


What is Poetry?: Language and Memory in the Poems of the World

By Nigel Fabb



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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 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.

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Review

"Truly interesting and valuable. Fabb is clearly one of the leading experts in the poetics of the world."
Joel Sherzer, University of Texas, Austin

"Ranges impressively and informatively across a wide range of languages, exploring the means by which their poets organize the rhythms and sounds of speech into verse."

Timothy Steele, poet

About the Author

Nigel Fabb is Professor of Literary Linguistics at the University of Strathclyde.

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