



PIGHOG PRESS

The Trouble With Anthologies

A panel discussion featuring:

Tim Cummings - TC

Brendan Cleary - BC

Naomi Foyle - NF

John O'Donoghue - JOD

Maria Jastrzebska - MJ

John Davies - JD

Ciaran O' Driscoll - CD

Sunday 6th December 2004

TC: I have been looking at bookshop shelves over the last twelve months, you're looking for something new and the whole thing is dominated, firstly by Daisy Goodwin's poems for death or dying or being in love or these new huge books like *Being Alive* and *Staying Alive*, the Bloodaxe book. They say they have sold 70,000 copies and it supports the publisher, keeps them going and it's good for publishers, editors and bookshop sellers, but it's not good for poets.

I think what you're getting is a whole load of anthologies which are either disingenuous in terms of what they're putting in their stall, either saying "these are the poets that are important, just read these, you don't have to read anything else", or they're turning poetry into something that is useful – a cushion or a balm and I don't think poetry should be used in that way, I think it diminishes it and it brings down important poems.

Even if you have a great poem or string of poems in an anthology, if the idea of the anthology is quite naff it degrades the work and you can't read it with the same satisfaction. It's reducing something important, that really is a one-to-one thing, to the gift market and it lowers its cultural stock even more. Supporters of anthologies would say they sell more, get out to the public and they're a success and we believe in them but the opposite is true. It begins to demean the poems

themselves. I just want to see what people think about that and the new anthologies, like the Graywolf anthology, you've got that?

JOD: I have it and I have reviewed it for *PN Review*. I'm interested in how poets fight for what I call the paradigm of what a poem is and Don Paterson is definitely trying to construct a paradigm that he feels is a blueprint that is going to be hegemonic if you like.

It's going to be the poem that is professional and accepted within the profession of poetry and while I hold no big bouquet of flowers for the Cambridge Modernists, whom he seems to be trying to give a good kicking, why can't they do what they do? They don't really grab me a lot, sometimes I think what they do is interesting and I'm with him on the impenetrability of a lot what they do but he seems to want to call them post-modernists and I think that's a misnomer, they're more rightly called avant-gardist, he's succumbed to post-modernism himself on quite a few occasions.

CD: How would you define post-modernism?

JOD: Post-modernism is self-reflexivity, its playfulness, I suppose it goes back to *Tristram Shandy*. There's that kind of awareness. He says a poem is a machine for remembering itself which again is a post-modernist, self-reflexive definition of a poem. I'm interested in the wider implication of the anthology as a kind of intra-poetic or intra-poet text so your point about the mass market is a very interesting one and one I think that needs thinking about but I'm interested in how poets fight their corner about "What is a poem?" and "How should it work?"

BC: There are two strands because as Tim's mentioned, there are the anthologies that are quite rightly almost coffee table books, mass market and the poets get maybe one poem in and so their work might lead readers to check out their other collections, but it's unlikely. There's that strand and if you read the Bloodaxe anthologies you have people like Mia Farrow and Van Morrison saying what great books of poetry they are, feeding into a populist sentiment. Many years ago I recall hearing Bob Geldof was a big fan of contemporary poetry and if these people are

such big fans of contemporary poetry, these superstars, then why don't they put their hands in their pockets and fund genuinely interesting publishing deals, as Paul Weller once did when he funded Riot Stories press.

There's that strain of the gift book but then occasionally there are anthologies that are actually attempting in some way to portray a particular aesthetic at a particular time, although it was a long time ago, Al Alvarez's anthology [*The New Poetry*] when it came out in 1962 was a genuinely interesting anthology because it indicated there had been a major shift in contemporary poetry, more towards more a psycho-analytical approach with poets like John Berryman and Sylvia Plath and he provided with it an excellent, challenging essay. Those sorts of anthologies, even if you disagree with the notion of a movement being born, are valid because they're contributing to debate about the state of poetry. There are two strands to deal with, the gift book and the polemic, if you like.

JOD: I think the polemic is where I weigh in, in my study of the anthology. My friend Ann Rowse said that we don't want to be polarised in terms of this polemic that Don Paterson wants to bring forward, she said she feels there's another strain in English poetry that gets overlooked in this, she traces it back to Basil Bunting, Ken Smith, Barry McSweeney, Roy Fisher, Denise Reilly, for want of a better word, there's a kind of working class modernism that has a grit and a sort of relish for the urban.

BC: Well that's the whole notion of particular cabals assuming superiority at the expense of others, those poets you mentioned, several of them were involved in the coup that took place at the Poetry Society in the early seventies. They were simply removed from the position. Poets like Tom Pickard and Eric Mottram were running the show and people weren't happy because a lot of the poetry was arguably impenetrable.

JOD: Well there's this going on at the moment because Potts has had to apply for his job again, hasn't he?

BC: That's happening in all manner of jobs, that's the cut and thrust of post-Thatcherism.

JOD: That's another thing to throw into the pot.

TC: I think the anthology is a post-Thatcherist phenomena.

NF: I think that's partly to do with the changes the book trade, after the demise of the Net Book Agreement, big chains and supermarkets could suddenly sell books in dumps, sell them half price. That's why we've seen independent bookshops go out of business, because they could no longer rely on selling huge loads of Harry Potter but would stock a lot of poetry, now can't even sell the Harry Potter.

BC: Bloodaxe is a good example of somebody who has changed their publishing strategy, they were always very happy to publish poets at various stages, to market them for sales. Benjamin Zephaniah, Attila the Stockbroker, Henry Normal, three to mention, in other words these are popular performers so whack their books out, but their response to what Neil Astley refers to as the disdain of the booksellers is to get round it by producing anthologies, to survive. Arguably that's the reason why so many exist.

JOD: Mind you anthologies aren't just post-Thatcherite, it does go back far in the English tradition doesn't it? All the way back to *Lyrical Ballads*. They were the first anthologies.

JD: And there was Thomas Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry*.

TC: There were those Broadside Ballad collections of songs.

MJ: But some anthologies have bitten the dust, sort of anthologies of so-called marginal poets like gay anthologies, women's anthologies, black anthologies, Asian anthologies, there were a lot more of those. I think that's partly because identity politics have changed now but I think it's partly to do with economic forces. Who

is going to publish a South East Asian anthology like Redbeck did a few years ago? Who's going to stock it? Who's going to distribute it? No-one.

BC : So as a result what you get is, one of the earlier ones was *The Rattle Bag*, that Faber did, which I think had more integrity than the Bloodaxe ones, but it was one of the first that said, "Here's a bundle of dead good poems". Do you see what I mean? But that's taken the place of a particular strand, or particular movements whether they're in poetry or from the members of the community.

JOD : But that was aimed at kids which maybe gave it some of its integrity because you could have the dead good poets, no copyright charges there, and they could also have folk poetry, rhymes and things like that. What I'm thinking about is that new market conditions force publishers to come up with new strategies and at the same time, it goes hand in hand with new technology. At Waterloo Press I have been saying that we're putting out pamphlets and they're easily produced and paid for, look good, if we're in the game now in the 21st century what we need to do is we need a strategy. You have a shop window, a website and on the website go the books, which are sacrosanct and go as books to the punters, but we have to make pamphlets downloadable.

BC : Book stores in the whole history of poetry publishing, with the fine honourable exceptions of independents like Bernard Stone's shop in London where when you went in he just bought books and pamphlets straight off you, with notable exceptions bookshops just won't look at things without a spine or even with a spine.

JOD : We won't sell pamphlets in the bookshops but we will sell them. A publicly funded publisher doesn't have to make a profit. What we have to do is break even and that's our target. The big thing for poetry publishers is not profit. Writers only want money to buy time and publishers only want money to buy more titles. The thing with Waterloo is to make it success in Arts Council terms and in our terms as publishers to disseminate the work to get it as far and wide as we can. The market is skewed in poetry publishing once a public funder steps in and there are good and

bad aspects to that. If they give you a lot of money you spend most of your time accounting for it and you get sucked away from your artistic activity.

JD: Some interesting questions were coming out of that. The first is that Tim, you said that anthologies are not very good for poets, can you expand on that? The other is the connection between the way that poetry seems to be moving in terms of new technology, the use of the web and the trend in other publishing media, such as music, the idea of buying the single track to download to your iPod. Are we getting to the point where the individual poet may be able to sell an individual poem? Then I wonder, looking at the history anthologies, is there a connection here with the English mentality of collecting, the English collector like Mr Booth's Museum, in some ways an anthology is like a dead thing because it's like a butterfly collection. Three different strands to look at.

JOD: It's not dead if it's got a polemic at the front of it, if it's trying to make an argument with the current aesthetic. The polemic is the most interesting. The question of their not being good for poets? They get commissioned to collate them and that can be quite lucrative.

TC: It's good for those involved but in terms of say the gift collection, the Daisy Goodwin gift books it's not good for poets' work. The context it's in is demeaning, it doesn't do any favours and financially they won't get much, twenty quid. It's just the publisher or the editor that gets something out of it. Sure people like Don, pulling together this Graywolf anthology or the Next Generation poets, ten year plan being put forward, it's only good for those involved. Unless there's an alternative voice, like, *Conductors of Chaos*, Ian Sinclair's book, which had a mixture; Ken Smith, Barry McSweeney and so on, in it. That was a strong alternative voice on the same platform.

CD: What's this ten year plan you're talking about?

TC: We saw yesterday that the Arts Council have put forward the idea of the Next Generation poets.

JOD: But that's a second hand idea. New Gen was more or less a new idea but even that was marketing

TC: That came with *The New Poetry*, the Morley book.

BC: That's typical of the slick marketing practise that's been put into operation. The notion that it's making poetry more democratic, incorporating people that were previously excluded from the canon, is a myth and really what it's doing is being *seen* to be doing it without really doing it.

JOD: Anthologies are a way of building the canon. There's a definite line from New Gen back to 82, the Motion and Morrison anthology [*The Penguin book of contemporary British poetry*]. I was thinking about it and guys like Armitage in their youth would have read that and thought that was the paradigm of the poem and they quite deliberately set out four ideas of what a poem should be, one of which was narrative and one was that it should be oblique. Armitage in his first collection, really picked up on this idea of narrative and retold a lot of urban myths and anecdotes.

BC: There was quite a lot of controversy with that collection with the inclusion of Seamus Heaney, he said "I'm an Irish poet, what am I doing in this book?"

JOD: He'd got the English moniker twice before and went with it but that third time because he was part of Fildah he wasn't having it.

CD: Didn't Seamus Heaney's protest pamphlet lead to Don Paterson excluding all Irish poets from the Graywolf collection?

JOD: Yes, there are no Irish poets in there but then that's a bit of cultural sensitivity to be applauded in a way. I don't know how the yanks will take to this stuff, as Simic says in his introduction when he thought of British poets he went straight to Irish poets. There is this confusion in America with Irish and British and I think the Irish

could have a better reception if someone stepped forward and put together an Irish anthology.

BC: There is new a collection of Irish poets to be published, poets who have had one collection published, a new generation of Irish poets. That in itself is kind of polemical, there are certain poets who are Irish poets, possibly of the Anglo-Irish persuasion, Mr Wheatley and Mr Quinn and they've got a strong agenda. A strong, I would argue, rather conservative outlook. They're known in their critical articles so therefore a whole strand of poets are excluded from that.

JD: It's difficult though, because there's tremendous interchange between English and Irish traditions, with a slightly wider view you can see in this tiny sector of Northern Europe there is a kind of pool of activity that influences each other. You could argue the Welsh deserve an anthology.

JOD: But you have to be careful with the Irish because it's still a hegemonic thing for them, the Irish are still trying to build a nation, whatever that means, and poetry is a part of that and it's gone hand in hand.

CD: It could be solved quite simply by leaving out the word "British" and put it like this: "an anthology of poetry from Britain and Ireland". It's quite simply solved.

NF: In Vancouver there was a club, a folk music club, the WISE club – Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England.

MJ: It's great, it acknowledges it much more equally.

BC: Back to anthologies, we've identified there's two objectives really. To make money as a publisher whacking out the coffee table ones or to put it forward a particular polemic. The two can interchange with each other.

TC: There is a third one, the one that Ken Smith and Matthew Sweeney did *Backwards to Bedlam*, a book about madness.

MJ: Surely you're trying to extend the canon but also to deepen it or go where the canon has not been seen to go. The anthologies that have meant something to me as a reader are the ones that have shown me something I've never seen before, either because they've been a particular cultural group or they've taken a subject matter and deepened it.

MJ: I want someone to gather things that are going to be really interesting and make me go, "Oh, God".

BC: Are you looking for individual poets or individual poems on a particular theme, is the poet more important than the poem?

MJ: It can work either way, some anthologies have introduced new poets, there was one some years ago some Romanian women poets, new voices I'd never heard of whereas other anthologies have introduced me to new subject matter or ideas. It depends on the form of the anthology. If you've got one poem by each of you I'm not really going to get to know your work. If I have six poems by Brendan six by John, I get a feel for a voice.

BC: What Tim seems to be saying is that individual poets are suffering more under that equation, their work is being seen out of context, you see one poem.

NF: Quite a good example is *The New British Poetry*, twenty years ago, it has sections and you could say it's ghettoising people but actually it's quite useful if you want to say, look at women poets at a particular time, black poets, avant-garde poets, there was actually a huge range and each section and each had an introduction.

BC: There's the anthology itself, the whole book of poetry and then there's the whole power and control mechanism behind it.

JD: Let's look at that, what about this thing about anthologies in terms of trying to determine the canon and the reputation of individual poets. It can feel like a four

sided rainbow, one minute one crew are pulling, then another. It's going round and round but the direction of poetry I suspect is seen always in retrospect.

JOD: The publicly funded anthologies and publishers will have a certain line and they'll have to stick within it. That paradigm has always been slightly remade but remains the same, it's pentameter, clearly recognisable English lyric and that's what they have to play with. What you are saying John is clearly apposite, it's not only building and reinforcing the canon, it's also putting together a gang, gang warfare. The more interesting gangs are the ones Maria is talking about, they don't have a lot of resources but they have a lot of energy, a lot of possibly anger and perhaps more erudition because they're not consigning themselves to the "machine that remembers itself," they're looking further afield.

BC: A lot of outsiders who want to remain exactly that.

JD: Something I found useful about anthologies when I was a teenager, it gives you a different view of kinds of schools. There are always going to be people that stay outside but on the other hand it's quite useful to have some kind of idea of the different strands of poetry.

TC: But that's not happening now.

JD: Everyone seems very confused about what the different strands are at the moment.

BC: What's happening in schools with anthologies?

JOD: What you get is the exam boards producing their own anthologies and they are the ones that are the kids' introductions to poetry at a formative age, 15 or 16 when they're doing their GCSEs and you look at some of the poems and you think why are they in here? Why are young people being subjected to these?

BC: It's like Adrian Mitchell when he sat the exam to answer questions on his own poem and failed, showed the corruption of that whole idea.

JOD: The Chapman Brothers did the Art GCSE and they made a show of their art GCSE.

Another thing about the way that poetry is taught, one of the things they do at my school and at most schools, is to tier the kids into Higher and Foundations. The Foundation kids just have the chance of getting a C. What they're asked to do is write a critical poem and they can't, they haven't got the language or the interest. Motion spoke at this conference I was at about creative writing and education and I said "Can't you bring creative writing into GCSE?". These kids would get a poem they like, John Cooper Clark always goes down well, make them do a creative response and evaluation and that's the syllabus.

BC: The examining boards themselves are compiling the anthologies?

JOD: Well I think exam boards bring forward poets and make them the stalking horses or Aunt Sally's of the poetry world and it's Carol Ann Duffy and Gillian Clarke. I wonder what input these poets have in compiling the anthologies, it's very flattering as a poet to be told a whole generation of GCSE students are studying your poems but I think that's as far as the consultation process goes. I think it would be better for the cultural health of this country that Foundation kids never have to write an essay on poetry because it alienates them.

JOD: In my day it was The Penguin Voices, they had pictures and poems and you got a visual education as well, they were brilliant and I still have them.

BC: What I am trying to get at is there's a danger of it falling into the nation's 101 favourite poems.

TC: It already has.

JOD: It's not even 100, it's 20. It's creating illiteracy instead of literacy.

BC: It's an important issue, the individual collection by a poet is being devalued.

JOD : Motion is our main man, Motion is our shop steward on this, as an activist he says one thing and does another and subtly subverts what people like Charles Clarke say. The government's view of an English education is functional language and the mechanics of language, literature goes out of the window.

JD : I remember a teacher saying to me this year there were no literary texts in the GCSE paper. It was all leaflet copy or something like that.

JOD : It's all down to SATS. They are terrified of poems, five years ago they put a poem into the Year 9 SATS, it terrifies the kids and a poet objected to it. They are terrified. I had the Head have a go at me because I taught some eleven-year-olds a eulogy about a child's death and I was asked why I didn't choose a lighter poem but I've giving them a sentimental education, an emotional education. Boys don't get one, they just get taught you have four emotions Mad, Sad, Bad and Glad. We work up from there.

CD : There is no clear definable emotion, there's just a seething mass of them.

BC : Is there something that can be done about it? The whole anthology thing?

CD : I am distinguished as being the most un-anthologised poet in Ireland but coming to recognition in other ways. I am reminded of Yevtushenko, he wrote of poetry and compared it with football. The big difference if you score a goal with football, the ball is in the net, no-one can dispute it except to say you're offside but what's happening with poetry is that someone's kicking the ball and it hits the corner flag and someone says "brilliant goal".

JD : Or else there's a group of people running up and down the touchline with the goal posts.

TC : I mean to say if an anthology is done playfully, look at the Graywolf, I haven't seen it but it's about defining and excluding. You could have a whole load of Michael Donaghy poems next to John Cooper Clark, a wide goal post.

CD: The other thing is there is an underlying agenda about who gets into mainstream anthologies.

BC: I think there is but it's a bit like the notion of grey area, it doesn't suggest a conspiracy theory that there's people sat round in a room planning but momentum has gathered and it is happening, not with a definite strategy.

JOD: There's a kind of Royale Poetic as I call it. A policing, there are cultural gatekeepers but as Brendan says there's a momentum built from Motion and Morrison to New Gen. Now, there was a Bloodaxe anthology *New Poetry* but there's slight difference between them. New Gen had all this about being in vogue and was very slick, it wasn't like the continent where people consciously create movements with manifestos and they agitate, it was much more Thatcherite. The English have this thing, as well as the collector there's the club, "clubability", a clubbable chap, it's gone out of the language now but it's still around. Poets seem to fight shy of this, something about the other side of English which is man is an island, Robinson Crusoe, the individual has to make it on their own terms, maybe they want it to be included and be part of the self-excluded as well.

TC: As Brendan was saying earlier about outsiders wanting to remain so, there's a strong individualistic streak with a lot of poets. With Don now, you get the referral system and also the workshop system, people they are mentoring and so on. It coalesces this way as well.

JOD: The challenge that you can lay at anthologists is one of corruption. There's been evidence for this, prizes are given by people who are closely related to prizewinners.

TC: Donaghy resigned.

JD: Neil Astley mentioned this, it wasn't him that did the shopping but there was an article written and Neil was blamed for it. I was aware that there did seem to be an attempt to cartel.

JOD: ----- was judging a competition, ---- said to me “If you’re going in for it put a pink dot in the corner so I know it’s yours”.

JD: It’s common knowledge that when workshop leaders are judging competitions, people from their workshops win.

BC: Because they recognise it and recognising is an ego boost to them as they recognise their input.

NF: You just have to look at the list for the Forward Prize, look at the publishers, it’s the top five publishers.

BC: The Forward Prize is a great example, The Forward Book. Somebody’s wealth has created that. It’s saying “These are the best poems, we’ve sent a team in to select them so everything else is not as good”.

CD: Another factor, compiling an anthology requires a hell of a lot of research whereas it’s much easier to compile one with all your pals in it or people who are well known at the moment.

JOD: Let’s face it, browsing anthologies is a key part of any poet’s education. I remember Montague’s *Faber Irish Book of Verse*, that really has given me stuff.

JD: *The Penguin Book of Contemporary Verse* was very influential.

CD: I know it was the first contemporary anthology I read.

BC: It was a genuine concern for people to read the work of those poets, that came from a sentiment that’s much cleaner than anything that’s around now.

JOD: That’s an almost Reithian public service thing and that’s gone because Penguin couldn’t have made much money out of those and they must have produced a load

of them. I don't think that Penguin looked at things from a monetary perspective in the sixties, they were still awash with *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

BC: It's a different agenda these days, that's what I'm getting at. That's the anthology on the basis of "Wouldn't it be great if everyone were to read those poets?"

JOD: This is back to Naomi and the market forces; poetry is dominated by conglomerates now. If English publishers see poetry on their catalogues they'll say "No way, we're not making a loss on these, we won't subsidise them."

JD: There's another aspect, which I find slightly worrying but is also a good thing, it's like the Radio 3 raid on culture, it's a marketing thing as well, you say "we've got a Mozambican guitar player" and it's fantastic but it's commodification, it turns everything into something you can sell and the actual cultural tradition is lost somewhere.

BC: There's something very worrying about it, it doesn't console me that very much that Mia Farrow is enjoying contemporary poetry or Van Morrison. That's distinctly turning something into a product and there is a motive behind it that is cold and calculating.

JD: But they are products, as well, we operate in a certain context.

JOD: What you're saying John is interesting, this thing about the poet and the reader. The poet has an opportunity to get into the iPod thing, if the culture can stand it. The poet in performance is going to become more and more important, and we may see this established by the mid century, a DVD of their performance, sound and vision and you are going to be able to download those I'm sure.

JD: We're into the compilation market.

JOD: Then we get to the stage where Astley and his one poem per poet in *Staying Alive* is paradigmatic.

- NF:** What we need is physical space for poets, like the Poetry Library in London. The Poetry Cubicle in Norwich sounds like a great space. It's tiny but you can buy individual poems at the Poetry Cubicle. What I've done is send my files over the Internet and they print them and sell them for 50 pence or something.
- BC:** There is a Poetry Library in Edinburgh and one in Morpeth, Northumberland.
- NF:** Poetry is a niche market, it does get lost in bookshops, it's a literary and an oral form. We all agree that poetry readings have a huge function, they are a place where you can congregate and where you can sell books.
- TC:** All poets know that readings are where you sell books, not bookshops.
- BC:** There's an important issue that these anthologies are feeding into the notion that those in control are making poetry more accessible. It's a question of are they making them accessible at its maximum input, getting people to go and check out poets or being seen to be making it accessible without doing it, it's only going halfway. Look at these anthologies, how many they're selling, poetry is becoming more popular.
- CD:** It does seem to be a market thing and in some sense a social need.
- BC:** There was that book *Pleased to See Me: 69 Very Sexy Poems*, there's a typically shrewd piece of marketing.
- CD:** There's a social need in Western society to get a lot of stuff that talks about overcoming difficulties and problems and surviving and that accounts for the immense popularity of *Being Alive* and *Staying Alive*.
- JD:** There are now books of poems about surviving a hysterectomy and so on.

CD: It's answering a social need for order, if people believe that no matter how great your difficulties are you can survive them and get through then society stays together. You have to recognise that this is something booksellers are looking for as well and individuals want.

JOD: That goes back a long way, that goes back to the Psalms.

BC: Arguably that's individuals being told that's what they want.

CD: When what they really want is a couple of weeks in Auschwitz is that what you're saying?

JOD: We fell into this trap at Survivors' Poetry, one edited by Smith and Sweeney, the first one was *Beyond Bedlam*, that was the best one. Alison Combes our director was in with Peter Forbes and said "We can get this anthology together", and I said "How much is it going to cost?". It's going to cost 3500 for him and 6500 for worldwide permissions and I thought about it and I didn't think about it long enough and said work away. The anthology turned in was slimmer than *Beyond Bedlam*, less polemical and it was definitely in the category you're talking about which is Self Help. It wasn't successful, Potts slagged it in *The Guardian*, him having written to me saying, "I've always admired the work of Survivors' Poetry," this was one piece of work that wasn't especially admirable and we wish to correct that now, to have a more polemic anthology come out, maybe two.

JD: So how do you find the balance between this idea that Tim raised at the beginning that there's something unpleasant about the usefulness in poetry, it does have its uses obviously in, therapeutically and socially?

JOD: For me it's down to sentimental education of the public. It's about giving to the person who is perhaps under-sentimental and it turns into a means of expression that maybe at that moment is therapeutic. There is a huge snobbery about writing as therapy but I think if people are honest, the first time they turned to poetry beyond its playfulness for a deeper quality, it is to do with consolatory therapy. Then they

dabble in it, as Patrick Kavanagh says, “I dabbled in verse then it became my life”, then they start to find their way through this thicket. The thing is, as Tim said, the thicket is terribly dense with crap and creating this thing for a sentimental education is terribly important because we’ll get to stage where we live in a society that is emotionally illiterate, this thing about road rage, the response to difficulty is rage, which is very unhealthy.

JD : To round off can we go round the table and each say what we think is the future of anthologies and what is the anthology you’d most like to see? I must admit I’d love to see the anthology that takes the year 2000 as its end point and just looks at the strands and say these are the main movements, not just in English.

JOD : I’d most like to see the *Field English Anthology* and see what the Irish make of the English canon. The Irish bugged it up, they left out two important volumes, *Women’s Writing in Ireland* in the first three volumes, they went out to libraries and everything, then they backtracked. I would in all seriousness like to see a *Field Anthology of English* writing because I am very interested in the cultural transmission between the English and the Irish.

TC : It would be good to see that WISE anthology and perhaps the Penguin Poets, a four part series where they put people who are sympathetic with each other, a new writer and an established one.

BC : I’d like to see an anthology set in a historical, political and cultural context by the poets themselves, their own testimony about their writing.

BC : Bloodaxe did it in their anthology *New Blood*, which was a primer, another anthology we haven’t discussed, where the publishing house puts out an anthology to sell their books. You got to write about “Why I Write” and about the poems that were included.

JOD : There was a great Penguin anthology called *Poster Voices* and there was an early seventies one that had quite long autobiographical essays and they had big

photographic essays, so you saw the poets in their culture. There wasn't much to it but as Brendan says it was just the guys themselves.

NE: I agree with John in bringing all the strands together, in a way it would be good to bring all the conflicts out because it does seem to simmer and snipe in the poetry world.

JD: In Brendan's terms I'd like the strands to identify themselves, so someone that identified with the Cambridge Modernists writes the introduction to that section.

NE: You would have individuals who wouldn't want to be associated with any. I think that poetry anthologies are integral, like a poetry magazine is an anthology, it won't go away and it can't be seen as a dead form, it has been overtaken and swamped by market forces and particular individuals and perhaps we need to wrest the form back.