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R. Tsur, Poetic Rhythm : An Empirical Study in Cognitive Poetics

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Poetic
Rhythm

Structure and Performance

An Empirical Study in
Cognitive Poetics

R. Tsur, *Poetic Rhythm : An Empirical Study in Cognitive Poetics*, Eastbourne, Sussex Academic Press, 2012, 2nd Ed. 2015, 460 p.

► This research is an instrumental investigation of a theory of rhythmical performance of poetry, originally propounded speculatively in the author's Perception-Oriented Theory of Metre (1977). "Iambic pentameter" means that there is a verse unit consisting of an unstressed and a stressed syllable (in this order), and that the verse line consists of five such units. In the first 165 verse lines of *Paradise Lost* there are two such lines. The theory takes up one of the central issues in metrical studies : all criteria for metricality hitherto proposed have been violated by the greatest masters of musicality in English poetry. This theory assumes that when the versification patterns and linguistic patterns conflict, they can be accommodated in a pattern of "Rhythmical Performance" - namely one in which the conflicting patterns are simultaneously perceptible. There are scales of mounting difficulties of mismatches, on which each poet (and each theorist) draws at different points the boundary of what is acceptable. This research submits to computer analysis recordings of some of the greatest English poetry, by Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Keats and others, comparing readings by leading British actors and colleagues from the academy. Professor Tsur's revised and expanded edition also exploits recent software developments, which make it possible to electronically manipulate existing recordings and compare versions with subtle differences.

► **Reuven Tsur** who was awarded the Israel Prize for his work in Literary Theory, is Professor Emeritus of Hebrew Literature and Cognitive Poetics at Tel Aviv University, and Middle East vice president of the International Association of Empirical Aesthetics. His books include *"Kubla Khan" - Poetic Structure, Hypnotic Quality and Cognitive Style : A Study in Mental, Vocal, and Critical Performance* ; *On the Shore of Nothingness : Space, Rhythm, and Semantic Structure in Religious Poetry and its Mystic-Secular Counterpart - A Study in Cognitive Poetics* ; and *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics*.