitman, /Plus a million other poets, is still entirely original" (Allen 1960 230), is composed, that is, it is steeped in literary history. "And it is so exciting that it cannot be here repeated/You must go to the Poem Society and wait for it to happen" (Allen 1960 231). Clearly, what is being advocated here is a reformation not a revolution, for, the Poem Society is merely undergoing a purge, and even more remarkably, it is a reformation from within, for some members who have been admitted to the Society remain to provide a continuing link with the past.

The basic premises for the attacks on the academy and academically oriented anthologies (Hall-Pack-Simpson), apart from the "baleful influence" of the British and European poets was the idea that the younger poets selected were capable of a much larger variety of verse and the editors' selections were attenuated or stunted. Louise Bogan, for example, complains that the poets of the Hall-Pack anthology were satirists on occasion. And yet this is exactly the kind of poems we can also find in their collection. Thus in the second edition of the New Poets (1962) we find John Wain's "Aux Jardin Des
Plantes" (170) with its hilarious parody of Rainer Maria Rilke's "Der Panther: Jardin Des Plantes." While Rilke's poem, by setting up the panther as a symbol of the mind celebrates in Sisyphean terms the restless and unending human search for perfection, Wain deflates the idea in a lazy gorilla with some clever and delightful onomatopoeia. Reed Whittemore’s rollicking "A Day with the Foreign Legion" (Hall 1972 70-72), which mocks at war and army life, is another wonderful satire. Within the selections of the Allen anthology we find a dazzling variety. Koch's "Fresh Air" that fumes at "Yeats of the baleful influence" is printed in the same anthology as Charles Olson's "Song 4," the first line of which is "I know a house made of clay and wattles" (Allen 1960 13) with its obvious Yeatsian allusion. Olson's own long poem, "The Kingfishers" is a philosophical meditation, not just an effusion of emotions along Confessional lines. One cannot but feel a blurring of poetics as these poems appear together. Probably the critics, except for a few, erred in thinking that each anthology was a final pronouncement and reflected the unchanging opinions of the editors that were thought to be in black and white. One may, again, suspect a situation in which the views of reviewer and editor dovetail neatly into each other. For instance, in a Poetry review of Allen's anthology in April 1961, X. J. Kennedy, after praising the few poems that he liked, writes, "What saddens one ... is the stodginess of most of the rest of the book—so much of it in a language like instant mashed potatoes. And served in a comparable shape. Oh, the instant product must save toil, all right" (Kennedy 243). And so we find Pack, in his Introduction to the American poets in the second edition (1962), write, "The idea of a raw, unaffected, or spontaneous poetry misleads the reader as to what is expected of him. He too can be spontaneous, just sit back and respond" (Hall-Pack 1957 178). Rasula notices a similar
probable collusion between reviewer and anthologist: "Possibly cued by Allen or some of his poets, [Thomas] Parkinson evoked [in his review of *New Poets of England and America*] the precise terrain shortly to be mapped in *The New American Poetry* . . . The opposing forces were being arrayed . . ." (Rasula 231). The whole episode for Rasula smacks of a crude kind of manipulation.

IV

An unsigned review of *Contemporary American Poets* (1962) in the *Times Literary Supplement* queers the pitch even before it begins by quoting Gerardo Diego: "An anthology is always an error" and faults Hall for bringing out a "lay-it-safe" anthology because he is an academic (1963). The reviewer mentions Edgar Bowers, Donald Justice, Robert Bly, W. D. Snodgrass and W. S. Merwin as names to watch. These writers "have in common a vitalist attitude towards life and poetry. They are not afraid of feeling and its communication, and overcome the significance of the self which produces so much sentimental poetry in American poetry" (Hall 1963; emphasis). This particular reviewer seems to be hostile to confessional poetry. Even at this early date, Allen's classification of poets seems to have taken root as the reviewer uses the terms "Black Mountain" and "San Francisco axis" to divide the poets. Hall's introduction is criticized for being unfair to John Ashberry whose poem "Homage to Mistress Bradstreet" the editor had described as a "failure" (Hall 1962 20). The reviewer hopes that Hall would follow up his anthology with sequels since it "dilutes the robust beauty" of American verse (Hall 1962 20). He concludes by quoting William Stafford's lines
"Talking along in this not quite prose way/we all know it is not quite prose we speak" (Hall 1962 20). This again harps back to the old question of the difference between prose and poetry.

A similar confusion hovers around the Allen anthology for Cecil Hemley who, writing in the *Hudson Review*, clearly has a rather low opinion of the editor. He does not trust him to select the best from the poets and finds that he “inevitably begins discussing [the anthology] in inappropriate terms . . . It represents Mr. Allen's private view . . .” (Hemley 627). The poets appear to be mere pawns in the anthological gambit. Ironically, Hemley condemns Allen in precisely those terms that Riding and Graves use to condemn an arch academic anthology. The latter, in their assessment of F. T. Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1861), write, "The Treasury is a usurping private anthology" (Riding and Graves 1928 44). Considering this limited range of comments, one feels that the reviewers were bound to collide with each other.

Again, Katherine Garrison Chapin shrewdly notes in her review of Donald Allen in the *New Republic* (January 1961) that the rebellion of the poets collected is itself a part of the tradition when she says, "To break away from the forms of art that have grown sterile or confining is a process which takes place continually, on a large or small scale throughout the history of English poetry . . .” (Chapin 26). However, she is unhappy with the kind of break they make with literary history. Quoting Kenneth Koch's "Fresh Air" in which he regards Yeats, Auden and Eliot among others as poets of "the baleful influence," she asks with a dismissive tone, "Behind this bombast, what else is at work?"
Her answer to her own question is that there is nothing. Chapin is disappointed that apart from unconventional ideas and verse forms, there is no "creative impulse in poetry" visible in the anthology. The poets, in borrowing from various sources such as painting and foreign poetry, have only amplified their own already extant feelings and ideas.

Allen's most famous contribution to literary history, his division of the poets on the bases of geographic affiliations, Chapin thinks, is not very helpful since they are not "regional" poets "in any sense of the word" (Chapin 26). Most of the Beat poets for her do not even have shock value and are in fact, quite "tiresome" and fit into Lowell's poems for "midnight listeners" (Chapin 26). One cannot help feeling that if the "tiresome" is the "raw," Robert Pack is right in pointing out that Lowell's distinction between the two kinds of poetry has only served to obscure the difference between the "good and bad, honest and pretentious writing" (Hall-Pack 1962 177). The use of old terminology reattired in new terms is indicative of the fact that the "wars" were nothing new in literary history and their intensity and influence in the 50s and 60s have been exaggerated.

The main issues in the "war" revolved around such ideas as nationality and the legitimacy of poetics. American poetry had become a contested site on which critics differed in tracing homegrown or European influences and trends. The anthologists make the issues more pronounced by aligning themselves on the grounds of nationalism and definitions of poetry. But probably the issues themselves cannot be resolved as at least reviewer discovered. Louise Bogan, in her review of Allen's anthology in the New Yorker (October 1960) says, "The collection brings up ... the perhaps unanswerable query: What degree of anarchy can be projected in poetry? For when its principal tenets and
accepted formal procedures are assaulted with utter vigor, this art of language does not
merely change, it totally disappears" (Bogan 200). While the degree of anarchy may be
debatable, anarchy itself is preferred even by the academicians with Hall writing, "In
modern art, anarchy has proved preferable to the restrictions of a benevolent tyranny"
(Hall 1962 25). The differences between the anthologies thus come down to a question of
"degree" within or without the academy.

It is beyond doubt that the anthologies discussed here influenced at least some
poets to write the kind of poetry each of them privileged. Jed Rasula remarks that the
poets included in the Hall-Pack anthology soon changed their styles as they found the
academic poetry they were engaged in stifling, though we might attribute some of it to
the poets' own growth over time. It is debatable whether we ought to couch this success
or failure in the language of belligerence or armed conflict as the phrase "Anthology
Wars" suggests. The impression of decade-long wars fought through anthologies was
probably created by Anglo-American reviews and reviewers.

The interesting point about these rival anthologies is that both were transmitters of
an Anglo-American cultural tradition. Allen, of course, might claim a marginal advance
in the matter of knowledge. To him we owe our first acquaintance of Black Mountain
poets, the San Francisco Renaissance and a small number of open declaimers and
balladeers. While Hall-Pack-Simpson could only confirm the textual poetics of Brooks
and Warren, Allen advanced our awareness of vocal poetics. Writing on Lawrence
Ferlinghetti in his "Preface," Allen alerts us to the still abiding influence of "a popular
oral poetry . . . since Vachel Lindsay" (Allen 1960 xii). Allen was also responsible for introducing the Beat poets in a fascinating package. No wonder Allen, rather than Hall-Pack-Simpson, is widely used and drawn upon by contemporary experimental schools of poetry in North America. Viewed in this light, neither Hall-Pack-Simpson nor Allen created anything "new." Both parties were equally transmitters, while Allen may justifiably claim to have produced new knowledge of poetic orality. In other words, the rebels and conformists of the '60s and the '70s came from the academy and any war as such was of an internecine nature.

V

A virtual blueprint for a future anthology or a prolegomenon to the future Anglo-American anthologies had to wait until 1989 when Cary Nelson published his Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory, 1910 - 1945. Nelson’s list forms the Contents page of an anthology manqué, for the poets of Nelson had as much claim to be anthologized as anybody else; and yet, he can only "provide," he admits, "provisional answers to questions that cannot actually be settled" (Nelson 3) because "most of us . . . do not know that the knowledge [of the history of poetry of the first half of the Twentieth century] is gone" (Nelson 4). He recognizes, however, that the classroom is where that memory is born and sometimes continued. We make anthologies because we want to see our best poems together at one place. Anthologies are our memory-banks. We return to them because something we love cannot be forgotten, or because something has, indeed, been forgotten. "If I were putting
together a list for a course on modern poetry," remarks Nelson, "I would have some poems in mind as essential reading … I would not be willing to compile a list of the best American poems, but there would be poems I would defend and want to share with others" (Nelson 56-57). He goes on to assert that the "essential" is "contingent and temporary" and is a function of the current political circumstances. He aims at a course that is as much a reflection of the literary history of the times as it would be an introduction to some of the best work of Modern poetry. In any case, he will not impose his conception of the best on the student, as this might be a personal view. This is of a piece with Nelson's assertion that we ought to preserve all literature, even the one we think is trivial or irrelevant, and let posterity decide, based, as he would have said, on their own political commitments and circumstances. They would provide valuable perspectives and contrasts to mainstream Modernist poets and poetry. Thus, Nelson's own choices would retrieve long forgotten or ignored poets who are outside the mainstream of Modernism because they produced an ideologically committed poetry. Many of these writers were often women or from the minority communities. A study of the poets Nelson tries to recover reveals that they are distinguished by their ability to compose works that destabilized the accepted meanings of words and reflected a political commitment along with a keen sense of history, providing a countervailing influence to the canonical poets. Quoting Paul Lauter, Nelson suggests that "the main issue [for the profession] is not assimilating some long-forgotten works of authors into the existing categories; rather, it is reconstructing historical understanding to make it inclusive and explanatory instead of narrow and arbitrary" (Nelson 22). Most of these poets are ignored because they do not "display the surface indecision and ambivalence that many critics
since the 1950s have deemed a transcendent, unquestionable literary and cultural value” (Nelson 44). And yet Nelson finds a significant body of neglected or forgotten work that shares a common genesis and kinship, both in production and publication, with the Modernist canonical writers. Both, the marginal as well as the canonical writers, were convinced of the primary role that poetry would play in civilization and society. If the white Modernist poets published a variety of texts in formats like the anthology, the professional magazine, the pamphlet and the broadside, the marginalized writers had their own parallel movements that matched the former in each of these initiatives and enterprises, and with a commitment that was no less. If anything, the forgotten poets, in Nelson’s view, were even more extreme and daring in their literary experiments than many of the recognized Modernists were. Some examples that Nelson suggests are H. D. and the Baroness Else von Freytag-Loringhoven. In a surprising analysis, he claims the former’s "Oread" to be a very un-Imagistic poem due to its psychological and linguistic suggestiveness though Pound had printed the poem in his Imagist anthology and often claimed it to be all that he wanted Modern poetry to be. The baroness’s work was a confluence of the visual and graphic arts with allegiances to Dada and other revolutionary art forms. This is exactly what the Modernists too were doing when they developed their epistolary camaraderie. The exploration of the similarities and differences between the canonized and the marginalized is a main motif of *Repression and Recovery.*

Nelson’s book has roughly three sections, the first one surveying some influential literary histories and foregrounding the poetics on which Modernism constitutes itself in these accounts of literature. The second has a fairly detailed analysis of the poetry that he
feels had been neglected, with selected poets analysed at some length by way of illustrations. This is the potential anthology that Nelson proposes, in our categorization, as a transmitter of knowledge. "We should . . . take it as axiomatic that texts that were widely read or influential need to retain an active place in our sense of literary history, whether or not we happen, at present, to judge them to be of high quality" (Nelson 50). Finally, Nelson discusses the enrichment of literature consequent upon the inclusion of these currently marginalized poets in the canon. But the mere extension of the canon is only a partial and incidental aim of this writer. Nelson wants nothing less than a change in the way we read poetry, and the poetics we privilege as readers and students. There is an imminent danger of simply adding names from minorities and women to the canon that would end up in a self-congratulatory appearance of liberalism. This is at least as dangerous as a narrow canon because the privileged marginalized writers would be read at the price of the neglect of others from the same group. A literary history that is merely a background to some major texts closes the canon to "minor works" that are rooted in the "productive literary and social relations" (Nelson 38) in the past. This limited canon colonizes a potentially infinite literary history to validate and perpetuate itself. The canon in turn provides literary history with a neat, linear and monolithic narrative that makes the latter elegant and readable. For Nelson, the problem seems to be the obsession of the academy with its own narrow poetics that it holds rather dogmatically and defends against all attacks. The academy will awaken into a new vigor if it gives up the valorization of poetry simply because it does not make any political commitment, a poetry that hangs in a limbo "in an uneasy internal anguish and external inaction" (Nelson 44). The academy, in other words, should become the battleground for the war
between literary history and the canon, the one providing intellectual challenges to the other, replacing their collusion with an invigorating collaboration.

Nelson provides us with new insights into the reasons for the repression of the poets that he lists when he tells us that Modernism privileged a poetry that was politically uncommitted if non-committal and thematically ambiguous, such as W. H. Auden's *Spain*. In the course of his disquisition, other explanations emerge. For example, discussing the poems published by the Industrial Workers of the World, he chronicles how the poets appropriated popular tunes to their songs in an attempt to reach readers who would be unfamiliar with music and also to empty the original tune of its meaning to make way for their own ideology. Perhaps this appropriation of popular tunes made them suspect for the elitist Modernists for whom "a new cadence meant a new idea," where the idea by itself was not enough. A cursory look at Nelson's list of journals and anthologies of the marginalized poets makes it obvious that they were all aimed more at a political agenda with many Leftist leanings (the book has a dark red cover) and were not dedicated exclusively to "making it new" or a cleansing of the genteel. This diffusion of the poetic aim, as the Modernists would have seen it, is perhaps another reason why these poets were ignored—in other words, Nelson accuses the academy of being unable to recognize good poetry outside the sites where poetry traditionally appeared. By according this poetry its rightful place, the academy would enlarge its canon and step out of the ivory tower it is accused of living in.
Working back from Nelson's potential anthology, we can further examine the reasons the relatively narrow canon that Modernism has. A committed poetry subscribes to chiliastic or melioristic ideas and, often, the solutions suggested to the problems are panaceas. Thus poets like H. H. Lewis who thought of Soviet Russia as a model for the ills of a capitalist society would appear to be taking the easy way out of a very complex situation that, in the existential angst of the World Wars and Depression, would seem very simplistic. Moreover, if Modernism is seen to have turned its back on nature's beauty, the frequent harking back to this theme by the marginalized poets does not help the situation. One poet, Angelina Weld Grimke, describes her erotic experiences in just such terms: "maiden trees kissed aflame by the mouth of Spring" (Nelson 98). We remember that spring had become passé as a subject for poetry for quite some time and its repetition expectedly aroused indifference. Amy Lowell, to take the example of another of Nelson's poets, describes her own love in relation to nature again, and while she foreshadows the "deep image poetry" of the 1960s, (Nelson 101), a blasé Modernism could not care less. One cannot also help wondering how consistent Lowell's imagery is, because, if the leaves she strips the lover of symbolize such things as hypocrisy, they are also nourishing for the plant, and the white flower that love or the lover is identified as is merely a clichéd symbol of purity, ephemerality and innocence. But by perceiving and highlighting the trends that poets like Lowell anticipated, Nelson can claim to be putting history in perspective.

The stable canon of the Modernists is matched by a fixed poetics and their poetry presented uncertainty as an ideology and regarded such representation as honesty and
truthfulness. This poetry in psychological terms, aims to come to grips with a difficult situation by reverting to it and confronting it repeatedly, much as shell-shocked soldiers dream about their experiences. It conforms to the Yeats-Arnold theory of "active suffering" without self-pity. By limiting the discursive abilities of poetry to voice the suffering of the workers and ordinary masses, these poets made it merely incidental and not the primary focus of their efforts. In places, Nelson finds the marginalized poets in the tradition of the poetics in just that situation which Yeats rejected. Wilfred Owen, a poet excluded by Yeats from his 1936 anthology, talks about how his poetry is in "no sense consolatory" and Claude McKay uses the sonnet form, in Nelson's interpretation, to empty it of the "consolations" it offered the dominant culture (Nelson 89). Meanwhile, Nelson relies on what he calls "compensatory anthologies" that keep the marginalized poetry alive, awaiting a time when it will reclaim its rightful position.

As the title suggests, *culture* is a key word in Nelson's project and the writer endows the term with a rich variety of implications, which sometimes, cloud its meaning. In the title, the word stands for the culture as a whole of which literature in general and poetry in particular, are parts. They are its products and mirrors making them especially worthy of attention as the records of the past and also as offering new ways of problematizing the present even as they suggest their own solutions. Within the broad rubric of culture, Nelson recognizes many sub-cultures, the most important of which is the "culture" of the Left (Nelson 24) with a world-view of their own. The writer implies that this culture had its own unique space that was a challenge and an alternative to the mainstream culture and the latter tried to ignore it out of existence mainly with a
conservative canon. This was made easier by the failure of communism in the United States. But for Nelson, these failures of the writers too are valuable because they are a part of history and throw a contrastive light on our own times: they are "acts of witness" (Nelson 165). The refusal of the academy to see itself in this mirror is the main problem with it, leading it to suppress a literature that does not flatter it. The academy does this by artificially dividing literature into categories such as "Confessional" poetry and deflecting its implications as the peculiar problems of the writer in question. In other words, its solipsistic view refuses to countenance any accusative perspectives. Nelson believes that even the failed movements still offer us "the poetic vision of a revolutionary working class" which might be a valuable contribution in itself (Nelson 167).

Nelson decries the tendency of the academy to look for universals and to belittle the significance of the present. "To argue that... provisional knowledge of our own time... is trivial or contaminating, preferably to be rejected in favor of some more permanent truth, is, curiously to deny any significance to our own historical moment or our lives within it" (Nelson 11). He argues that the desire to recover forgotten documents of literary history is itself symptomatic of our times and is the "embedded in the productive relations in our history" (Nelson 11). This significant but ignored and forgotten corpus of literature can reveal the true richness of the culture of the United States. In fact, an effort at such recovery need not entail any war among the anthologies. As Nelson again writes, "The strong, common political commitments in this poetry turn the coexisting traditional and experimental forms published in journals and anthologies into a dialogue rather than a competition to be won" (Nelson 25). As preservers and
transmitters of knowledge, every anthology has a valuable contribution in a collaborative
and yet competing project.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the canon is its drive to perpetuate itself
due to which it resists the inclusion of writers who do not conform to its own themes,
irrespective of the poetic abilities of the marginalized. Thus even white American writers
such as William Carlos Williams were for a long time marginalized and entered the
canon late. They were forever, in the minds of Nelson's generation, associated with the
neglected. Amy Lowell's reputation and stature grew from being just one more Imagist
writer to that of a poet far ahead of her times and also as a "literary statesman" (Nelson
18). Vachel Lindsay is viewed as a failure, but as a significant failure whose works are
effective when he sings himself to lived experience of the ordinary people and did not
lose himself in unachievable idealisms which made his poetry vague and irrelevant. Carl
Sandburg is praised for his commitment to the working classes by representing whom he
enlarged the discursive scope of poetry and drew an ivory tower art into an engagement
with social responsibilities and with life itself. Sandburg may have lost an opportunity to
etch cameo images of individual workers, but by portraying a class of people, he added a
new dimension to Modernism, showing that it could be conscience keeper and a force for
revolution. Abraham Lincoln Gillespie, another poet who was forgotten until recently,
anticipates Postmodernism through his experimental writing combining clichés into self
conscious words (Nelson 74), a project the Modernists shared when they wanted to write
in a language that was fresh and simple with the hardness of granite. Yet, not all forays
by white writers into the marginalized worlds were successful, as the case of e e
cummings illustrates. Nelson finds his (cummings's) efforts at capturing African-American dialects in his poetry "nothing other than despicable" (Nelson 118) and this poet was unimpressed by the communism in the Soviet Union. This is perhaps a serious fault cummings had, in Nelson's view, since the latter assigns a considerable place to Leftist writers. The point is that each section of American society had a unique Zeitgeist of its own and had developed sophisticated artistic techniques to express itself, something any other section could not. Without putting all these cultures and sub-cultures together, we cannot arrive at truer and a more complete understanding of American poetry.

One of the gravest injustices of the canon is to be found, according to Nelson, in its treatment of the radical movements and writers who in turn poured scorn on the mainstream Modernists as a bourgeois group engaged in idle obsession with language and other linguistic experiments. Instead, they tended to explore the contributions that poetry could make to society. W. C. Williams makes the point clearly in connection with H. H. Lewis. "Without saying that Lewis is important as a poet," he writes, "I will say that he is tremendously important as an instigator to thought about what poetry can and cannot do for us today" (quoted in Nelson 49). The erasure of Lewis from literary history, Nelson concludes, can only "flatten and homogenize the past," depriving us "of some of its constitutive tensions and possibilities" and trapping us in an "impoverished and restricted present" (Nelson 49). If the canonical Modernists sometimes insisted on being true to life, so did the writers on the Left. Mike Gold, one such poet says, "Proletarian realism deals with the real conflicts of men and women who work for a living ... No straining or melodrama or other effects" (Nelson 105-106). With the aid of poetry, the
worker's letters "become representative cultural texts" (Nelson 106). The bewildering variety of literary innovation that characterizes the times is the glory of American literature of the times, more so because it originated among writers who apparently had no formal training in poetry. One such poet, Anna Louise Strong, who wrote under the pen name of Anise, uses asterisks and dollar signs after every line, thus effectively isolating and marking it out for a special and fresh consideration, much as Walter Pater would write every line on a fresh page to be able to see it in isolation.

In the writings of many women poets, two forms of neglect, one based on a sexist attitude and another on political commitment, merge together. Ignored as women and for their ideology, these writers nevertheless share an innovative spirit and highlight the woes of half of humanity. Very often they address themselves, encouraging and enlightening kindred spirits. Tillie Olsen’s "I want You Women Up North to Know" graphically describes how the exploitation of fellow-women is the source of some of the fineries that other women enjoy, and "are dyed in blood" (Nelson 105). Welding and collating her lines from letters written by ordinary people, Olsen is reminiscent of Eliot’s "mythic method" in The Waste Land.

Such outrage and anger are also the themes of African-American writers who use all means available to them, whether they are accepted literary genres like the sonnet or jazz forms. Countee Cullen and Richard Wright are two writers who illustrate the use of the conventional and the new in their poetry while tracing a history of racism. The use of dialect brings a ring of authenticity which is augmented by the references to the African-
American beliefs, as in the case of Sterling A. Brown in “Scotty Has His Say”: "Whuh folks, whuh folks, don' wuk muh brown too hahd!" and he threatens to "sprinkle goofy dus'/In yo' soup tureen" (Quoted in Nelson 99). This oppression also draws together the anti-racist white poets like John Beecher who in a poem "Beaufort Tides" writes, "What future tides will free/these captives of their history?" (Nelson 108).

The attempt to establish a memory bank finally materialised in Cary Nelson's *Anthology of Modern American Poetry* (2000), 1250-pagetome that, by its sheer size, is a promise of comprehensiveness and a record for the future. Like many anthologies on modern poetry, the Oxford collection begins with Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, but includes Twentieth century British poets as well, a notable departure from the tendency of anthologists to edit poetry on nationalist lines. As is bound to happen in an anthology of this size, the poets are of varying merit. The results are pretty ironic. In her review of the book, Marjorie Perloff asks why, if lineation is the only criterion for inclusion, greeting-card does not find a place in the anthology. Nelson too had asked the professors to explain why "the poetry sung by striking coal miners in the 1920s is so much less important than the appearance of *The Waste Land in The Dial* in 1922" (Nelson 68). Nelson's head notes to poets indicate their allegiance to the communist causes and the Soviet Union until the collapse of communism turns them towards a "straightforward identity politics" (Perloff 3) of oppressed peoples. It is as if the badge of suffering were a guarantee of good poetry. Perhaps, Nelson intended his anthology to be a faithful literary history, recording the trends of the times as reflected in poetry. But he also includes the canonical poets, and thus appears to edit what Laura Riding and Robert
Graves called a "trade anthology," which is also Perloff's complaint (Perloff 3). Many of the selections she finds are indicative of an academic anthology like the Norton and Prentice-Hall publications. Nelson's attempts to explain away these repetitions to put the student-reader on familiar terrain are disingenuous because they merely mask an intent to succeed commercially by toeing a line that has yielded results in the past. To sum up, the poetry in Nelson's anthology is marked by sheer indifference in quality and the anthology fails badly in measuring up to its promise of collecting the "major" poets. The journalistic phraseology and ideas put paid to these aims. Even more shocking are the typological errors of which Perloff mentions at least one. The conclusion is that the student-reader is bound to be confused by the varying qualities of the poems and the anthology is not a significant source of help in recognizing even such elementary concepts as what constitute major and minor poetry and indeed what constitutes poetry itself. If there is a sense of déjà vu here after the anthology wars of the 50s and 60s, it is only indicative of the growing influence of the anthology.
Notes

1 This phrase appears as a subheading in Jed Rasula's *The American Poetry Wax Museum* (p. 223). Rasula dwindles wars into battles and mentions the main parties involved in them viz. Donald Allen's anthology on the one hand and the Hall-Pack-Simpson anthology as two editions on the other. "The habitual and often gratuitous mention of this 'battle' has permeated the study of American poetry in the past thirty years" observes Rasula and adds that "so much so . . . it would be fair to think of it as a perpetual rerun much like a syndicated television program" (p 227).