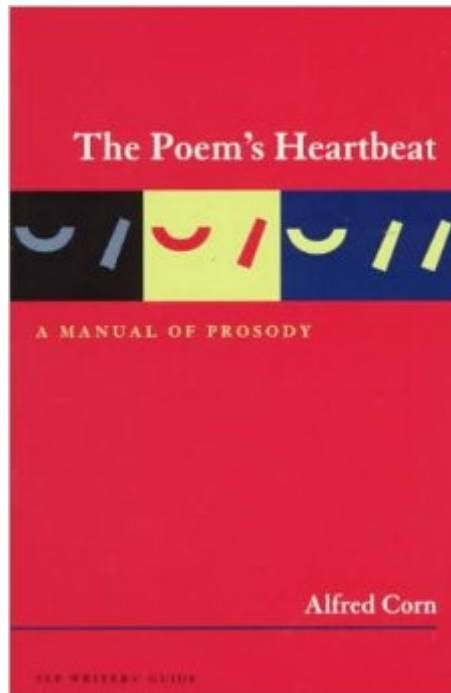


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# The Poem's Heartbeat: A Manual Of Prosody, Revised Edition (Story Line Press Writer's Guides)



## Synopsis

The Poem's Heartbeat is a progressive, step-by-step introduction to prosody--the art and science of metrical composition in poetry. This second edition includes a new appendix of sample scansion, and a comprehensive index of poets and poems cited. "This intelligent, user-friendly book is a quality guide to rhyme, rhythm, meter, and form for students, experienced readers, and practitioners of poetry... The Poem's Heartbeat may well be the finest general book available on prosody."-Library Journal (starred review) "In lucid prose, Corn clears a straight path through the scansion of quantitative verse and free verse... A provocative, definitive manual on meter."Publishers Weekly "A lively and well-informed primer to prosody, a current hot topic in poetic studies. Corn's aim is to introduce the novice poet or student to the vocabulary and understanding of English prosody, from its basic rules and definitions to the complexities of how sound is measured in poetry. Recommended for all academic libraries, this book could only have been written by someone who cares about the details, the relation of sound to sense, and fine, clear expression."-Choice "The Poem's Heartbeat triumphs over the dryness-or supposed dryness-of the subject, treating every aspect of it with precision, dispatch, and apt illustration. That it is sorely needed in the present footless state of things goes without saying."-Richard Wilbur

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have accumulated five HOW TO books on writing poetry - Rules of the Dance - Making your own

Days - The Art of Poetry Writing - In the Palm of Your Hand - and The Poem's Heartbeat - A Manual of Prosody. The first four books are very good and certainly worth reading. However, I found more in this book than all the other books put together. I took Corn's book and several other poetry titles on vacation and wound up reading this book through three times in seven days and barely looked at the other books. It is the epitome of a HOW TO book written by a poet/teacher who has learned his craft thoroughly. Well written, easy to understand, Corn holds the reader's interest through the entire 161 pages. The chapter on Metrical variations alone is worth the price of the book. If you like to read poetry, this book will help you understand poetry from Medieval to Post Modern, and if you write poetry, as I do, this is a must have manual.

This (sub)titles itself "A Manual of Prosody", as it indeed is. Actually, it is a manual of the dominant prosody of the English-speaking world since 1500 or so, the accentual-syllabic sort. Other possible prosodic disciplines, such as accentual, durational, and syllabic, are mentioned and briefly exemplified, but finally are dismissed as antique or foreign. Which they are: there is little point, in a book that is not a treatise, in taking up such matters. So, as a manual on English-language prosody (and, to a lesser extent, verse forms), how is it? Not bad, actually: it's an easy read, and its points about varying stress levels in iambic lines are illuminating. The book introduces technical terms as it goes along, but makes no effort to highlight them. Some are indexed, but not all, so a glossary would be helpful. On a couple of occasions I found myself puzzled at his use of terms. He had covered them, but in a low-key way, and there was no easy way to get back to the discussions other than by searching through unmarked text. His discussion of free verse is general and, appropriately, he talks mostly about what it is not, since it does not follow the rules of traditional prosody. (Someone else will have to tell me what it is.) This book would be more helpful with visual aids. The parts of a verse line could be illustrated, and various verse forms entabled. A glossary or detailed index that allowed one to go from a poem that one is trying to analyze to a discussion of relevant points would be nice, as would a few sample deconstructions of real poems. Having said that, I do think that the author has achieved his stated aim of writing an introductory work on the subject, presupposing no, or little, prior knowledge. He includes fragments of poetry to illustrate his points, but not terribly much. One should probably reinforce what he says with readings from some anthology of classic poems.

I've read a few of these 'manuals on prosody' and I found Corn's to be one of the better ones. He writes in an easy to understand style that would help any beginner. He covers everything pretty well.

I still prefer Fussell's *Poetic Meter & Poetic Form* and Tim Steele's *All the Fun's in How You Say a Thing* (though Corn's is written in an easier style, Fussell and Steele are more comprehensive), but I'd recommend this to those who want to learn how to write in meter and form.

The best way to craft quality poetry is to read the masters, present and past:

Hardy, Frost, Yeats, Auden, Masfield, C.S. Lewis, Wilbur, Steele, Gioia, et al. The best way to read the masters is to have an outstanding guide like this one, or Timothy Steele's *"All the Fun's In How You Say a Thing"*, both must-have companions for the serious composer of metered/rhymed poetry. Alfred Corn has done New Formalism poetry a massive favor with this book. How does Thomas Hardy get his *Darkling* Thrush to sing so melodiously, flinging his soul into the air? Read this volume and find out how Hardy masters end rhyme using subtle variation of one, two and three syllable words of different parts of speech: noun, verb, adjective, etc. How does Frost rivet our attention with his *Road Less Taken*? Metrical variation, not sing-song monotony, as Corn masterfully explains. How does Auden leave indelible impressions in the reader's memory with his villanelle 'If I Could Tell You'? Corn sketches the poetic canvass for the careful reader to see the brush-strokes, tones, textures, context, colors, etc. To be a better poet, or to be a more appreciative reader of the great poets and discern what doesn't quite measure up, get this book and Steele's *"All the Fun"*. Also, anything by Richard Wilbur would be essential to explore the mind of the master of the 21st Century: *Prose Pieces*, *Catbird's Song*, *Mayflies*. Enjoy!

The title does more justice than the subtitle. Such a pleasure to read, poet Corn's guide to understanding the 'beat' of poetry never leaves the reader in 'manual' tedium. Instead he entertains with the lively varieties that 'feet' can dance in different poetic styles. Realizing the poets and poetry lovers generally appreciate both words and history, Corn introduces terms through intriguing tidbits about their etymology and resulting connotations (e.g., verse from turning - like plowed rows; line from linen thread; text from textile; iamb from Greek to assail). Likewise, he shows the power of different metrical patterns in daily speech and variations thereof - thus helping the strange pedilections of poets make a little more sense. The focus is \*English\* language verse, but Corn also includes enough cross-cultural references to help us appreciate our differences and commonalities with the ancients and other moderns. Yes, it is a manual in the sense of providing a thorough understanding of how and why poetry meters (and sometimes doesn't); but Corn is a poet and here enhances a student's love of verse through deeper understanding, even for the technical underpinnings. A HIGHLY recommended and DELIGHTFUL book.

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