

**TE'UDA**

XXX

POETIC STRUCTURE, COGNITIVE PROCESSES  
AND LITERARY INTUITION  
Studies in Honor of Professor Reuven Tsur



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THE CHAIM ROSENBERG SCHOOL OF JEWISH STUDIES  
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AND LITERARY INTUITION**

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Editors

Idit Einat-Nov

Uriah Kfir



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## Abstracts

### **Confuse Me: Acoustic Confusion as Poetic Disruption**

Roi Tartakovsky, Tel Aviv University

In this article I develop and exemplify the notion that sound can potentially have a disruptive effect on the semantic workings of a poem. Much previous work has been dedicated to showing the power of the sound stratum to illustrate, illuminate and accompany the poem's "sense," and some attention has been devoted to the possibility that sound is simply neutral, neither particularly aiding nor disrupting meaning. In contrast, relatively little attention has been paid to the ways in which sound can interfere with the mechanics of sense-making. I attempt to fill this void by demonstrating how *acoustic confusion* plays out in poems. Long recognized as a robust finding in research on short-term memory, acoustic confusion occurs when the individual is exposed to sequences of words that entail phonemic overlap. The result of this exposure can be an eroding of the distinctive features of words, so that they become blurred and are difficult to reproduce or disentangle. Poetry of different schools and styles is notorious for making use of a whole host of sound-based poetic devices, which are partially subsumed under the headings of rhyme and (within medieval Hebrew poetry) *šimud*. Using the umbrella term of acoustic confusion, I demonstrate how the disruption of the typical mechanisms of encoding or retrieving words is exploited by three Hebrew language poets: Benjamin Shvili, T. Carmi and Efrat Mishori.

### **Voice Quality in Poetry Reading and its Effect on the Listening Experience**

Chen Gafni, University of Haifa

The poetic text is ontologically incomplete by nature. That is, there are elements that are not defined in the text, and are left open to interpretation. Such undefined elements can be expressed in vocal performance by various means, including voice quality. In this paper, I discuss a certain "softened"

voice quality used by some poetry reciters for emotive expression. This voice quality can express a range of emotions, attitudes, and states of mind, including *contemplation*, *affection*, and *yearning*, depending on the context. I describe an experimental study investigating the emotive qualities of the softened voice quality. In the experiment, listeners evaluated the mood or state of mind conveyed in short excerpts from recorded recitals of “Kubla Khan” by two professional actors. The results suggest that listeners are sensitive to the softened voice quality and share similar impressions of its emotive effect. Thus, this study illustrates how voice quality can be used to convey the reciter’s interpretation of the poem. This study also makes a methodological contribution to literary criticism. By combining open-ended evaluations and numerical evaluations of the same items, a detailed description of the emotive qualities of the performance can be obtained that is also amenable to statistical analysis. In other words, this methodology provides a possible solution to the issue of combining a qualitative and a quantitative approach in a single study.

### **The Dual Facet of Expertise: The Effects of Experience in Reading Literature on Aesthetic Judgment**

Amir Harash, Tel Aviv University; Yeshayahu Shen, Tel Aviv University

Previous research has found associations between viewers’ expertise (or experience) and their aesthetic appreciation of complex (visual) artwork. Such stable associations have not been reported for literature. We suggest that three potential methodological factors might be responsible for this lack of association: the evaluation of aesthetic appreciation, the evaluation of literary expertise, and text difficulty.

We then describe a novel experiment implementing a “semantic noise” scale to assess disruptions and difficulties encountered when decoding text, using current techniques for measuring aesthetic appreciation and literary expertise. Aside from replicating previous findings on the relationship between expertise and aesthetic appreciation, this analysis also revealed that readers with medium expertise in literature had lower aesthetic ratings than readers low on expertise. This may imply that expertise could also be a disadvantage in that it may increase readers’ confusion and interfere with their aesthetic appreciation.



We suggest these findings may be accounted for by assuming two distinct components of literary expertise: the ability to detect linguistic deviations and problems in the text, and the ability to accommodate them successfully. We interpret the results in terms of these two factors.

### **The Coexistence of Similarity and Disparity: The Notions of Similarity and Disparity as Experienced through Metaphoric Reading**

Motti Benari, Independent Scholar

Literary research has given little consideration to the coexistence of the contradictory notions of similarity and disparity evoked in the mind by metaphoric organs through metaphoric reading. How can the same metaphoric organs elicit both the impression of similarity and the impression of disparity, without one dominating the other? This paper responds to the handful of studies on this topic and shows that their arguments cannot provide a coherent compelling explanation for this phenomenon. It presents an alternative hypothesis, based on the distinction in the field of visual similarities, between holistic similarity and attribute similarity. I describe these distinct categories and illustrate their presence in metaphoric utterances.

Specifically, I argue that during the meaning-production process, both categories of similarities are involved. The lesser the impression of holistic similarity, the greater the impression of attribute similarity and the more the metaphor is considered apt. Thus, since holistic similarity is perceived earlier, a lack of holistic similarity between metaphoric organs evokes an early impression of dissimilarity/disparity. Only in a later stage, when the attribute similarity is perceived, does the impression of similarity emerge. Since there are two distinct types of similarities, the similarity that emerges later does not nullify the earlier notion of disparity.

### **The Journey towards Asymmetry: How Language Affects Thought**

David Gil, The Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History; Yeshayahu Shen, Tel Aviv University

This paper presents a preliminary and tentative formulation of a new empirical generalization governing the relationship between grammar and cognition across a variety of independent domains. Its point of departure is an abstract distinction between *symmetric* and *asymmetric* cognitive structures. Although

in principle any feature whatsoever can introduce asymmetry, this paper focuses on one specific feature, namely *thematic-role assignment*. The main empirical finding concerns the role of language or more specifically grammar, in effecting and maintaining the distinction between symmetric and asymmetric cognitive structures. Whereas symmetric structures devoid of thematic-role assignment occur more commonly in a non-grammatical and usually also non-verbal medium, asymmetric structures involving thematic-role assignment are more likely to be associated with a grammatical medium.

This work draws on three independent strands of empirical research associated with three diverse phenomenological domains: *compositional semantics*, *metaphors* and *schematological hybrids*. These three domains instantiate conceptual combinations that bring two or more subordinate entities together into a single superordinate entity. For compositional semantics this consists of a juxtaposition of constituent signs to form a single more complex sign; for metaphors this entails the bringing together of two different concepts to produce a comparison. For schematological hybrids this involves the combination of different entities to form a single new hybrid entity.

The empirical results reveal a remarkable parallelism between these three domains. Within each domain, symmetric structures tend to be associated with a non-verbal or otherwise non-grammatical medium, while asymmetric structures are more frequently associated with a grammatical medium. Thus, within each domain, grammar introduces asymmetry. More specifically, in all three domains, the asymmetry involves the assignment of thematic roles. To capture this effect, two distinct levels, or tiers of cognition are posited: *non-grammatical cognition*, which is more commonly associated with symmetric structures, and *grammatical cognition* which is more conducive to asymmetric structures. Within each of these three phenomenological domains, the distinction between non-grammatical and grammatical cognition is manifested in three independent realms, *phylogeny*, *ontogeny*, and the *architecture* of human cognition.

### **A Linguistic View of Bialik's Poetic Language of the Senses**

Tamar Sovran, Tel Aviv University

This paper applies linguistic methodology to shed light on some traits of H.N. Bialik's poetic lexicon. At a time when Hebrew was not yet a spoken

language, Bialik's linguistic and poetic genius enabled it to express thoughts, sensations, sights and emotions in an unprecedented way. Bialik had vast intimate knowledge of all layers of Hebrew scripture. Yet he used these treasures in an innovative and unique way that liberated poetic Hebrew from the 'prison' of quotations, the main characteristic of his predecessors. He expressed the intimate personal experiences and sensations of the child and the adult with vocabulary drawn from traditional Hebrew. I focus on two short abstract rhyming nouns: *Rox* – softness, and *Zox* – purity, innocence. Literally and metaphorically, these two nouns describe a whole host of new experiences of nature as well as the inner soul. They are associated with lambs, grass, youth, the rays of the sun, poems, and more. *Rox* is directly related to the sense of touch, and evokes emotions of intimacy and enjoyment, while *Zox* is more abstract, and is associated with sight as well as with the realm of morals and holiness. Bialik links it to his childhood, to prayers, and to luminous sprites (“the sunlight's bright zephyrs”) (*zafirrim*), etc. Bialik's ingenuity enabled Hebrew to express personal emotional states and a vast array of sensory impressions. The discussion centers on the ways in which Bialik's original modes of expression freed poetic Hebrew from the heavy impersonal heritage of Enlightenment poetry, and provided new directions for his followers.

### **There the Moon is Flaming like the Kiss of a Cook: Nathan Alterman's Poetic Construction of Similes and Metaphors**

Ziva Shamir, Tel Aviv University and Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya

In his important and innovative book *On Metaphoring* (1987), Reuven Tsur discusses issues of semantic information processing and poetic language. He suggests that enigmatic similes such as “There the moon is flaming like the kiss of a cook” (or “like the kiss of a kitchen maid”) from Alterman's well-known poem “An Everlasting Rendezvous” is a modernistic simile. These similes did not exist in Hebrew literature prior to the emergence of the Shlonsky-Alterman school, and their “markedness” is a symptom of a state of disintegration. In previous generations, the similes and metaphors of most Hebrew poets represented an integral and unified world, whereas Alterman depicted a world in which “things fall apart” (to cite Yeats' “The Second Coming”).

Reuven Tsur claims that the modernistic effect of this simile derives from Alterman's marked usage of metaphors and similes. The reader is given superfluous information about the word "kiss" but not the substantive information needed to interpret the next phrase ("the kiss of a cook"). Since the text does not supply the information to understand these similes, it disorients the reader.

Tsur's analysis is based on cognitive poetics. This paper sheds light on this specific simile and its "neighbors" using several other textual and contextual approaches to enable Alterman's readers to decipher some of his latent ideas (which will however remain forever partly cryptic). Alterman's essay "On the Ambiguous Nature of Poetry" suggests that Alterman used his enigmatic language systematically and deliberately, rather than randomly, thus leaving it up to his readers to solve his riddles with their extra-literary knowledge, their imagination and their intuition.

### **The Story of Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish's Young Son (Bavli Taanit 9a)**

Ronit Shoshany, Bar Ilan University

The story in *Bavli Taanit 9a* describes two encounters between the late Resh Lakish's young son and his uncle Rabbi Yohanan. This paper presents a close reading of the story, and also examines its place in the immediate context of a sequence of sayings of Rabbi Yohanan, and in the wider context of stories about Rabbi Yohanan in the Babylonian Talmud. It is argued that this story is a mirror image of the famous story of Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish (*Bavli Bava Metzia 84a*).

### **"Binding rather than Dividing, Extending rather than Ceasing": Diarisis in Spanish Hebrew Poetry**

Uriah Kfir, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

The starting point of my inquiry is Judah Halevi's attack on the Arabic-quantitative-prosodic system in medieval Hebrew poetry, and in particular the tension (that exists in every prosodic system) between a poem's rhythm and syntax. Specifically, this article addresses the tension between the boundaries of a word or a conjunction and the boundaries of the metric foot. The key prosodic term is *diaresis*; i.e., a natural rhythmic break in a verse when the end of a foot coincides with the end of a word. This article

describes the presence of diuresis in medieval Spanish Hebrew poetry, which is alternately preserved or disrupted, and addresses it statistically by examining specific metric patterns and their distributions. The core of the article presents analyses of representative poetic examples through the lens of prosodic approaches such as cognitive poetics. One of the key issues is the effect of diuresis: does it reinforce the literal meaning of the verse (as implied by Judah Halevi) or does it downplay words in favor of the rhythm? My working assumption is that diuresis dictates a dramatic reading which emphasizes each word or conjunction separately, and thus creates rhythmic expectations that are always fulfilled in a monotonic routine. However, for this precise reason, once the diuresis is disrupted—whether in a local, specific junction or in larger units within the poem—the readers' attention is drawn to it and they are forced to devote more attentional efforts to the reading process. This is why diuresis can also impact the interpretation of the poem.

### **The Grotesque Look: A Reading of the Third Maqama in Yehuda Al-Ḥarizi's *Sefer Tahkemoni***

Idit Einat-Nov, Kibbutzim College of Education, Technology and the Arts, and Tel Aviv University

This paper proposes a new reading of “The Poets of Andalus”, one of the best-known *maqamas* in Yehuda Al-Ḥarizi's *Sefer Tahkemoni*. This reading derives from the hypothesis that this art of storytelling is based on a poetic principle of uncertainty, and is therefore associated with the various forms of the ambiguous and the ambivalent (the grotesque, the uncanny, the ironic, etc.). As I have argued elsewhere about other rhymed Hebrew stories, this approach is appropriate, in my view, to the character of some of the most fascinating rhymed stories produced in medieval Hebrew literature. In the present study I suggest yet another demonstration of the poetic benefit that can accrue from the adoption of this approach.

### **The Dao Flickering through Words: A Close Reading of Chapter Fourteen of the *Dao de jing* according to the Principles of Cognitive Poetics**

Sivan Wagshal Teeni, Independent Scholar

This article examines a well-known classical Chinese text, the *Dao-de jing*, from an innovative perspective. Are we presented here with a fishnet which,

in the words of Zhuangzi, can be cast aside after the fish has been caught, or are the words and unique structures of the text of no less importance than the message it conveys, whatever it may be? The purpose of this essay is to see how to apply the principles of cognitive poetics as developed by Tsur and his students to this Chinese text. It focuses on a close reading of Chapter 14 of the *Dao de jing*, based on Dan Daor's and Yoav Ariel's translation into Hebrew to show how the text uses literary devices and structures to convey a hidden philosophical message to the reader, how opaque words and fuzzy sentences make it possible to understand the ineffable, and how concepts such as *Dim* and *Hazy*, and expressions such as *Continuing Without End* and *Returns to Nothing* enable the *Dao* to flicker through the words.

### **Grotesque Reflections: Writing the Occupation through the Eyes of the Palestinian Other**

Adia Mendelson-Maoz, The Open University of Israel

The article reads works by Israeli Jewish authors who ostensibly give voice to Palestinian elders, women and children, and depict their suffering under the Occupation. I discuss the cultural and ethical issues surrounding the appropriation of the voice of the subaltern by the conqueror, and analyze the authors' esthetic choices, such as the use of the grotesque and unrealistic spaces.

Moral philosophy has often engaged with the notion of "point of view" by examining its claim of objectivity and its problematization. Thomas Nagel, for instance, chose the title *The View from Nowhere* for his 1986 book in which he articulates the theoretical assumption that ethical questions should be addressed from a neutral point of view. Although it is clear that this type of stance is impractical in real life, fiction provides a unique opportunity to switch perspectives and adopt different points of view. The power of bringing the Other's story is discussed in this article by focusing on the authors' choice to abandon a causal linear narrative for non-realistic, mostly grotesque writing. This article analyzes three texts: David Grossman's *Hiyukh ha-gdi* (*The Smile of the Lamb*, 1983), Dror Green's *Agadot ha-intifada* (*The Intifada Tales*, 1989) and Itamar Levy's *Otiyot ha-shemesh, otiyot ha-yare'ah* (*Letters of the Sun, Letters of the Moon*, 1991).

**“Yoke-Weary, Heavy-Boned, with Ponderous Trend”: On the Contribution of Syntax, Rhythm and Intonation to Readers’ Experience in H.N. Bialik’s Long Poem “My Father”<sup>1</sup> – A Lecture in Honour of Reuven Tsur**

Harai Golomb, Tel Aviv University

The goal of this study is to demonstrate how syntactically generated suprasegmentals and segmentational ambiguities **can** affect and control imagined and internally-experienced intonation in readers’ minds, thereby merging a poem’s fictional world with a reader’s own potentially-physical reading process. In “My Father”, a long poem by H.N. Bialik (1873–1934, a towering figure in modern Hebrew poetry), intonation curves are carefully manipulated by the poet’s powerful yet tensely restrained syntactic strategies. The poem abounds in complex sentences, whose **initial** subordinate clauses create dynamic unease, anticipating main clauses, occasionally withheld for as long as a dozen of long lines. These subordinate clauses are almost invariably followed and separated by commas, until a long overdue full-stop appears far down the textual road. This is especially effective in the formation of the poem’s central image — a “Homeric simile” equating its hero, the father of its first-person speaker, with an ox of mythical proportions, incessantly dragging a wagon (equated to the father’s life) in an endless uphill journey. The father, a man of elevated spirituality, is compelled to grunt and sweat under a weary life, never blessed with rest or relaxation, as his family’s breadwinner who manages a tavern, serving despicable blaspheming drunkards. His daily-death kind of life ends when his heart finally breaks.

Another effect of the same syntactic strategy is **fake-biblicality**: disguised as comprising numerous biblical parallelisms, the poem actually substitutes its hypotactic sentences for the bible’s typically paratactic ones. Finally, the readers are shown to be forced, as it were, to almost physically sense the father’s day-to-day toil and drudgery through their own trials and tribulations as breathless reciters of endless sentences with frustrating half-pauses of false allure. The readers’ final rest, their full stop, coincides with the father’s abrupt death and the tense description of his grave and tombstone.

- 1 The title of the abstract is based on the translation of Bialik’s “My Father” published in *Chaim Nachman Bialik: Selected Poems*, Bilingual Edition, translated by Ruth Nevo (Dvir, 1981), pp. 84–89.

## **I Will Flee from Thee: On Reuven Tsur's Escape from the Ghetto – Memoirs**

Ilana Rosen, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

This article presents a literary-cultural analysis of Reuven Tsur's Holocaust memoir *Escape from the Ghetto - Memoirs*. Tsur's memoir describes his coming of age in the Hungary and Romania of World War II and the Holocaust. The high point of the narrative is Tsur's description of his amazing escape along with his parents and sister from their Hungarian hometown of Nagyvárad (presently Romanian Oradea) after the liquidation of the ghetto and the deportation of most of its Jews to Auschwitz. This article first surveys the history of the Holocaust of the Hungarian Jews, focusing on the region of Erdély/Transylvania, where Nagyvárad is located. It then discusses the documentary memoir genre and explores its popularity among Holocaust survivors, including several members of Tsur's intellectual circle who hail from Central Europe. The article then examines Tsur's extraordinary escape and rescue narrative and the ways in which he retells and conceptualizes it fifty years later.