

The Place of Poetry

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Today many forms of entertainment compete for our attention, and it appears that poetry plays a minor part in most people's lives now, compared to the greater prominence it had in the past. However, this paper seeks where poetry is to be found in the twenty-first century, finds it in some unexpected guises and places, and ventures that poetry does in fact still hold its place in our modern hearts¹. The "place of poetry" refers to either (or both) the location of poetry, and its importance in our lives.

The beginnings of literature in any culture were oral: songs and poetry, memorised to be recited aloud for public enjoyment. The relation between the two is close, then and now (as we can see from the word *uta* (歌) in Japanese, which can mean poem or song, and it is similar in English, where "song" may be taken to mean "poem"). Before literacy became prevalent favourite tales and songs were transmitted orally down the generations, and after they came to be transcribed fate in its various forms of fire, flood and warfare had its say in determining which works of literature should be preserved. Set down for our pleasure in books we can read the myths and great works of the past from any continent; the doings of Thor and Loki, Helen and Achilles, Rama and Sita, Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca, the ancestors and spirits of the Dreamtime, the Monkey King,

Amaterasu and Susano-o. The poetry in the epics and sagas tells us of gods and heroes, and can make us gasp in admiration, awe or horror. Yet the poetry of the past was not only expressed on a grand scale; it was also an integral part of daily lives. A charming example of poetry in the workaday world comes from Matsuo Bashō's haiku of 1687, composed for early summer, at the time of planting out the young rice seedlings:

里人は稲に歌読む都かな²

Anyone who has ever worked in a rice field knows that it is far from the pastoral idyll suggested by Bashō's poem, but will agree that there is immense pleasure to be found from being in the great outdoors in early summer, and from playing one's small part in the great cycle that begins with sowing and ends in harvest — enough to inspire anyone to song. And of course any tough or tedious work can be eased and speeded along by songs to distract from or give rhythm to the task. Fishermen hauling in their nets, sailors with their sea shanties, chain gangs, women doing housework — all turn to words with tunes and rhythms to help along their work. Bashō's perception of the peasants at their rice planting is half amused and half tender — he finds as much to appreciate in their rustic poetry as in the refined verse that was produced at the imperial court in the (conventional) capital, Kyoto, and that served as inspiration to generations of succeeding poets. Poems are then part of the working routine of Bashō's peasants, but poems were also a part of leisure time in the past. The *Man'yōshū* (c.759) has several examples of poems in praise of sake:

験なきものを思はずは一杯の濁れる酒を飲むべくあるらし³

This tanka's sentiments are conventional enough, but expressed with whimsical appeal, and indicate woes of life, and alcoholic consolations in their train, that have not changed over the thirteen centuries since the compilation of the *Man'yōshū*. The humour of another tanka is even stronger:

この世にし楽しくあらば来む世には虫に鳥にも我れはなりなむ⁴

but the tanka has a subtle twist that one would perhaps not ordinarily expect to find in a drinking song; the willingness to descend to the state of an insect or bird in the next life for the sake of pleasure in this life refers to the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation. Poetry is then to be found ubiquitously in the past, whenever people were at work or at play.

Traditional forms of poetry endured for many generations but in the twentieth century rebellion against conventions meant that many fixed forms of poetry were rejected in favour of free or open verse. Previous to the twentieth century the teaching of the set forms of poetry and the compulsory learning of poems meant that poetical lines ran more in people's heads than now, so that people could also produce poetical utterances more readily. My example is drawn from a time when books were also probably more precious than they are now, in a pre-paperback era, where people inscribed their own books or pasted in bookplates with their names to ensure their copies did not go astray, and schoolboys additionally wrote in the following couplet – doggerel rather than poetry –

If this book should dare to roam
Box its ears and send it home.

Modern schoolboys would probably snigger at the thought of writing such ditties in their books, and rhyming verse has long ceased to exercise its monopoly on poetry in English. However, I would like to go on the trail of poetry in modern life, and then argue that poetry has not died out at all, but reinvented itself, and remains a vital part of our consciousnesses, whatever language or culture we spring from. My examples are drawn from languages that I know: readers are invited to extrapolate to languages that they are familiar with. Human curiosity and hunger for the novel mean that cultural forms rarely continue undisturbed, but are constantly tinkered with, updated, and from time to time radically rethought. Poetry has of course been carried along by this impetus for change, and, in common with the other arts, has been deeply affected by the new economic and technological realities that have shaped all areas of human experience since the Industrial Revolution ⁵.

Like them or not, certain strong social currents are evident to anyone living in industrialised countries today. Not without painful adjustments, information society is becoming as important as industrialised society. Wage differentials have become huge in the developed world, and society appears to be dividing more and more into privileged haves and disadvantaged have nots. To ensure one's place at the privileged table, and preferably at the best end of that table, it is necessary to do well in increasingly competitive education. Some countries uphold religious beliefs and values more than others, but even in countries where the spiritual remains

a force to be reckoned with, religion seems to have no control whatsoever over the commercial pressures that encourage rampant consumerism. In such milieux nothing is sacred, and anything can be tapped for an advertising gimmick or sales ploy, whether it is what we love or revere most, or what we hold most taboo. Now no delicacy of feeling is permitted to halt the juggernaut of the profit prerogative. Poetry expresses some of the most intense thoughts and emotions of our human experience, but no respect for its articulation of human spirit impedes poetry's adoption as a marketing tool. The extracts from the three poems that follow are all quoted verbatim from the inside lid of boxes of chocolate manufactured by Frigor, one of the established chocolate makers of Switzerland ⁶.

[first poem] Les violons mêlaient leur rire au chant des flûtes
Et le bal tournoyait quand je la vis passer
Avec ses cheveux blonds jouant sur les volutes
De son oreil où mon Désir comme un baiser
S'élançait et voulait lui parler, sans oser.

.....

Et je crois que voici venir la Passion.

Paul Verlaine, extrait de "Initium" ⁷

[second poem] Granatäpfel prangen
Heiss, wie die Lippen der Nacht!
Rot, wie die Liebe der Nacht!
Wie der Brand meiner Wangen.

Else Lasker-Schüler, aus "Die schwarze Bhowanéh" ⁸

[third poem] e nessuna carezza
t'è più ignota, nessuna.
Al sole ed a la luna
salì la nostra ebbrezza.

Gabriele d'Annunzio, da "Invito alla fedeltà" ⁹

Under the three poems Frigor adds their own footnote: "Le chocolat passion". Indeed. The poems and the chocolates supplied by Frigor are both delicious. As you bite on your chocolate you have an extract (bite) of poetry to absorb at the same time; an exquisite morsel for the mind and for the body. Frigor cannily conjures up not one but two simultaneous carnal pleasures (one real, one left to the imagination), and endues its chocolates with the intense (yet refined) sweetness of romantic ardour, invoked by the poets' passionate lines, which in turn invoke hot physical passion. We are all enough products of our age to relish the wit in this gag, and furthermore should be honest enough to admit to the tumult of devouring passions that compose our being. Last but not least, it should be noted that Frigor has maintained standards of political correctness impeccably: the three official languages (French, German, Italian) of Switzerland are represented equally in the chosen poetic quotations: Verlaine's French may have two extra lines, but the sum total of the passion in each poet's extract must be about the same.

Reactions to Frigor's quotations will probably vary: the consumer of the chocolates is free to ignore the poems, feel amused by the juxtaposition of the confectionery and the poetry, resent the cheapening of the poetry by utilising it for such blatantly commercial

purposes, or appreciate finding some lovely poems he or she may not have been previously aware of. If the poetry is good enough it will speak to the reader beyond the confines of the commercial context. Moreover, words have a power of their own; once they are inscribed they pass beyond the control of their author, and the ways in which those words will be read and interpreted, and their ultimate effect, are unpredictable. Frigor assumes it will gain some market advantage from its adopted poets, but it also does them a service in return, by disseminating their words.

In an age of easy and sensational entertainment, poetry, quiet and thought-intensive, is not conspicuous. Schools will introduce some of poetry's great names to students, and those who find they enjoy poetry will continue reading for themselves. For poets who have not made a name for themselves finding exposure, let alone fame, is a daunting task. In their cases too commercial enterprises can give as well as take. Bottled beverages have been increasing their share of the soft drink market in Japan; among them, Ito-en (伊藤園), originally a tea seller, was the first Japanese company to successfully develop a way of bottling cold green tea. For some years Ito-en has been printing haiku on the sides of its green tea bottles, written by successful entrants in its original haiku competitions, which began in 1989 ¹⁰. There are various age categories in these competitions, and aspiring poets, from primary school age children to the retired, have their poems distributed all over Japan thanks to Ito-en's wide network. Masashi Nishimura won the top prize in the junior high school section of Ito-en's eleventh competition, and his haiku gives an idea of the flavour of these poems:

全宇宙真っ黒だけどぼくがいる¹¹

His haiku is not subtle, but it is powerful, and, as a haiku should do, it arrests us in our normal course, to make us perceive something in creation differently. Masako Tsuchiya was the winner in the over 40 years old category of Ito-en's thirteenth competition, with the following haiku:

木の実踏み石段の数忘れけり¹²

Her haiku is more mature, and as befits an adult's greater complexity of thought she has succeeded in writing a haiku with a double meaning; a surface meaning that takes as its starting point an observation from the natural world, and an underlying meaning that can offer a philosophical interpretation. The fact that the haiku contestants' ages are listed after their haiku adds poignancy to her haiku. The *kinomi* (lit. nuts or fruit) with which the haiku opens places the poem in autumn, and Tsuchiya's age of 76 likewise places her in the autumn of her life. The image conveyed by her haiku is of someone climbing the long, steep stone stairs leading up to a shrine (shrines and temples in Japan often being built in high places) and counting as they climb, then being distracted by treading on some acorns or small nuts that have fallen from the trees overhanging the stone steps, and being startled by the sound of the nuts cracking, or the feel of them cracking underfoot, and thus led to forget the number of steps climbed. This haiku implies also that the climber looks back on her life, as one looks back down stairs one has climbed, and is suddenly brought to question what

she has achieved in that life, just as she has previously unquestioningly followed the daily routine (put one foot after another on each step to keep climbing) until something happened to jolt her out of the adherence to that routine. She perhaps also implies that what we devote ourselves to in our daily routines can be unnecessarily humdrum (as insignificant as counting the steps as we climb), and that it can distract us from what is more important; the shrine at the top of the steps, or the meaningful goals that we should be working towards in our lives.

Not all haiku reach so deeply, and haiku have perhaps become so popular, outside Japan as well, because many have an enigmatic quality, and can only be interpreted in a way that is personally meaningful to each individual reader. Such a haiku was written by Willy Cuvelier of Belgium (61 years old), in Ito-en's category of haiku in English:

In the curtains
sun and summer breeze are playing
a shadow show. ^B

Imagining the nature of the shadow play is left to the reader, but Cuvelier's poetic techniques can be clearly appreciated. In his second line he uses both a *kigo* (seasonal marker for haiku) with "summer breeze", and then both alliteration and assonance ("sun and summer"). He follows this up in the third line with the alliteration of "shadow show". It is a short poem to bear such a weight of technique, but it can be argued that he gets away with it, as the repetition and combination of sounds replicates the motion of the

curtains in the breeze, and the play of light and shadow. Not all of the Ito-en bottle haiku are as good as the three examples quoted above (some are also closer to senryu¹⁴), but the casually thirsty tea drinker is offered a pleasingly serendipitous glimpse of the world of poetry, and the amateur haiku poet is offered the greatest encouragement possible; many readers.

My examples of the poems adopted by Frigor and Ito-en have shown a certain symbiotic relationship existing between poetry and commerce. (This is not new: kings and then lords of deep purses have always been the patrons of artists blessed with rich imaginations and poor pockets, William Shakespeare being a pre-eminent example.) However, all the poetry in these examples is intended to be taken seriously by both its writers and readers, and intended to be defined as poetry, a high art. This paper argues that poetry in the guise of high art may have lost some ground in modern times, but that the instinct for poetry is still strong with us. To prove this point I would like to turn to some extreme examples.

It is a commonplace that infants' babbling shows their delight in language, and enjoyment of experimentation with the possibilities of language. Hence also early words such as *mummy* (British English), *mama* (Japanese) and *maman* (French), which reflect the infant's pleasure in the repetition of sound. To encourage the development of infants' language their adult caregivers resort to techniques which further encourage the infants' pleasure in language: nursery rhymes, songs and lullabies that are characterised by repetitions, strong rhythms and rhymes. These often appear in exaggerated form, and as the children grow and their tastes mature they no longer require such pronounced techniques. Yet the human pleasure in repetition,

rhythm, rhyme and experimentation with language never decreases — no one with ears to hear can fail to respond to song. For song poetry is applied to lyrics and combined with melody, and so it is perhaps an unfair example to use poetry thus unassailably allied with music. So I will return to my consideration of poetry in the marketplace, this time in the form of greetings cards.

Some forms of written salutation exist in every literate culture. British people (no doubt urged on by card manufacturers) are particularly fond of sending greetings cards, which now exist for every conceivable occasion. Christmas cards became popular during the reign of Queen Victoria; birthday cards, cards to congratulate upon a wedding or a birth, and cards of condolence upon bereavement also have a history. The twenty-first birthday card once marked the attainment of adulthood, but now cards for any age are available. Cards can now be purchased for the trivial as well as the momentous of rites of passage, such as congratulations upon passing one's driving test — or the newly momentous — passing exams. These British greeting cards are usually made of a piece of card, folded in half and opening like a book. The face of the card bears a picture, illustration, photograph or decoration. The inside right page may be left completely blank, for the senders to inscribe as they please, but more traditionally bears a short message, appropriate to the type of card, often in the form of a verse, printed in the middle of the page, and allowing enough space both above and below this message for the senders to write their own personalised messages. The printed messages or verses are almost invariably anonymous, and are presumably composed by employees of the greeting card companies. Some cards, for example for birthday,

wedding or Valentine's Day, can be serious or humorous in tone, but what I wish to emphasise is the near-ubiquitousness of the accompanying verses, and their adherence to stereotyped sentiments and very predictable and outdated rhyme schemes. More often or not the verses fall into doggerel rather than reach the standard of poetry ¹⁵, but they are nevertheless there, presumably by popular demand. I conjecture that, because poetry is still considered to be a high art, upon such special occasions in people's lives, everyday (prosaic) words are not judged adequate to mark the occasion, and people reach for what they believe is more elevated language, even if it comes in the form of borrowed words and old-fashioned conventions.

It is easy enough to sympathise with the sincerity of the senders' sentiments as they choose a verse to convey their wishes for the recipients to recover their health soon, or live happily ever after, or find cheer in midwinter — these are social universals. It is more contentious to argue that football fans are repositories of poetry. Yet browsing through the extensive Manchester United Songs and Chants internet website yields flashes of wit, ingenious rhymes, and an occasional arresting thought. The songs and chants are primarily sung by supporters during matches, serving to encourage one's own side, and dismay the opponents. When the stadium is full the volume and tone of the singing can be impressive, and carries the emotion of the supporters: enjoyment, aggression, triumph, despair. Some of the chants refer to particular players, such as "Ole Gunnar Solskjaer", for Gunnar Solskjaer (from Norway), sung to the tune of "You Are My Sunshine":

You are my Solskjaer,
my Ole Solskjaer.
You make me happy,
when skies are grey.
Oh Alan Shearer
was **** dearer,
please don't take
my Solskjaer away! ¹⁶

Much of the fun of this derives from the partial substitution of new lyrics in a very familiar song, and the unexpected juxtapositions that occur as a result. Lines 3 and 4 have not been changed from the original, but now make a wry comment on the gloomy winter skies that often prevail over English football (winter being soccer's domestic high season). The last four lines convey the fans' sarcastic opinion of the transfer system that sees players changing teams for huge sums of money, including players who should be retained for their footballing skills but who are traded for the club's financial reasons. Other chants are anthems for the team in general, such as the following, sung to another well known tune, "Lord of the Dance":

Drink, drink, wherever you may be
We are the drunk and disorderly
And we don't give a ****, and we don't give a ****
We're going home with the championship. ¹⁷

This chant flaunts defiance and the self-confident superiority of their team, but it should be noted that mocking and taunting have been motives for poetry since its early days. Moreover, half of the

mockery is self-directed; the supporters are well aware of their “drunk and disorderly” reputation. Of course, if the two previous examples can be called poetry they are of a low order. These two are not original compositions (original pieces can be found elsewhere on the website), but rely heavily on other lyrics, but again it can be noted that derivativeness and the deliberate echoing of others’ words are also poetical traditions. Another advantage of this style is its versatility; the supporters’ chants quickly appear in new versions to stay up to date with events such as winning a particular championship or the arrival of a new player. Perhaps I have been pushing poetry offside, but I would like to defend my assertion that there is something akin to poetry in the supporters’ stands, in their creative use of language, reinventive gifts, and undoubted delight in rhyme, rhythm and melody.

Next I will examine situations where poetry has more gravitas, and begin, literally, by putting poetry back on a pedestal, so that we can again respect and admire it, as befits a noble art. The Statue of Liberty symbolises New York — at whose portal she stands — a free, dynamic, and even awe-inspiring city. She is an instantly recognisable icon, but her attentive visitor will also find a poem of note inscribed on Liberty’s plinth:

THE NEW COLOSSUS

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name

Mother of exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep ancient lands your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”¹⁸

This sonnet was written by Emma Lazarus, a Jewish American poet, in 1883. Her inspirational lines represent an ideal and a self image of the United States. The ideal has been betrayed often enough by cynicism and opportunism, but retains a certain power — the demonstrating students in Tienanmen Square in Beijing in 1989 chose a replica of the Statue of Liberty as their rallying point and for an instantly recognisable message. Lazarus’s rejection of the iniquities of the Old Continent aims to impress, but glosses over the irony that the statue was a gift from to the USA from France, very much a member of the Old World. This is not to deny the power of Lazarus’s words, and the humanitarian impulses they have championed over the years. As memorable poetry does, Lazarus’s words have also become part of the common tongue in English speaking countries, particularly so in the USA. In contexts of immigrants, refugees and escape from oppression writers frequently cite or paraphrase Lazarus’s words. An example of the latter is David Ignatius’s 2001 *International Herald Tribune* article on artistic freedom and the many black American artists who found the recognition that they could not find at home in France, when

he mentions that, “More than a century ago France gave America the Statue of Liberty, and Americans like to boast of its welcome to the tired, poor and downtrodden.”¹⁹ In a 2001 *Observer* article Greg Palast takes a much wryer look at politicians’ stances on immigration, and quotes Lazarus without attribution, as if he assumes all are familiar with her poem: “Bush would hold open the Golden Door for immigrants, but not out of a weepy compassion for the ‘huddled masses yearning to breathe free’. Immigration is simply good business.”²⁰

Liberty remains a focal point in the search to define national identity, although present poets are far fuller of doubts and questions than Lazarus. Thylia Moss is a poet who often writes deliberately to show the stance of two disadvantaged groups to which she belongs, namely black Americans, and women. Her 1991 version of Liberty does not inspire passionate patriotism:

The Lady of the Harbor, Fatima rip-off
except she came first with a crown like
the one of thorns on another whose cause is

masses. Avant-garde refugee from 50’s horror
flick *Attack of the 50-foot Woman* ...

where Liberty is linked with elements of Christianity that the poet finds troubling, but, worse — as it shreds Liberty’s dignity — Liberty is associated with the tackiest of examples from pop culture. Moss goes on to question Liberty’s relevance to present America:

Her back is to us while she changes

Her mind about walking away, entering
The deep seat of meaning she thought furnished
Her house.²¹

Throughout the twentieth century there was a questioning, and frequently a rejection, of previous icons and ideals, but this trend towards disillusionment went hand in hand with a hunger for belief and inspiration, on both a personal and a national scale. Again taking an American example, this is illustrated by a poem that was composed for and then recited at the inauguration ceremony for President Clinton's first term in office in January 1993. "On The Pulse Of Morning" is by Maya Angelou, one of the doyennes of black literature in the USA. Despite her present eminence, her chequered life experiences and warm personality have given her the ability to stay closely in touch with social trends and ordinary people. Her poem surveys her country from ancient times through to the present, while considering the interrelationship between its nature and successive waves of human inhabitants, and also the historical ties that link the various groups of people who all became Americans. Her poem opens with a non-human landscape of mythic dimensions:

A Rock, A River, A Tree
Hosts to species long since departed,
Marked the mastodon,
The dinosaur ...

but almost immediately human beings are apostrophised, and called upon — on this inauguration day particularly — to renounce their

heinous ways in order to fulfil the grand destiny they were created for:

But today, the Rock cries out to us,
... Come, you may stand upon my
Back and face your distant destiny,
But seek no haven in my shadow.
I will give you no hiding place down here.
You, created only a little lower than
The angels, have crouched too long in
The bruising darkness
Have lain too long
Face down in ignorance.

Angelou uses Biblical phraseology masterfully to criticise the failings that have marred American history but equally to remind her listeners and readers of the great things that can be attained if humans so wish to channel their talents. Her first indictment is of the repeated slaughters Americans have inflicted on one another, and she combines this with criticism of the environmental damage caused by human priorities of military and economic supremacy in the River's address to Americans:

Your armed struggles for profit
Have left collars of waste upon
My shore, currents of debris upon my breast.

Her message is severe, but always leaves room for a better future; the River goes on to say,

Come,
Clad in peace, and I will sing the songs
The Creator gave to me when I and the
Tree and the Rock were one.

The poem proceeds to name the kaleidoscopic list of Americans who have succeeded to this natural bounty:

... the Asian, the Hispanic, the Jew,
The African, the Native American, the Sioux,
The Catholic, the Muslim, the French, the Greek,
The Irish, the Rabbi, the Priest, the Sheikh,
The Gay, the Straight, the Preacher,
The Privileged, the Homeless, the Teacher.

Angelou's America includes all races and nationalities, and members of all the groups that society has chosen to categorise in terms of religion, sexual orientation, profession etc. Just as she has earlier shown how one form of injustice is linked to other forms, so does she now set up a counterbalance, in showing how positive linkings could result in an integrated and harmonious society. Yet before this vision can be realised there are historical debts to be faced up to. Angelou first mentions the terrible treatment meted out to the Native American tribes before considering the fate of the African tribes, the only ones to come to the new World not of their own volition,

... bought
Sold, stolen, arriving on a nightmare

Praying for a dream.

Here “dream” is a heavily weighted word, which both savagely recalls the cliché of the “American dream” (the freedom to seek happiness and prosperity) and Martin Luther King’s famous speech, opening with the beautiful line “I have a dream.” At this point the poem sounds a very sombre note, but again points to the solution:

History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived but if faced
With courage, need not be lived again.
Lift up your eyes upon
The day breaking for you.

Angelou is hoping that a new day is dawning, and that those who were unjustly disenfranchised in the past will take their proper place. Two such groups she has not yet mentioned (although many of her other poems deal with them), but she addresses them in the line “Women, children, men” — three very ordinary words, remarkable only in that they reverse the conventional order, established by habit of usage, of ‘men, women and children’. The slight jar that comes from Angelou’s deliberate reordering serves to make the reader aware of society’s traditional pecking order, and the disadvantages that it has created for women and children, the latter being perhaps even more powerless and voiceless than women, who at least have status deriving from their adulthood, and rights of self expression and self determination that minors almost totally lack.

The poem moves towards its close with the suggestion to leave

the past behind in favour of better “new beginnings”, and ends very simply but movingly:

Here, on the pulse of this new day
You may have the grace to look up and out
And into your sister’s eyes, into
Your brother’s face, your country
And say simply
Very simply
With hope
Good morning.²²

Throughout the poem has kept a balance between appealing to popular sentiment and striking the dignified note appropriate to a national ceremony calling for both solemnity and celebration. Other nations have also recognised the contribution that poets can make to national life; the office of Poet Laureate was first filled in Britain in 1619 by Ben Jonson, and has continued until the present, comprising both illustrious and not so illustrious poetic talents, the current Poet Laureate being Andrew Motion²³. Poets undoubtedly have a function — whether official or unofficial — to record the national mood, and events of importance to the national community. The USA has both national and state Poets Laureate; Canada has a national Poet Laureate. Japan has no official national poet’s office, but the New Year’s tanka which are traditionally composed by the members of the Imperial Court also serve as a type of national chronicle, as they reflect events that have touched the nation in the previous year. Similar to the wish of individual purchasers of greetings cards (containing poems) to command language elevated

beyond the everyday, it is felt necessary to commemorate matters of national moment, whether auspicious or sorrowful, in verse. The fact that poetry is not used for normal discourse, and its consequent prestige, marks such events as separate from the banal and everyday.

Poetry is perhaps particularly to be valued for its capacity to impart dignity and comfort to sorrowful occasions, whether on a public or a private scale. It may be surmising too much, but in an era in developed countries when death has been distanced from ordinary experience, and perhaps even become something of a taboo subject, poetry is a channel that remains open to explore the territory of death, and offer catharsis to the bereaved. In 2002 two 10 year old schoolgirls, from Soham in Cambridgeshire, were abducted, and despite a huge police search, later found murdered. The girls' plight became a national cause célèbre, and their memorial service in Ely Cathedral was attended beyond capacity by a crowd of more than 2,000 mourners, and in addition widely publicised in the media. The service aimed to be one of "celebration and remembrance"²⁴, but could not hide the pain occasioned by the loss of two young and innocent lives in such a brutal fashion. For those recalling the funeral service the most moving moment seems to have been the recitation of a poem composed by Kevin Wells for his daughter. A contract cleaner by occupation, Mr Wells had never written a poem before in his life, but spent three days working on it in his determination to give a fitting tribute to his daughter²⁵:

Your right to grow, to mature and play
So cruelly denied, in a sinister way.
Attentive and caring, a parent's delight

But so young at heart, needing comfort at night.

The garden so quiet, the house is too
But pausing for a moment, we can still sense you.
Your trusting nature and desire to please all
Allow us your family, to remain walking tall.

Our memories, now shared, with the nation's hearts
Small crumbs of comfort, now it is time to part.
We will never forget you, heaven's gain as it knows
Is simply you Holly, our beautiful Soham rose. ²⁶

The poem is no technical masterpiece, but it conveys the father's love and grief in abundance, and one assumes that in his poetic venture Kevin Wells found some comfort or significance in shaping his bereavement in verse, otherwise he would not have persisted in a technical exercise of rhyme and metre had it not also proved to be a labour of love ²⁷. It should also be noted that Kevin Wells was aware of the national dimension of his family's grief, which he acknowledges in his final stanza.

I have one more example of poetry's role in providing an outlet for the dark side of human emotion before I turn to more cheerful considerations. Timothy McVeigh was the Oklahoma city bomber who was executed in 2001 for his crime of killing 168 people in 1995. McVeigh, a decorated military veteran, showed no sign of remorse for all the deaths he instigated. In attempts to explain why someone should wish to commit such an atrocity various theories were put forward, that McVeigh's paranoia about government caused him to lose all normal sense of judgment, or that McVeigh's

military training had made him into a killer. McVeigh chose not to explain his actions. Instead of taking the traditional opportunity to make a final statement McVeigh gave prison officials a handwritten copy of a nineteenth century poem by William Henley, whose final stanza reads

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul. ²⁸

Both Henley and McVeigh were agnostics, and the earlier part of the poem has the poet refusing to quail as he faces whatever horrors may follow death. This feeling was obviously shared by the condemned man, but the motivations for Henley to write the poem and for McVeigh to adopt it differ. Henley was afflicted from a young age with the painful and crippling disease of tubercular arthritis, which necessitated the amputation of his lower left leg at the age of 16. In view of his physical suffering and loss of physical freedom it is easy to sympathise with his claim to total spiritual autonomy, in the form of an “unconquerable soul”. However twisted the motivation that led McVeigh to his appalling deed, the motivation was sufficiently strong to carry him through the planning and execution of the bombing, while knowing the consequences of his probable arrest, the whole summed up in his borrowing of Henley’s words as “the fell clutch of circumstance”, to be endured resolutely. Naturally, the normal third party reaction to McVeigh’s mass murder is that of outright condemnation, and it

is also likely that the reaction to McVeigh's choice of poem to serve as his last words is a repudiation of his defiance and inhuman callousness towards his victims. Yet, within the predominantly Christian context of the United States, despite McVeigh's rejection of Christianity, it is a tenet that the greatest forgiveness is reserved of necessity for the greatest sinners. This may be felt to be too generous for such a sinner, but in McVeigh's choice of this poem to speak for him I suspect that he found some consolation in poetry that he could not otherwise find, isolated as he was by the enormity of his deed from the rest of society, and from divine forgiveness.

It is time to turn to poetry's role, now as ever, to simply add pleasure to ordinary living. Or, at its least, to while away tedious times. There is still a surprisingly large conventional appetite for poetry in book form. Taking just one example, in 1986 the novelist Vikram Seth decided to publish a novel completely in verse rather than in prose, presumably rather a risky venture from a business point of view. However, *The Golden Gate: A Novel in Verse*²⁹ was reasonably successful, and is still in print. It is set in San Francisco, records the lives of yuppies and their pets, and is written in the form of 690 sonnets, of various moods.

Turning aside from the predictable location of poetry in books, modern lifestyles and life choices mean that poetry can be found in what initially seem surprising contexts. Poems on the (London) Underground began to appear in 1986. Poems appear in a few of the spaces normally dedicated to advertising posters, at standing eye height above the windows inside Underground trains. The poems (or extracts of poems) have to be short, to fit in the limited space allowed for posters (60cm wide and 28cm deep), and have to

be searched for: they are not in each carriage and so each poem represents a serendipitous find. The initial scheme was on an experimental basis, but so many commuters, including this writer, expressed their pleasure in finding nuggets of beautiful or memorable poetry amid the usual advertising dross, that the scheme has gone from strength to strength. The book of *Poems on the Underground* is now in its tenth edition (each edition growing thicker as more poems are added to the Tube collection), and in the Introduction to the ninth edition its three editors remark that, “The idea of poetry on public transport remains somewhat far-fetched, if not preposterous — and in this may lie its appeal. We have been credited in official Government surveys with inspiring a renewal of the art and appreciation of poetry; more people are writing poetry than ever before, more poetry titles are published, more poets are performing in pubs and shopping malls reciting alongside jazz bands and string quartets.”³⁰

Since its inception in London the notion of scattering poetry in public spaces has been adopted by mass transport systems in New York, Paris, Dublin, Stuttgart, Vienna, Barcelona, Athens, Shanghai, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Stockholm, Helsinki and Oslo. Poems can additionally be spotted on London buses, and in dozens of smaller cities in the UK and elsewhere. The editors also note that Poems on the Underground are “now assumed to be part of the urban landscape, a model for primary school projects and a subject for PhD theses in media studies and semiology.”³¹ In addition to being displayed on the Underground the poem posters, with the distinctive circle bisected by bar logo, are also collected in libraries (within the UK, and in British Council libraries internationally), schools, hospitals

and prisons (the latter two of which utilise the posters in their creative writing courses, offered as an aid to therapy and rehabilitation). The scheme has led to poetry readings and workshops for adults and children, new musical commissions inspired by the close links between poetry and song in some of the poems selected for the programme, competitions open to new poets, and various other activities, including a small literary contribution to the European Union — more usually associated with economic and political rather than cultural objectives — in the commissioning of new translations of poems by twentieth century European poets, to mark the British Presidency of the European Union. The poems so far selected have been old and modern, and well loved English favourites balanced by hitherto obscure poems, but the project is far from displaying a monopoly of English poetry. Caribbean poetry and European translations are well represented, and the editors are obviously diligent in their quest for inclusivity: I have enjoyed reading Russian, Chinese, ancient Greek and Sanskrit poetry, and more. When space allows the pleasure of the poetry is enhanced by the pairing of the original and its translation for non-English poems, illustrations, and reproductions of the poem in its author's handwriting, in its original script, or in its musical notation. The quirky appeal of this poetic project continues to create new ripples.

Dipping into its good humoured miscellany I offer some snippets from the poems that have given cultural sustenance to a couple of decades of London travellers: the West Indian poet Grace Nichols, who has made her home in England, has a poem with the opening lines,

transport systems, but the Underground is a relatively old fashioned communicative network. The internet offers instantaneous and global communicative potential, which can offer an even smoother ride to poetry. The internet is more conspicuous for the ease of communication it affords for business transactions, but commentators have remarked on the facilitation of established and new communities (political groups, religious groups, NGOs of various kinds, like-minded hobbyists) by the internet; if already established, their members can communicate more quickly and frequently, and, if new, members can use the internet to recruit each other.

An example of a new internet community would be Poets Against The War³⁴ of 2003. The genesis of this group is as follows. The American president's wife, Laura Bush, was a librarian before her marriage, and one of her priorities as First Lady has been to encourage reading and literacy. She invited well known writers to the White House on several occasions, and scheduled a symposium on poetry for 12 February, 2003. Invitations to poets had already been issued by the time American belligerence towards Iraq became ominous, and one of the poets, Sam Hamill, decided to decline the invitation as a gesture of protest, and instead collect some poems from a few poet friends, to speak for what he felt to be the true conscience of his country. Presumably he communicated with at least some of these friends by email, and they in turn passed on his idea to their acquaintances. 1,500 poets responded to him within four days, and a website was set up to handle the torrent of poems: <poetsagainsthewar.org>

The poetic response continued to be extraordinary; between the last week of January and 1 March, 2003 Hamill collected 13,000

poems, by nearly 11,000 poets, comprising well known poets and ordinary members of the public, ranging from 4 years old to 86 years old. Hamill attempted to deliver a part of his poem collection to the White House, but it was refused. However, on 5 March Hamill presented the poems to the US Congress. Hamill's campaign spread to other countries and other languages: poems protesting against the Iraq war and war in general have been presented to the governments of Britain, Australia, Turkey, Italy, France, Germany and Pakistan, and websites in French and Spanish followed the initial two English language sites in the USA and the UK. Anti-war poetry anthologies selecting poems from the websites were speedily published by May in the USA and the UK ³⁵.

The speed and volume of this international poetic response would not have been possible without the internet. Although the massed poets' gesture may have been considered as quixotic it won considerable publicity, and and somewhat alleviated the feeling of helplessness of ordinary citizens who would otherwise not have had a means of expressing their opposition to their governments' military aggression. Finally, the Poets Against the War phenomenon (which is still evolving) encapsulates various of the points I have raised so far, including the recent popular dimension of poetry, the symbiosis of traditional art forms and technical progress, and the interflow of national and global trends.

Activity such as that of Poets Against The War has an emphatically political dimension too, but this is again not a new trend in poetry. The British poet Byron (1788–1824) died as a result of his campaign to free Greece from the Turks, and his fellow Romantic poet Shelley (1792–1822) professed that “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators

of the world”³⁶ a sentiment first expressed by Samuel Johnson in 1759: “He [the poet] must write as the interpreter of nature, and the legislator of mankind and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations; as a being superior to time and place.”³⁷ This exalted notion of the poet’s calling has frequently been hotly disputed, not least by fellow poets. W.H. Auden (1907–1973) commented in his poems on the events of his times but concluded that “poetry makes nothing happen.”³⁸ The point can be argued both ways, but it should perhaps be noted that, in order to write poetry poets must be equipped with responsive minds and hearts, which in turn means that poets cannot help but be affected by what is happening in their environment and in their times, even if they choose to reflect this to a greater or lesser extent in their writings.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries a poet’s environment has become internationalised, but I suggest that a poet’s development begins in his or her childhood surroundings, and his or her awareness broadens to a national scope, with occasional forays into an international dimension. Shakespeare noted that “the poet’s pen ... gives to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name”³⁹, in other words, the poet responds to particularities, and the poetry will not be effective unless these particularities are conveyed to the reader or listener. A poet who follows this pattern of development is Seamus Heaney, who was born in Northern Ireland in 1939, and received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995. His much-anthologised poem “Blackberry-Picking” epitomises both autumn in the British Isles and the antics of children away from adult supervision:

Late August, given heavy rain and sun
For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.
At first, just one, a glossy purple clot
Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.
You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet
Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it
Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for
Picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger
Sent us out with milk-cans, pea-tins, jam-pots
Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots ... ⁴⁰

An Irish poet could not continue his career without reference to what are euphemistically called the Troubles of Northern Ireland, but the religious and political complications and the ferocity of all the conflicting factions endanger any would-be commentators. Heaney has negotiated the fraught field deftly by virtue of his oblique references, and the respect he has won from the Irish community in general by his attempts to give a fair hearing to all sides. His technique can be seen in the poem "Funeral Rites" when he indicates with a calm but critical eye what is wrong:

Now as news comes in
of each neighbourly murder
we pine for ceremony,
customary rhythms ... ⁴¹

He also distances the angry passions of the Irish moment by referring in several moving poems to the various ancient bodies which have been found preserved in peat bogs, and acknowledging the affinities that exist between these dead and the living. He sees,

but does not judge, their human weakness, because he confesses that he shares it. In the poem "Punishment" he contemplates with tender pity the mummified corpse of a woman who was probably executed for adultery before being thrown in the peat bog, and finally admits to the duality of his instincts — he too

... would connive
in civilized outrage
yet understand the exact
and tribal, intimate revenge. ⁴²

His scrupulous examination of the complexity of human motivation enables us to understand human guilt and extend our compassion to all the warring parties. Heaney knows that most people are not able to transcend their narrow tribal loyalties; these inevitably lead to rivalries but also provide our identities and rewards for existence. He pointed this out, with a welcome touch of humour, in his own case in 1983, when he sent a spirited verse letter to the editors of the *Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*, to object to his inclusion — as an Irishman — in that anthology:

Don't be surprised
If I demur, for, be advised
My passport's green.
No glass of ours was ever raised
To toast the Queen. ⁴³

This essay has visited various countries and languages, in the company of an assortment of poets, and gone on a deliberate quest

for poetry in unusual loci. It has found both evidence for a decline in some aspects of poetry, and, hearteningly, evidence of many vital new possibilities for poetry. This should not be surprising, given the investment of so much of our human identity in our thoughts and words. The restless innovation of the present era is sure to create further potential for poetry. To give a foretaste of future poetry I would like to conclude by quoting “Prologue”, by the young poet Patience Agbabi, born in 1965. Agbabi is an utterly new fashioned poet, who studied traditional English literature but is as influenced in her writing by contemporary rap ⁴⁴, urban living and computer technology. Agbabi is one of the new breed of poets committed to spreading poetry by means of workshops, particularly, in her case, for schoolchildren. She chose to be Poet in Residence at a London tattoo studio; her unconventional choice confirms my contention that poetry is versatile enough to flourish anywhere. “Prologue” displays the creative energy and exuberance with which poetry secures its place in the future:

Give me a word
any word
let it roll across your tongue
like a dolly mixture.
Open your lips
say it loud
let each syllable vibrate
like a transistor.
Say it again again again again
till it's a tongue twister
till its meaning is in tatters

till its meaning equals sound
now write it down,
letter by letter
loop the loops
till you form a structure.
Do it again again again again again
till it's a word picture.
Does this inspire?
Is your consciousness on fire?
Then let me take you higher.

Give me a noun
give me a verb
and I'm in motion
cos I'm on a mission
to deliver information
so let me take you to the fifth dimension.
No fee, it's free,
you only gotta pay attention.
So sit back, relax,
let me take you back
to when you learnt to walk, talk,
learnt coordination
and communication,
mama
dada.
If you rub two words together you get friction
cut them in half, you get a fraction.
If you join two words you get multiplication.
My school of mathematics
equals verbal acrobatics

so let's make conversation.

Give me a preposition
give me an interjection
give me inspiration.
In the beginning was creation
I'm not scared of revelations
cos I've done my calculations.
I've got high hopes
on the tightrope,
I just keep talking.
I got more skills than I got melanin
I'm fired by adrenaline
if you wanna know what rhyme it is
it's feminine.
Cos I'm Eve on an Apple Mac
this is a rap attack
so rich in onomatopoeia
I'll take you higher than the ozone layer.
So give me Word for Windows
give me 'W' times three
cos I'm on a mission
to deliver information
that is gravity defying
and I'll keep on trying
till you lose your fear of flying.

Give me a pronoun
give me a verb
and I'm living in syntax.
You only need two words to form a sentence.

I am I am I am I am I am
bicultural and sometimes clinical
my mother fed me rhymes through the umbilical,
I was born waxing lyrical.
I was raised on Watch With Mother
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
and Fight the Power.
Now I have the perfect tutor
in my postmodern suitor,
I'm in love with my computer.
But let me shut down
before I touch down.

Give me a word
give me a big word
let me manifest
express in excess
the M I X
of my voice box.
Now I've eaten the apple
I'm more subtle than a snake is.
I wanna do poetic things in poetic places.
Give me poetry unplugged
so I can counter silence.
Give me my poetic licence

and I'll give you metaphors that top eclipses
I'll give megabytes and megamixes.

Give me a stage and I'll cut form on it
give me a page and I'll perform on it.

Give me a word
any word. ⁴⁵

Notes

1. This essay is not directly relevant to Professor Nakamura Kei's field of expertise, but I have fond memories of keen discussions with him about the precise meanings of English words and katakana borrowings in Japanese, when he was as assiduous as a poet in teasing out all shades of nuance and identifying the absolute quiddity of a word, so I venture to hope that he will find some pleasure in this rambling rose of an essay on poetry.
2. *Satobito wa / ine ni uta yomu / miyako kana*
Village people
making poems in the paddies —
their own capital!
English translation from Steven D. Carter, *Traditional Japanese Poetry: An Anthology* (Stanford University Press, 1991). The original haiku may be found in Bashō's *Oi no Kobumi* (笈の小文).
3. *Shirushi naki / mono o omowazu wa / hitotsuki no / nigoreru sake o / nomu beku arurashi*
Instead of fretting
over things that can't be changed
how much better
to swallow down a full cup
of cloudy sake!
English translation from Steven D. Carter, *Traditional Japanese Poetry: An Anthology* (Stanford University Press, 1991). The original *Man'yōshū* tanka may be found in *Kokkatakaikan*, 338 (旧国歌大観, 338).
4. *Kono yo ni shi/ tanoshiku araba/ komu yo ni wa/ mushi ni tori ni mo/ ware wa narinamu*

If in this world
I can only enjoy myself,
then in the next world
let me be a bug or a bird —
it will not matter to me!

English translation from Steven D. Carter, *Traditional Japanese Poetry: An Anthology* (Stanford University Press, 1991). The original *Man'yōshū* tanka may be found in *Kokkatakaikan*, 348 (旧国歌大観, 348).

5. All artistic pursuits were also affected by other changes, such as the revolutions in scientific and religious thinking, but in order to confine this essay to a manageable length only technical and economic influences will be considered.

6. These particular boxes were on sale in Switzerland during the period 1999–2001 (at least). I have not been able to verify if they are still available for purchase.

7. The violins mingled their laughter with the song of the flutes
And the dancers were whirling when I saw her pass by
With her blonde hair caressing the helixes
Of her ear, where my Desire like a kiss
Sprang, wishing to talk to her, but did not dare....
And I believe that this was the advent of Passion.

(my translation) Extract from “Initium”, lines 1-5, and line 13. See Verlaine’s poem in full in Paul Verlaine, *Oeuvres Poétiques Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1962).

8. Pomegranates glow
Hot, like the lips of the night!
Red, like the love of the night!
Like my burning cheeks.

(my translation) Extract from “Die schwarze Bhowanéh”, lines 8-11. See Lasker-Schüler’s poem in full in Else Lasker-Schüler, *Gedichte 1902-1943* (München: Kösel Verlag, 1959).

9. and there is no caress
that remains unknown to you, not one.
Our intoxication reaches
To the sun and to the moon.
(my translation) Extract from “Invita alla fedeltà” lines 65-68. See d’Annunzio’s poem in full in Gabriele d’Annunzio, eds. Annamaria Andreoli and Niva Lorenzini, *Versi d’Amore e di Gloria, Vol. I* (Milano: Mondadori, I Meridiani, 1982).
10. See <<http://www.itoen.co.jp/new-haiku/index.html>>
11. The whole universe is utterly black —
but I am here.
(my translation) Source: Ito-en bottle of *ocha* (お茶), on sale in Japan in 2001.
12. Treading on acorns —
I forget how many of the stone steps I’ve climbed.
(my translation) Source: Ito-en bottle of *ocha* (お茶), on sale in Japan in 2003.
13. 太陽と夏風 影絵芝居をカーテンに
(uncredited translation appearing next to original haiku in English)
Source: The same bottle of Ito-en *ocha* (お茶) as in Note 11, supra.
14. Senryu are written in the same form as haiku, but are meant to be taken more lightly — they are written to amuse or satirise.
15. Two examples will be more than enough to show the typical verse included in greetings cards. Firstly, from a birthday card for a grandmother:
A Grandma who knows
how to brighten a day
with heartwarming smiles
and kind words to say —
A Grandma who’s warm,
understanding and dear ...

is a Grandma who's loved
even more every year.

(Hallmark card, on sale in the UK in 2001) The metre is, regrettably,
lamer in the second example, taken from a Valentine's Day card:

No one else could ever be
the special things you are to me
Or fill my days, my heart, my world,
so very happily.
No one else could comfort me
with just a look or touch,
Or make me laugh and help me
to enjoy life half so much ...

(Carlton card, on sale in the UK in 2001)

16. <<http://red11.org/mufc/songs.htm#players>>
17. *ibid.*
18. Emma Lazarus, ed. Gregory Eiselein, *Selected Poems and Other Writings* (Broadview Press, 2002). The sonnet is also reprinted on tourist postcards on sale in the souvenir shops on Liberty Island.
Incidentally, Emma Lazarus did not live to see her poem on the bronze plaque at the base of the plinth; she died in 1887, and the plaque was not affixed to the statue until 1901.
19. David Ignatius, "Some Difficult Things Are Easier Said in French" (*International Herald Tribune*, 23 April, 2001).
20. Greg Palast, "Asylum seekers? Try 'human capital'" (*The Observer*, reprinted in *The Guardian Weekly*, 7-13 June, 2001).
21. Both quotations are from Thylas Moss, "Miss Liberty Loses Pageant", in *Rainbow Remnants in Rock Bottom Ghetto Sky* (New York: Persea Books, 1991), p.53-54.
22. All the Maya Angelou quotations are from "The Pulse of Morning", the inaugural poem reprinted in the *Guardian Weekly* of 31 January,

- 1993, and also to be found in Maya Angelou, *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou* (New York: Random House, 1994).
23. Remuneration for the Poet Laureate, who is officially a member of the Royal Household, traditionally consists of one hundred pounds and a case of sherry per annum.
 24. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/child/story/0,7369,783923,00.html>>
 25. *ibid.*
 26. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/child/story/0,7369,783927,00.html>>
 27. A poem was also read out aloud for the other child, Jessica Chapman, but this poem, “Lord of Comfort”, was written by a friend of her family, recited by one of the police officers liaising with her family, and not quoted in newspaper reports. See <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/child/story/0,7369,783644,00.html>>
 28. The three quotations are taken from William Henley’s poem “Invictus” (published in 1875), the text of which can be found at <http://www.courtstv.com/news/mcveigh_special/invictus.html>, and details concerning Timothy McVeigh can be found at <http://www.courtstv.com/news/mcveigh_special/0611_execute_ctv.html>
 29. Vikram Seth, *The Golden Gate: A Novel in Verse* (New York: Random House, 1986).
 30. See *Poems on the Underground* (9th edition), edited by Gerard Benson, Judith Chernaik and Cicely Herbert, (London: Cassell, 1999).
 31. *ibid.*
 32. Grace Nichols (b.1950), “Like a Beacon”, p.29, *ibid.*
 33. John Keats (1795–1821), lines from “Endymion”, p.53, *ibid.*
 34. “The War” refers to the attack on Iraq by American and British military forces, whose invasion of Iraq commenced on 20 March, 2003. The build up to this war was considerable, perhaps predating President Bush’s January 2002 State of the Union address criticising the “axis of evil” (Iraq, Iran and North Korea), or even the American response to the al Qaeda terrorist attack of 11 September, 2001.

35. See *Poets Against The War*, edited by Sam Hamill et al (New York: Nation Books, 2003) and <<http://www.poetsagainsthewar.org>> for information concerning the Poets Against the War phenomenon.
36. See Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* (1821).
37. See Johnson's *Rasselas*.
38. See Auden's poem "In Memory of W.B. Yeats".
39. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c.1595), V.i.15-17.
40. Poem anthologised in *The Nation's Favourite Poems* (London: BBC, 1996), and collected in Seamus Heaney, *Opened Ground: Selected Poems 1966-1996* (London: Faber, 1998).
41. In Seamus Heaney, *Selected Poems 1965-1975* (London: Faber, 1980).
42. *ibid.*
43. See "An Open Letter", reprinted in *Ireland's Field Day* (London: Hutchinson, 1985). At that time Irish and British passports were different colours, although now both share the same colour, designated by the European Union.
44. Rap music, which started in the African-American community, is characterised by its strong rhythm and witty lyrics, which are often composed on a spontaneous basis, particularly if there is a "duel" between two rappers. Rap poetry has evolved to stand independently of rap music, and as such harks back to the early oral traditions of poetry.
45. See Patience Agbabi, *Transformatrix* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2000).