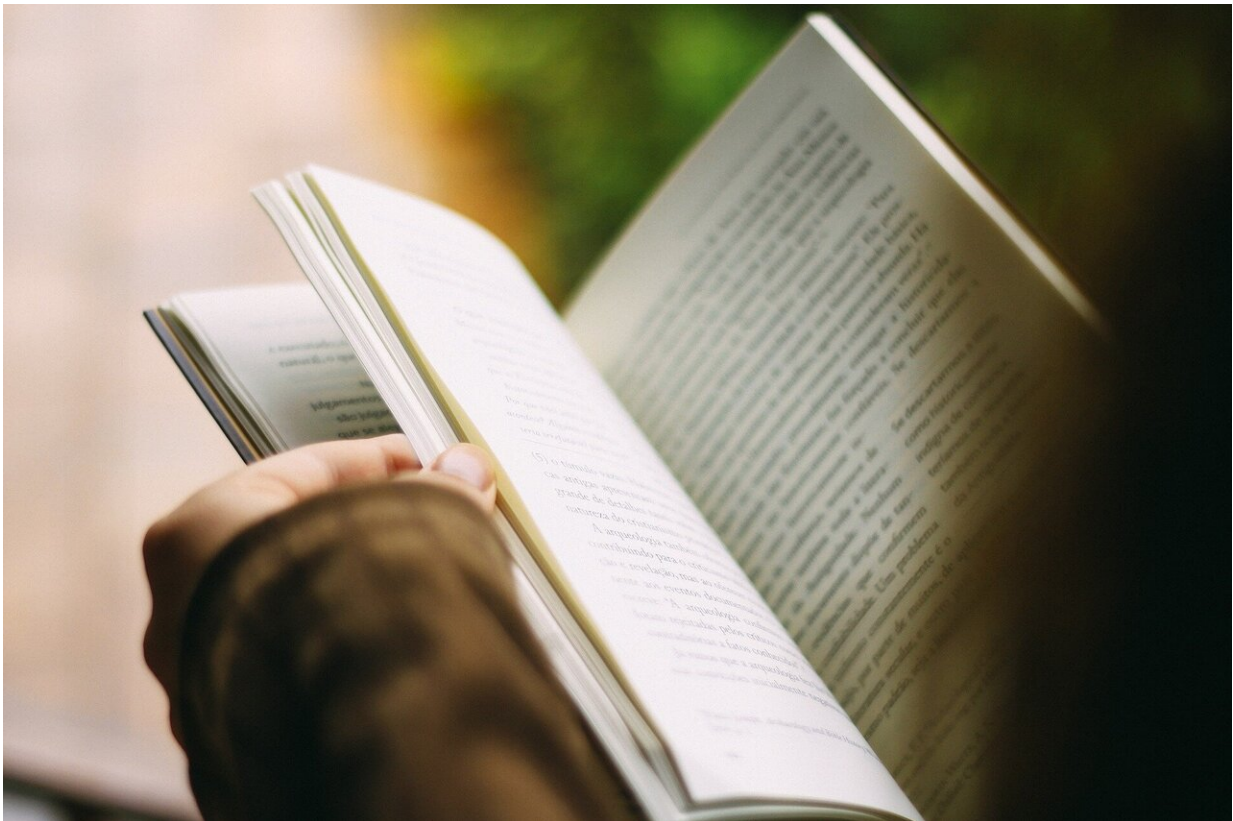


Examining the sensations experienced when reading poetry

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In addition to searching for the meaning of poems, they can also often be described through the emotions that the reader feels while reading them. Kristiine Kikas, a doctoral student at the School of Humanities of

Tallinn University, studied which other sensations arise whilst reading poetry and how they affect the understanding of poems.

The aim of the [doctoral thesis](#) was to study the palpability of [language](#), i.e. sensory saturation, which has not found sufficient analysis and application so far. "In my research, I see reading as an impersonal process, meaning the sensations that arise do not seem to belong to either the reader or the [poetry](#), but to both at the same time," Kikas describes the perspective of her thesis.

In general, the language of poetry is studied metaphorically, in order to try to understand what a word means either directly or figuratively. A [different perspective](#) called "affective perspective" usually studies the effects of pre-linguistic impulses or impulses not related to the meaning of the word on the reader. However, Kikas viewed language as a simultaneous proposition and flow of consciousness, i.e. a discussion moving from one statement to another as well as connections that seem to occur intuitively while reading. She sought to identify ways to approach verbal language, that is considered to trigger analytical thinking in particular, in a way that would help open up sensory saturation and put their observation in poetic analysis at the forefront along with other modes of studying poetry. To achieve her goals, Kikas applied Gilles Deleuze's method of radical empiricism and compared several other approaches with it: semiotics, biology, anthropology, modern psychoanalysis and cognitive sciences.

Kikas describes reading in her doctoral thesis as a constant presence in verbal language, which is sometimes more and sometimes less pronounced. This type of presence can be felt like color, posture or birdsong. "Following the neuroscientific origins of metaphors, I used the human organism's tendency to perceive language at the sensory-motor level in my close reading to help replay it using body memory. This trait allows us to physically experience the words we read," explains Kikas.

According to her, the sensations stored in the body evoked by words can be considered the oneness of the reader and the words, or the reader's becoming the words. Kikas emphasizes that this can only happen if the multiplicity of sensations and meanings that arise during reading are recognized.

"Although the study showed that the saturations associated with verbal language cannot be linked to a broader literary discourse without representational and analytical thinking, the conclusion is that noticing and acknowledging them is important in both experiencing and interpreting the poem," summarizes Kikas her doctoral thesis. As her research was only the first attempt in examining sensations in poetry, Kikas hopes to provide material for further discussion. Above all, she encourages readers in their attempts to understand poetry to notice and trust even the slightest [sensations](#) and impulses triggered while reading, as these are the beginning of even the most abstract [meaning](#).

More information: Thesis:

www.etera.ee/zoom/198338/view?page=1&p=separate

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