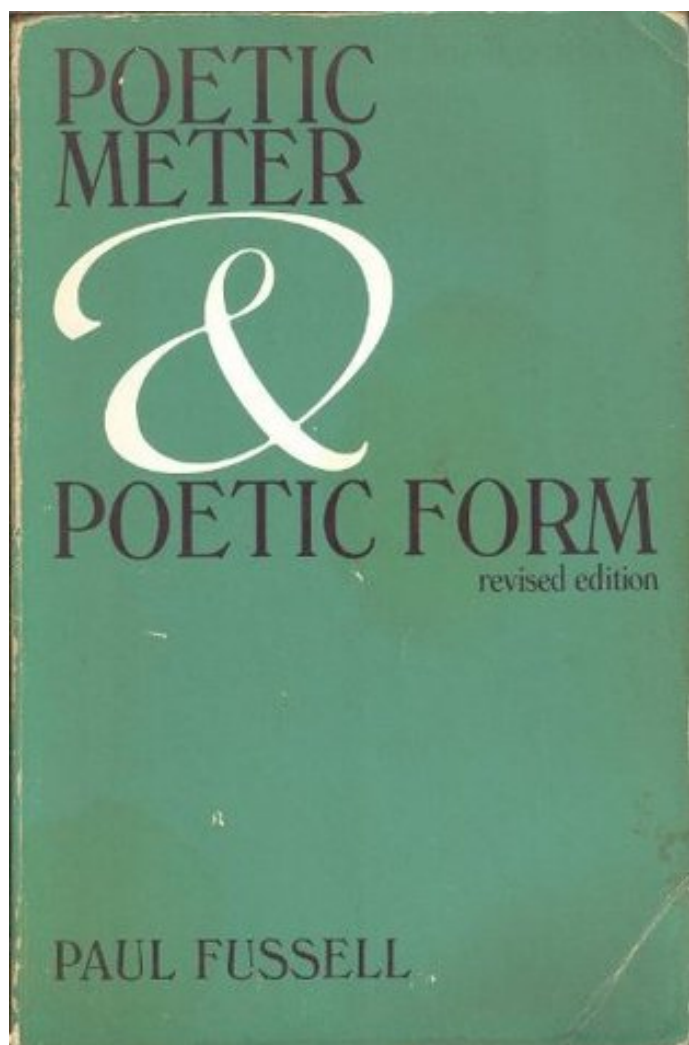


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**Paul Fussell**

**Poetic Meter and Poetic Form**



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Author: Paul Fussell

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## Insightful reviews

Maureen: I like this reference book on Poetry. I referred to it frequently.

Tiffany: Revisiting the classic! Worth the respect due our elders, who will always have worked harder than we and proceeded more responsibly in structuring knowledge.

That said, I did laugh at a number of lines--PF is quite witty, yes, but I laughed as much at some of the sheer pluck of schematic meaning assignation and then of concomitant evaluative gouging: "What he produces is very nice, but his stanza surely lacks the dense organism that attaches to a permanent poem."

What intrigues me here is the sense that a relationship to meter and form is a relationship both to PERMANENCE and meaningfulness in the world. He actually says that excellence of formal technique rescues "poems from oblivion" (154). As an amateur theologian, I find this difficult to believe.

And I'm not the only one bringing up theology here: on the departure from standard forms in 20th century literature, even Fussell gets almost theological: "Some kind of meaningful repetition would seem to be required to save a poem from oblivion. The challenge to contemporary poetry would seem to be a pair of unhappy alternatives; either to contrive new schemes of empirically meaningful repetition that reflects and--more importantly--transmit the color of contemporary experience; or to recover schemes that have reflected the experience of the past. To do the first would be to imply that contemporary experience has a pattern, a point that most post-Christian thinkers would deny. To do the second would be to suggest that the past can be recaptured, to suggest that the intolerable fractures and dislocations of modern history have not really occurred at all, or, what is worse, to suggest that they may have occurred but that poetry should act as if they have not. between these two demands of accuracy of registration on the one hand, and aesthetic organization, on the other, we seem to find no technique of RECONCILIATION: we yield now to the one demand, now to the other, producing at times a formless and artistically incoherent reflection--accurate in its way--of some civil or social or psychological reality, and at times a shapely and coherent work of art which is

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necessarily an inexact report on the state of affairs, not to mention the state of language and meaning and coherence in our time. . . .What is wanted is the sort of reconciliation between them that could be effected by another Yeats" (152-153).

I'm after reconciliation, too. Of another sort, I expect. The reader's, too.

Heather June Gibbons: Indispensable. Wish I could find a reasonably priced copy of this-- it's out of print, and the library made me give it back.

Mike: Fussell has a very good grip on easy forms, particularly in the global of formal (i.e. metrical and/or rhymed) verse, and when you have no idea concerning the subject, he will teach you. That said, there are major problems, to my mind. The lesser one is a glut of examples, which are inclined to beat a useless horse -- we get it, Paul, adequate already. The larger challenge is Fussell's seen distaste at no cost verse. Sure, he devotes a little time to it, however it reads as though it is out of obligation, and as though he quite does not comprehend what he is conversing about.

Donna Rae: a needs to learn for any poet, Fussell is smug yet worthy it

Andrew: cut up into major sections, Meter and shape (per the title). The meter part used to be useful, but, as one other reviewer the following has stated, suffers from a glut of examples. It drags on a bit. I came across the shape part the higher of the two: discussions of line, rhyme, stanza, and a range of ordinary forms, akin to the sonnet (of course).

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