CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00185-5 - What is Poetry?: Language and Memory in the Poems of the World
Nigel Fabb
Frontmatter
More information

What is Poetry?

Poetry, defined as language divided into lines, is found in most known human cultures. This masterful survey of poetry and its constituent components demonstrates the functions performed by metre, rhyme, alliteration and parallelism, arguing that each line of a poem fits as a whole unit into the limited capacity of human working memory. Using examples from around the world, Fabb surveys the wide varieties of poetry and the ways they are performed, including those in songs and signed literatures. Focusing on language, form and memory, he argues, helps us understand why poetry is a particularly valued way of using language. A fresh exploration of poetry, the book will be welcomed by students and researchers of literature, linguistics and psychology, as well as anyone interested in poetry.

NIGEL FABB is Professor of Literary Linguistics at the University of Strathclyde.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00185-5 - What is Poetry?: Language and Memory in the Poems of the World
Nigel Fabb
Frontmatter
More information

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00185-5 - What is Poetry?: Language and Memory in the Poems of the World
Nigel Fabb
Frontmatter
More information

What is Poetry?

Language and Memory in the Poems of the World

Nigel Fabb

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00185-5 - What is Poetry?: Language and Memory in the Poems of the World
Nigel Fabb
Frontmatter
More information

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107001855

© Nigel Fabb 2015

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2015

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data
Fabb, Nigel.
What is poetry? : language and memory in the poems of the world / Nigel Fabb.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
ISBN 978-1-107-00185-5 (Hardback)
1. Poetry. I. Title.
PN1031.F24 2015
808.1–dc23 2015000105

ISBN 978-1-107-00185-5 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00185-5 - What is Poetry?: Language and Memory in the Poems of the World
Nigel Fabb
Frontmatter
More information

For my mum and in memory of my dad

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00185-5 - What is Poetry?: Language and Memory in the Poems of the World
Nigel Fabb
Frontmatter
More information

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00185-5 - What is Poetry?: Language and Memory in the Poems of the World
Nigel Fabb
Frontmatter
More information

Contents

Acknowledgements *page* viii
Note on the text ix
List of symbols x

1 Poetry 1
2 Form 17
3 Language 37
4 Metre 72
5 Rhyme and alliteration 123
6 Parallelism 140
7 Psychology and poetry 171

Bibliography 192
Language index 214
General index 216

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00185-5 - What is Poetry?: Language and Memory in the Poems of the World
Nigel Fabb
Frontmatter
More information

Acknowledgements

For their help with the preparation of the book, I thank Ragnar Ingi Aðalsteinsson, François Dell, Mohamed Elmedlaoui, Janet Fabb, Frog, Madeleine Grealy, Faye Hammill, Marged Haycock, Jonathan Hope, Elspeth Jajdelska, Ewa Jaworska, Julia Kind, Bob Ladd, Gwyneth Lewis, Karina Lukin, Wilson McLeod, Lev Michael, Joanna McPake, Martin Orwin, Alena Rettová, Joel Sherzer, Renate Sohnen-Thieme, Venla Sykäri, Gary Thoms, Alice Turk, Myf Turpin, Stefano Versace and an anonymous reader for Cambridge University Press. I thank my editor Bethany Gaunt and, as always, Andrew Winnard for his support for what is now my third book for Cambridge University Press. The University of Strathclyde School of Humanities provided a semester's research leave. Any errors and misrepresentations that remain in the text are my responsibility.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00185-5 - What is Poetry?: Language and Memory in the Poems of the World
Nigel Fabb
Frontmatter
More information

Note on the text

This book takes texts from diverse sources, which differ in their transcription and spelling conventions. I have sometimes changed symbols to more generally understandable forms, modernized spelling, corrected errors (based on expert advice), transliterated and modernized language names, all without explicitly noting that I have done so. Translations usually come from the source publications, unless otherwise indicated.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00185-5 - What is Poetry?: Language and Memory in the Poems of the World
Nigel Fabb
Frontmatter
More information

Symbols

/	line boundary (end of line)
|	boundary between line-internal sections (feet, hemistichs, etc.)
:	caesura
σ	syllable
σ́	stressed syllable
-	heavy syllable (occasionally also symbolized by H)
◡	light syllable (occasionally also symbolized by L)
◡́	stressed heavy syllable
◡́	stressed light syllable
x	syllable, which can be light or heavy (anceps)
μ	mora

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org