Chapter Four

MODERN INDIAN POETRY: THE FIELD OF PRODUCTION

I

As markets opened up during the 20th century, "literature" or "the literary" among other fields of Art began to operate more within what famed sociologist Pierre Bourdieu describes as the "field of cultural production" in his seminal work *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (1993). The production of poetry and the formation of new poetic identities were not immune to the influences of institutions, publishing practices, and forms of capital at play. By focusing on the sub-field of poetry, anthologies may be understood as a confluence point of Bourdieu's field of cultural production. The modes of production, dissemination, and capital involved in the making of anthologies make it a vehicle capable of shaping literary fields. In our present discussion, the field is the modern poetry canon. It is at this juncture that an inquiry about the social location of poetry may also be introduced.

Poetry as it appears within the pages of anthologies may be studied as a form of social expression. The consecration of the modernist voice/identity came not only through language but also through the conditions of its "practice," and the conditions of "its production and its reception" (Webb 53). It may be argued that 20th century modernism has retained its enigma because its inception was both *intended* and *consequential*. One of the leading figures of the American modernist movement, poet Archibald MacLeish, wrote: "A poem should not mean./ But be" (106), and this idea has remained resonant with later poetic voices that emerged throughout the 20th century. While all other forms of literature attempt to communicate ideas and stories, poetry has never committed itself primarily to communication, but rather to imagery. However, an argument may be made that this nature of poetry, and modern poetry in particular, came not by accident but by design. Gisèle Sapiro while discussing the history of literary genres within national traditions and national frameworks of post-revolution France and Germany in her seminal work *The Sociology of Literature* (2023) argues that "poetry flourishes under despotism, because its heightened formalism renders it less dangerous" (11). The very nature of modernism whose trajectory began as an anti-institutional movement but whose very identity is later consecrated by institutions is a paradox.

In an attempt to understand the social location of poetry and respond to the question "Why no sociology of poetry?" J.P. Ward in his book *Poetry and the Sociological Idea* (1981) suggests that poetry is not "social" as the esoteric quality of the

poetic expression naturally "truncates the very thing that in all other cases language strives to achieve" (202). Similarly, renowned 20th century German publisher Kurt Wolff while addressing the same question responded that the study of poetry primarily concerns itself with meaning and not social organization, hence the absence of a sociology of poetry (348).

Since these observations were made, there have been many efforts to respond to this gap in the history of literature. In her book, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007), Sarah Brouillette makes strong arguments about the material aspect of literature i.e. production and its position within the wider institutional networks:

> …there is a relationship between the material aspects of a book's construction and the meaning any reader might glean from it. In addition, the seemingly extra-textual world surrounding books, a world which includes, for example, the institutions and circumstances that make up the field of postcolonial literature, is also material for the construction of specific kinds of meaning. (2)

Furthermore, by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's 1993 theory on the "field of cultural production," Jen Webb, a renowned academic at the University of Canberra, developed a blueprint semi-empirical study of poetry and its conditions of practice in her 2018 essay "Poetry and the Conditions of Practice: A Field Study." By taking into consideration Webb's study and by taking into account new frameworks posited by social theorist Gisèle Sapiro in her recent work *The Sociology of Literature* (2023), this chapter attempts to examine and expand upon the arguments of poetry anthology and the production of modernism which have been introduced in the previous chapters.

II

To briefly posit a reductive understanding for simplicity, poetry anthologies are cultural products that emerge out of a specific social milieu. Poetry itself is an art form, and art is a "social practice" which "neither social nor economic features" can fully explain its internal operations (Webb 54). Famed sociologist Howard Saul Becker, who argued that art is a collective action involving a corporation of different networks simply defines art as "the work some people do" in his book *Art Worlds* (1982). This inquiry is also addressed by Janet Wolff in her work *The Social Production of Art* (1981) where she

endorses the argument of poet Vladimir Mayakovsky who imagined that "art is always 'manufacture'" (13). Here, by "manufacture," one must not arrive at an understanding of art as an "economic activity like other economic activities" (Webb 55), but as a way through which new meanings enter the field. For the anthology, whose footprints straddle between the academic market and the general reader market, it is not the re-production of text(s) which should be considered as a point of inquiry, but rather the way it produces new meaning through the texts. The making of India's modern poetic identity is – to borrow Mayakovsky's phrasing – an act of "manufacture," which occurred through decades of collective cultural deliberations taking place within the pages of anthologies.

Poetry is an art form, but when archived in a bound volume it transcends art and becomes a sociological artifact, and if there is one aspect we can infer from literary history, it is that poetry anthologies have always made fine cultural artifacts. One may reflect on why anthologies such as Meleager's *Garland* (200 BCE)*, Tottel's Miscellany* (1557), Palgrave's *The Golden Treasury* (1861), or Arnold's *The Galaxy of Tamil Poets* (1886) are still prescribed in institutions and owned by readers. Jahan Ramazani, editor of *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry* (2003) reflects in his essay "Writing Life: Remaking a Norton Anthology" (2004) concerning the editing of his volume. He contemplates "What redeems literary anthologists, if we're able to claim neither the creativity of the poet nor the analytic rigour of the cultural theorist?" (Ramazani). It is for the very ironical reason that within the pages of anthologies, art and sociology become symbiotic although they have been for many decades the location of "ceremonial academic warfare" (Graña 17).

In Bourdieu and Wacquant's work *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (1992), it is argued that a field study must commence foremost with the "construction of the object" of research, which in our case are anthologies (224). Bourdieu also argues in "The Field of Cultural Production" (1983), that a field study should systematically involve the identification and designation of the principles of relationality, and secondary social dimensions connected with the field. It entails the following:

1. Mapping the field: delineating the field of investigation, identifying positions within the field, and understanding the "institutions and agents" taking positions within the field

2. Understanding the "forms of capital" operating within that field

The combined result of such a field study shall offer a "heuristic efficacy" by providing an understanding of the organizational principles, the relationality, the institutional agents, and the individual practices (Bourdieu, "The Field" 311).

Thus, in working within this framework modern poetry becomes an "object" and the conditions within which it is practiced and manufactured become the "habitus" within "the sub-field of poetry" (Webb 58). There is a reason why the Indian English poetry of the post-independence years, the individual decades of the 1950s, the 1960s, the 1970s etc. all produced different types of poetry, which we are now able to examine from the respective anthologies. Because, unlike the editors of the Western anthologies, almost all major anthologies of Indian poetry are edited by poets who are "insiders" and who partake in "the illusio of the field," hence the doxa – the values and beliefs – of each generation of poets move in unified directions (Webb 56). Most of the individuals I interviewed for this study are poets and anthologists and hence must be classified as "insiders." Their opinions and testimonies are presented in the following relevant sections. Furthermore, by deriving a model from Webb's study on contemporary poetry, her methodology was replicated to scrutinize the sub-field of modern Indian poetry to arrive at a new understanding, by relying not on what is primarily known about the field i.e. language and meaning, but by investigating its "social history" (56).

1. Mapping the Field

Pierre Bourdieu in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) describes the "field of cultural production" as a "bifurcated field," where one pole is the "dominant (but poor), committed to autonomous production," and the other pole is "dominated (but rich), which is committed to heteronomous production" (Webb 56). The cultural "objects" can exist within various coordinates between these two bifurcated poles. In fig. 11 we can see a visual representation of the key ideas of Bourdieu's "field of cultural production" which has been interpreted by Webb to accommodate the contemporary sub-field of poetry (59). The visual representation, however, must be understood as partial and contingent, as any form of social and artistic expression/activity and its interpretation/understanding are bound to change with changing practices and tastes. Within the field, poets as well as poems are capable of shifting between poles and categories of consecration. She writes, "As poets develop their capacity and capital, as

technology affords new modes of practice and channels of dissemination, and as social values change, the positions themselves changed" (58).

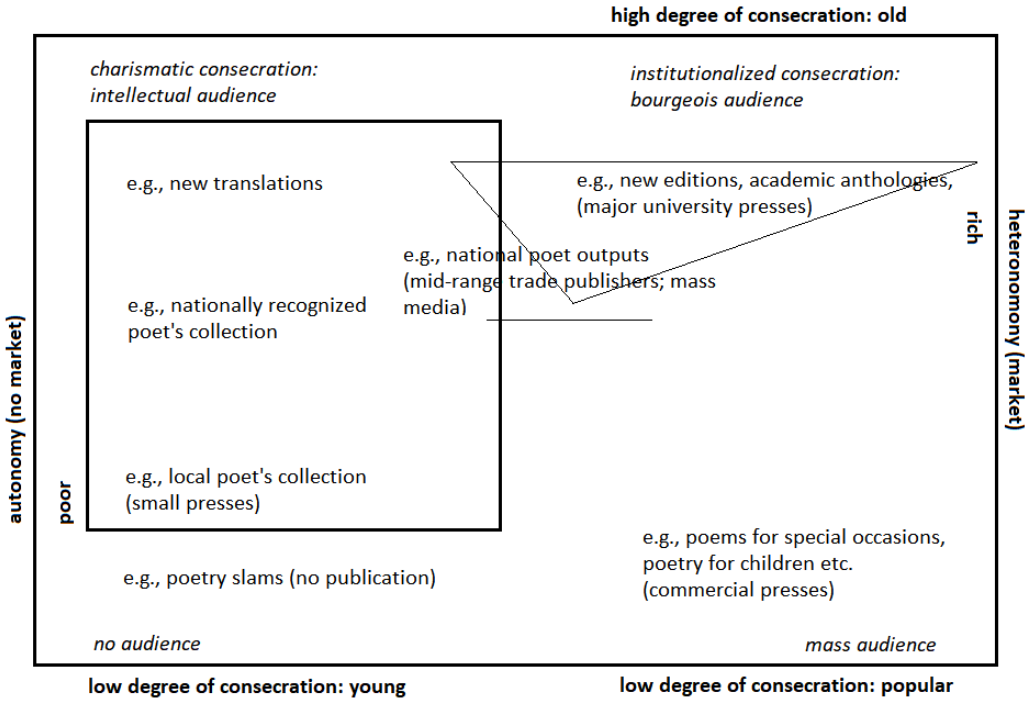

Fig. 11: The sub-field of contemporary poetry (Webb 59).

As visible in fig. 11, there are many coordinates inside the "field" where "objects" or forms of poetry may exist. Across time, poets and poems may move within the field and between categories of consecration. A significant example of this possibility of movement of poetry within the cultural field is Allen Gingsberg's *Howl* (1956), which started as a series of spoken performances in the cafés of Greenwich Village, and which upon publication was taken to court with its publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti of City Lights Books on grounds of "obscenity" (Wallenfeldt) The poem is now an important fixture in *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry* series, and has since been included in many university curricula.

Similarly, in 1977, Pritish Nandy chose Hind Pocket Books, a relatively new publishing house at the time to publish his anthology *Strangertime*. Hind Pocket Books was established in 1958 by Dina Nath Malhotra who came to India after the Partition (Hind Pocket) and specialized in Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Malayalam and English publications. Since 2018, Hind Pocket Books has been acquired by Penguin Random

House India and has been designated with the task of publishing only Hindi language literature (Penguin Random). Nandy who had earlier edited anthologies for publishers like Arnold-Heinemann and Oxford attempted a "somewhat heretic, breakaway selection" in his 1977 anthology ("Strangertime"). In *Strangertime* we find a selection of familiar names of modern Indian poetry in English who were new writers at the time but have since been canonized. The anthology contains poems by A.K. Ramanujan, Adil Jussawala, Agha Shahid Ali, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, Gieve Patel, Imtiaz Dharkar, Jayanta Mahapatra, Kamala Das, Keki N. Daruwalla, Keshav Malik, Nissim Ezekiel, and Ruskin Bond among others. Nandy in his prefatory matters introduces them as, "young, experimental poets, who have not appeared in such anthologies before. Good poets. Daring poets. Poets who have taken the occasional risk with the printed word" (qtd. in "Strangertime"). Nandy's selection criteria are not laid out in lucidity, no editor does but one can surmise through the attributed quality with which he chose his poets. He praises Ruskin Bond's "simple" style, Arun Kolatkar as "the artist and visualizer," and Gieve Patel as "one of our finest contemporary painters" (qtd. in "Strangertime"). By that time, Oriya poet Jayant Mahapatra was widely published and known abroad, and poets like Agha Sahid Ali, and Imtiaz Dharkar were published in *little magazines* but had never been anthologized before. It was Nandy's volume that gave these poets and their poems their first serious platform and a consolidated identity as a collective modern voice of Indian poetry.

Nandy reinforces his belief in the necessity for rootedness in order to create a serious poetic voice and also criticizes those who only dream of being validated and celebrated overseas as Dom Moraes did, who at the time had a very contentious relationship with India as far as his literary identity was concerned. Nandy – himself a poet – argues that "for most of us the priorities are quite different. And some of us have made it where we always wanted to: right here, where the action and the living audience is." (qtd. in "Strangertime")

Fifteen years later when Mehrotra's *Twelve Modern Indian Poets* was published by OUP, we find almost all the poets who were anthologized (or first appeared) in Nandy's *Stangertime*, save for Eunice de Souza whose first collection *Fix* did not come out till 1979, Vikram Seth whose first collection *Mappings* did not come out till 1980, and Manohar Shetty whose first collection *A Guarded Space* did not come out till 1981. So, it becomes apparent that the trajectory of Indian poets within the "field of cultural

production" has been the movement from one pole to the opposite pole. While in the 1970s they emerged as modernist poets primarily operating in the autonomy (low market)/low consecration zone, by the time these same poets were picked up by OUP in 1992 they had moved up to the heteronomony (market)/ high consecration zone. The fact that the latter anthology is made available and prescribed for college and university students only contributed in "manufacturing" / consecrating the modern Indian canon.

The second important understanding we can derive from the Bourdieuian "field of cultural production" is the concept of *habitus* – the underlying reasoning of the relationship that exists between agency and structure. According to Bourdieu's sociological understanding, the *habitus* is determined by structural position which in turn generates actions and opportunities within the field. In literary studies this has been adapted by Joe Moran in *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (2000) where he argues that the authorial identity and celebrity status of authors are utilized to develop a *habitus* around them which manifests in their writing and also influences how their writing exists within the sub-field. Webb also posits an argument concerning the *habitus* of poets which dictates creative thinking, their way of practice, and also the logic of capital which is further discussed in the following section (57).

This understanding of (poetic) *habitus* must be taken into consideration in the examination of modern Indian poetry in English as they influence which poets and poems are archived in anthologies. Unlike the anthologies of the Western canon which are regularly edited by a separate group of professional critics and anthologists such as Arthur Quiller-Couch, Dame Helen Gardner, or Louis Untermeyer almost all of the major Indian poetry anthologies post-1950 have been edited and published by Indian poets. The *habitus* that they develop is quite different. There is a certain tendency for the names of anthologies and their editors to get synthesized into an organic whole; the peculiarity of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1861), Gardner's *New Oxford Book of English Verse* (1972), and even Thayil's *60 Indian Poets* (2008) is that it becomes impossible to isolate the volume from the editor. What an anthology delivers or does not deliver, the praise or disdain is tied to the editor. As the primary work of anthologists is characterized by involvement in the selection and contextualizing of the texts, it comes with consequences.

There is also an embodied element of persuasion in every anthology which stems from the editors and their attempt to propose a certain viewpoint, a certain ideology, or a certain literary orientation. What are the ethics that guide an editor while compiling an anthology? What are the consequences of an editor's choice? What are the consequences of anthologies? What kind of *habitus* are poets and editors trying to develop with the rest of the structure within the "field"? When these questions were raised during my interviews (Appendix 2), one of my interviewees poet/editor Rochelle Potkar (Appendix 4) responded the following:

> It's mostly to do with the maturity of life in the writing. But not necessarily the canvas, art or craft. The Goan anthology 'Goa: a garland of poems' with Irish transcreations by Gabriel Rosenstock (Onslaught Press, Ireland) had a slew of legendary poets. Collegian writing is varied – from mature to strong to stumbling to banal to doggerels to essays. It can have a wide gap between art and craft. You will come across stellar poets who need slight nudging to promising poets who need to hone their art + craft, to deluded non-starters. The non-starters too are famous because social media and literacy are democratic, and wi-fi is free.
>
> For collegian-anthologies I try to choose good work but inclusion is also an essential criteria, where then yardsticks are lowered so inclusion and encouragement become the criteria. Inclusion will encourage a budding poet to work better with his/her poetry. We need to have patience with poetry. So an editing back-and-forth is sought. I like workshopping on poetry to any passerby who might be interested. I believe that if you have it in you for poetry, you can make it to any level with the right nutrients of reading good quality world poetry, regular practise, good editing.

It is not only editors but institutions and other agents that have contributed in the development of a *habitus* for the consecration of modern Indian English poetry. Because on another spectrum of understanding the Bourdieuian field of cultural production exists the pedagogic nature of the anthology. It was in the middle of the 20th century that a new genre of literature known as Dominion Literature appeared classified under the well-worn colonial literature among the Commonwealth countries. What followed was the publication of numerous Commonwealth anthologies after which postcolonial studies and Commonwealth literary studies became established as an academic field. Indian

writing in English began to be offered at the University of Mysore in 1950 and gained momentum through international conferences organized by bodies such as the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS). By 1976 anthologies such as *Commonwealth Literature: A Handbook of Select Reading Lists* published through the Commonwealth Literature and Research Centre came out and it became a standard textbook at the college and university level. In the 1980s, after Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, courses on Indian writing in English became more prominent in places such as the University of Mumbai, and the University of Pune. Since then, anthologies of Indian English writing have enjoyed a sustained existence within the university market (Bali 45-46).

Before the publication of the domestic institution-backed anthologies, modern Indian poets had limited but valuable exposure in Margret O' Donnell's *An Anthology of Commonwealth Verse* published in 1963 in London. The poems of Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes, and Kamala Das were published alongside Kashiprasad Ghose, Michael Madhusudan, Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, and Sarojini Naidu's poems. It was followed by P.L Brent's *Young Commonwealth Poets* (1965), and Howard Sergeants' twin anthologies *Commonwealth Poets of Today* (1967), and *New Voices of the Commonwealth* (1969) which were all published in London. Regarding the importance of publishing in literary capitals such as Paris and London, Pascale Cassanova argues in *The World Republic of Letters* that, "territories of literature are defined and delimited according to their aesthetic distance from the place where literary consecration is ordained. The cities where literary resources are concentrated, where they accumulate, become places where belief is incarnated" (23). The exposure these anthologies gave to the Indian poets helped create an initial *habitus* for the Indian poets' recognition on the world's literary stage.

Nonetheless, when P. Lal published the first edition of his seminal anthology *Modern Indian Poetry in English: An Anthology and a Credo* through his publishing house Writers Workshop in 1969 it opened doors for new kinds of Indian poetry and thinking to emerge. By the time institutions like Oxford entered the anthology space with *Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (1992) and *Modern Indian Poetry* (1994) the consolidation/consecration of modern Indian poetry arrived at a state of maturity. In a

1996 review of the latter anthology in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Sagaree Sengupta comments that "The sun never sets on the Oxford University Imprint" (496).

Another dimension in the "manufacturing" of literary identity is that this consecration in the "field of cultural production" is embedded within the literature taught to students as early as the K-12 level. As of 2023, there are currently more than four school education boards in India under which students get their K-12 certification: Central Board of Secondary Examination (CBSE) estd. in 1962, Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) estd. in 1958, The National School of Open Schooling (NIOS) estd. in 1989, the International Baccalaureate Certification (IB), and around 69 recognized State Boards (Recognized Educational). As per the current data provided through the Ministry of Education, Government of India's website in December 2023, CBSE has over 28,900 affiliated schools and 26 million students, CISCE has over 2750 affiliated schools and over 200 thousand students, NIOS has a rolling enrollment of over 350 thousand students annually (Vaibhav). It is mainly the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) estd. 1961 who designs textbooks for the CBSE schools, and the same textbooks are often opted by State Boards as per their discretion. Most language papers take up the shape of an anthology with persuasive *paratexts*. Poetry (as opposed to rhymes) is initially introduced at the secondary level (Class 9-10) and we find Gieve Patel's "On Killing a Tree," and Subramania Bharati's "Wind" (translated by A.K. Ramanujan) alongside Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken," W.B. Yeats's "The Lake of Isle of Innisfree," along with one of Wordsworth's beloved Lucy poem "A Slumber did My Spirit Seal." At the senior secondary level (Class 11-12) of the NCERT anthology we find the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel, Dilip Chitre, Arun Kolatkar, A.K. Ramanujan, and Kamala Das alongside W.H Auden, John Keats, John Donne, and Philip Larkin among many consecrated poets. This parallelism that is established within these K-12 anthologies asserts a level of standard for Indian poets alongside the long-canonized Western poets. The current NOIS senior-secondary English-302 anthology includes Nissim Ezekiel's much-anthologized "Night of the Scorpion" alongside another much-anthologized American poem – Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" continuing the parallel treatments of poets and poems.

The argument to be made here is simple; the notion concerning which (Indian) poets are relevant enough to be studied or archived begins at the K-12 level. The consecration of these Indian poets/poems begins in some of the most widely circulated

textbooks/anthologies in publication and hence they become naturally canonized – not in a high-brow academic sense, but as cultural figures/artifacts in people's memory. The inertia that poems such as Wordswoth's "Solitary Reaper," Frost's "The Road Not Taken," or Ezekiel's "The Night of the Scorpion" continue to enjoy is not accidental but maintained through their strong poetic *habitus*. The influence of institutions as agents in the development of poetic *habitus* where poets and poems may survive is a matter which should not be undermined, and neither can the value of the anthology as a pedagogical apparatus be dismissed. It can be argued that the real consolidation/consecration of literary identities occurs within the Higher Education and K-12 level books which account for 25% and 71% of the book market respectively as per the Nielsen ® India Book Market Report 2022 (see fig. 6). Moreover, the NCERT English language anthologies cater to a Pan-India and arguably urbanized network of students, and they in turn become agents within the field of cultural production.

2. Forms of Capital

The question of capital and its influence in the world of poetry publication is an often-overlooked dimension of the sub-field and one that directly influences the kind of *habitus* which is in operation. As writing poetry is by no means an income-generating practice, what is considered a reward is the satisfaction that comes from the process – of being recognized and being distinguished (Webb 60). In short, poets operate to maximize and accumulate "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic* 238). Secondly, there is the economic capital at play – money that flows within the field. For instance, the charging of exorbitant fees for granting permission for the inclusion of poems in anthologies is a form of generating capital by poets and copyright holders. Thirdly, there is the institutional capital that is utilized by a publishing house to print and promote certain poetry volumes. Capital, therefore, becomes a range of forms in the field of cultural production. In this regard, Webb raises an argument concerning the design of modern poetic practices within Bourdieu's "field." She writes:

> There is a logic to this insistence on the non-instrumentality of poetry: it is almost impossible for poets to operate at the heteronomous pole of the field, because there is no popular audience and no large-scale market-oriented production for contemporary English-language poetry. Therefore poets who are operating in terms of a practical sense of the field will be likely to value, and compete for,

> what is available to them: mystery; art for art's sake. Success in this operation is likely to provide practitioners with pretty much the only modes of capital available to them: social (participating in the right networks); cultural (knowledge, competencies, and taste); and symbolic (prestige and reputation: that which provides the conditions to acquire and use other kinds of capital). (Webb 58)

What developed in the post-1950s India was that newly established institutions such as P. Lal's Writers Workshop and Adil Jussawalla's Clearing House were beginning to promote a kind of cynical, vitalized, and ironical form of verse; including, but not exclusive to, poems by Kamala Das, A.K. Ramanujan, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra and Gieve Patel among many others through their houses. Many more anthologies further made their way into people's homes and eventually into educational institutions. Furthermore, awards and honours were accumulating among the emerging Indian poets as a form of recognition. Dom Moraes was bestowed The Hawthorden Prize for poetry for his collection *A Beginning* (1958), within twenty years Arun Kolatkar collected The Commonwealth Poetry Prize for *Jejuri* (1976), A.K. Ramanujan was awarded the MacArthur Fellowship award in 1983, Jayanta Mahapatra became the recipient of Jacob Glastein Memorial Award from the Poetry magazine in 1975, and Kamala Das was awarded the PEN Asian Poetry Prize in 1963. In our retrospective understanding, the possession of high levels of symbolic capital is evident among modern Indian poets. Within the field of cultural production, the accumulation of symbolic capital – the prestige of prizes and awards – translates into opportunities to have books published with prestigious imprints, even to the extent of having it translated into other languages, and most importantly having the opportunity to be anthologized as a final form of consecration (Webb 60-62). By the time Moraes, Kolatkar, Ramanujan, and Mahapatra found a permanent place in the pages of Mehrotra's *Twelve Modern Indian Poets* in 1992, they had all accumulated enough symbolic capital, and such an institution-backed anthology also enabled the translation of their symbolic capital into the economic.

Concerning this economic spectrum of poetry publication within the capital discourse, Jahan Ramazani makes succinct observations in his 2004 essay "Writing Life: Remaking a Norton Anthology" about the concrete and binding role that capital plays in the making of a modern anthology. In a tongue-in-cheek fashion, he comments, "When Auden said "poetry makes nothing happen," he wasn't thinking about poetry

anthologies." His position as the editor of a serious modern anthology and the creative decisions he took are influenced by the capital made available to him and the negotiations he committed to within the said framework. How Ramazani manoeuvred the Norton volume to maintain its integrity despite the publisher's severe budget cut is best understood in his own words:

> In the range of $500,000, the staggering cost of permissions was approaching almost twice Norton's original budget, putting the edition in danger of being swamped by fees. One publisher threatened to charge as much as $20 a line and thus give a new sense to "the golden line"—a fee that would drive up the cost of a single page over $1,000 (and there were about 2,200 pages to be reckoned with). I felt my grand anthological structure—its proportions carefully balanced and calibrated—teetering on the brink of collapse. But my already-hardening nose hardened further, and I quickly drew up a spreadsheet listing the dollar amount required to reprint each poem. Was this Frank O'Hara poem really worth the $3,600 the publisher was requesting, when all the poems I wanted by Charles Olson or Charles Reznikoff cost one-twentieth that amount in toto? Were a few brief lyrics by an emergent author worth as much as Hart Crane's twelve-hundred line epic *The Bridge*? Should I dump one overpriced poem and buy ten at a discount? Trying to turn the losses to my advantage, I asked Norton to give me more pages overall if I hacked away even more than the required $40,000. This was my chance to insert some lower-budget but important long poems; I was thrilled to be able to include not only lyrics among the nearly 1,600 poems but also the entirety of The Bridge, Adrienne Rich's *Twenty-One Love Poems*, Derek Walcott's "The Schooner *Flight*," and Tony Harrison's v., among more than twenty long poems new to the anthology. (Ramazani)

Ramazani's account of editing the esteemed Norton anthology gives insight into how the *intent* and *outcome* of bringing a modern poetry anthology to life are often *consequential*. Equivalent detailed and personal records of editing anthologies of modern Indian poetry have not been published or made readily available by the Indian editors, however, we can still extrapolate from Ramazani's experience a blueprint of modern anthology editing and publication. Nonetheless, there is reason to be optimistic that this gap in Indian publishing history will be gradually highlighted and understood in the

coming years. Post-2010, scholars such as Anjali Nerlekar (Rutgers University, New Jersey), Laetitia Zecchini (CNRS, Paris), Abhijit Gupta (Jadavpur University, Kolkata), Kanupriya Dhingra (O.P. Jindal University, Haryana), Rubana Haq (AUW, Chittagong), and Indian author/poet Jerry Pinto have begun exploring the publishing archives and alternative book histories. Pinto has been entrusted the Clearing House archives by Adil Jussawalla in 2011 and it contains correspondences from the 1960s and 1970s era of the Bombay Poets. A glimpse into the 1970s struggles of publishing Indian English poetry is presented in Pinto's "Key document: Eight books, seven poets, one Clearing House" published in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* in 2017. In a series of letters exchanged between Adil Jussawalla and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, the challenges of both networks of support and capital are discussed. A few excerpts are reproduced below:

> Letter from Adil Jussawalla to Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, dated April 7, 1977
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> I never got down to giving you an account of the "summit" Gieve, Arun and I had more than two months ago. Two main points emerged. No one was very happy about publishing "best sellers" in the future (Dom's Carmi, etc.). But there were no positive suggestions about who to invite to join us next year. This year, however, could be effectively spent making our position over fees, copyright etc. clear. For a start, it was felt that none of us should agree to sell a poem of ours to any magazine or any anthology here for a sum less that one mutually agreed on. Commitments already made would naturally be excepted. This should apply, I think, both to the poems in the books and to any we write and sell in the future, for as long as we exist as a group. The point of such a move would be to fix a lower limit to fees for poems, so that publishers or both journals and anthologies would no longer be able to fob us off with the usual "token" payment. It would also help poets younger than us to get the fees they deserve.
>
> In practice, I see it working like this: Editor X wants 4 poems from each of us for a forthcoming anthology. The publisher offers us Rs 10.00 per poem. We quote our lowest figure – say Rs 75.00 per poem. If the publisher refuses to budge, we don't appear in that anthology. That is the risk. Faced with such a stand by one poet, I don't think a publisher would greatly care. But by four . . . ! I think a publisher would have to compromise. What do you say? I can think of no

> another way right now, while we're still together, of making this business of paying for poems less shoddy and capricious.
>
> We'd have to work out a realistic lower limit of course. And perhaps one should be paid by line rather than a fixed sum for each poem. If you agree to the basic idea, we could start working on the details. We don't have to be too rigid in our approach. Any offer made to us below the agreed sum should be discussible between us. (qtd. in Pinto 242)

In another letter dated May 8, 1978 Jussawalla writes to Mehrotra:

> CH [Clearing House] can't be publishers in the normal sense of the term. We can neither risk losing money on the new manuscripts nor be responsible for marketing them properly. Poets with unpublished manuscripts who want to use the CH imprint would have to raise money and market the books themselves. The one advantage they would have over us is that they would probably have to do less work than we had to: they could draw on our experience, our lists, our contacts. Their account would be kept separate from ours. What control do we have? We would still have to reach a consensus on the new manuscripts; any one of us has the right to veto a manuscript. This may still not prevent us from being dangerously close to the situation of Writers Workshop – something you pointed out when we first exchanged ideas about CH. But since it's too crushing a responsibility to be publishers to other poets – at least I find it so – is there an alternative?
>
> Only one, I think: that we keep CH for our work and ours alone.
>
> The manuscripts we have received are: Dilip's, Saleem's, Eunice's and Hubert's. We've been through all of them. Am sending you the two you haven't seen. More than a year ago, Kersi hinted strongly that he was interested so Gieve is going to ask him for his. It's probably the kind of holiday reading you least want to do right now but it would be useful if we get your views fairly soon. One or two poets may drop out once they discover what's involved in getting their manuscripts out
>
> …

> This is what Ashok is doing with the second edition of Jejuri. I thought the plan was too ambitious and told Hubert so.
>
> Harish Trivedi's translations of Vijay Chauhan, Jayanta's Selected Poems, Vilas Sarang's translations of Mardhekar – that's what we should be publishing if we set up as a publishing house. Profit-making, a partnership of four. The only other way I suppose is, like Partha, to join one.
>
> Have you any idea what OUP is planning to do? New titles? Second editions? I don't think you should hesitate on account of CH if they want to publish Kite. (qtd. in Pinto 243)

In another letter dated June 29, 1978, Jussawalla writes to Mehrotra again in continuation of their discussion for CH's course of direction, and the establishment's attitude towards editing and publishing. Two of the key five points made in the letter are presented below:

> **d.** Suppose, after you read the manuscripts, we are all keen on X, Y and Z. If these poets belong to Bombay, they may still be unable to work with one another. Well, CH isn't here to teach them how to. Either they say [sic] the value of being published the CH way (which is basically publishing themselves] or they can think of alternatives. As Sarang did. His book is out. Also, if X and Y belong to Bombay and Z doesn't, I cannot be their secretary and correspond on their behalf. All correspondence, distribution of work, etc., will have to be managed by them. Finally, and this should have been put first, XYZ may not have enough money between them. I believe now that CH shouldn't loan or subsidise. I would insist on keeping the current CH account separate from that of other poets. We have yet to recover our losses and can't risk any more.
>
> **e.** I think all these are good reasons for not asking Jayanta for his manuscript yet. There is one other. The four of us can't be publishers of every good poet there is simply because his or her own publisher isn't moving fast enough. Surely Jayanta figures high on OUP's list of priorities. Ravi doesn't seem at all inclined to reveal what the priorities are – at least not to me. What did he tell you when you met him? I would expect OUP to be committed to at least one book of the ten poets in Partha's anthology. Something is very wrong if they are not. If you ask Jayanta for his manuscript would he know we are not publishers, that he would

> have to do practically all the work – even perhaps come down to Bombay and see his book through the press, then market it, keep the accounts etc.? (qtd. in Pinto 244)

The understanding we may derive from Ramazani's anthology editing experience and the Clearing House archives is that anthologies are not just about collecting good poetry, but the confluence point of technical and managerial outcomes. The end product is always a negotiated volume, whose contents are partly *intended* and partly *consequential*. Any canon including modernist thought exists within these structures and negotiations.

In the interviews of Indian poets and editors that I conducted for this study since late 2018, the respondents have expressed similar opinions on dealing with publishers and collecting permissions. When asked to express the differences they experienced while working on a personal collection of poems and editing an anthology consisting mostly of other people's poems and dealing with the publishers, one of my interviewees, Abhay Kumar (Appendix 3), who is the editor of multiple recent Bloomsbury anthologies including *The Bloomsbury Anthology of Great Indian Poems* (2020) replied:

> …editing an anthology is even more difficult. It involves reading dozens of poetry anthologies to select poems, locate the poets, the publisher and the copyright holders, to seek their permissions, organize the selection, write an introduction or the editor's note, to find a publisher and promote it, and finally sending copies of the anthology to the contributing poets among other things. It needs far more greater managerial capabilities than bringing out a personal collection of poems.

Replying to the same question, Rochelle Potkar (Appendix 4), poet and editor of recent anthologies *40 Under 40* (2016) and *The Punch Magazine Anthology of New Writing* (2021), answered:

> I was fortunate enough to find two independent poetry publishers – Poetrywalla and Copper Coin and the experience was very respectful, responsive, inventive, committed-to-poetry, and smooth.

> I am now in talks with a bigger publisher but they publish just two poetry books each year so the waiting time is longer. For me, the challenge is outside publishing – in the niche reading of poetry and its small readership.

Jeet Thayil in the introductions to both his anthologies *60 Indian Poets* (2008) and *The Penguin Book of Indian Poets* (2022) mentions a significant failure in dealing with publishers and copyright holders. He issues an apology in the introduction of *60 Indian Poets* concerning the omission of Agha Sahid Ali's poetry saying, "in each case, copyright holders would not part with the necessary permissions. Otherwise the selection betrays only my own preference for craft" (xviii). Although Thayil does not expose the specificities of the copyright denial, the reason in this case could be political rather than financial, as Agha Sahid Ali is guarded as a Kashmiri poet to a certain degree. The argument to be made here is that the *intent* and the *outcome* of modern anthologies are often consequential as they are tied to a web of permissions, capital, and institutions within the field. Modern Indian poetry in English, like any literary canon or literary culture, is manufactured through these agents. The modern anthology thus becomes the domain of "manufacture" – the field of consolidation and consecration.