

## **An analysis of the interpretive method of Attar Neyshabouri's Conference of the Birds based on the theory of visual perception of Gestalt**

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### **Introduction**

Gestalt is interpreted as the science of the psychology of form and shape, which emerged in Germany in the first half of the 20th century. This theory posits that the human brain adopts this method to comprehend complex subjects composed of various components by grouping all parts into a single subject and initially forming a general understanding of that subject. This theory is based on how the eye organizes visual experiences and has influenced various fields, including science, philosophy, and art.

### **Research Method**

This research was conducted using a descriptive-analytical method, and its information was gathered via a library-based approach.

### **Implementation Method**

The Gestalt theory provides a suitable framework for examining the overall perception of an artwork, be it literary or visual. In this article, we have applied it to examine and analyze *The Conference of the Birds* by Attar of Nishapur. We presented this method to explain the subject matter. These principles were adapted to the Masnavi of *The Conference of the Birds* by Attar of Nishapur, and the poems were analyzed from two perspectives (form and meaning), leading to findings based on these principles. Undoubtedly, Gestalt principles and their application have been of interest to researchers, but the priority of this research lies in the fact that no previous study has examined the Gestalt principles and applied them to the analysis of the poems in *The Conference of the Birds*.

### **Findings**

In the analysis of *The Conference of the Birds* based on the **Law of Similarity** from the perspective of **poetic form**, we reached the following findings:

1. Similarity through repetition at the word level.
2. Similarity in rhyme.

3. Similarity in refrain repetition.
4. Similarity in syllable repetition.
5. Similarity in the repetition of adjectives and demonstrative pronouns.
6. Similarity in the repetition of conjunctions.
7. Similarity in phrase repetition.
8. Similarity through consonance (homophony).

And in the analysis from the perspective of **meaning**, we reached the following findings:

1. Similarity in the subtle verbal congruence between “Simurgh” (Phoenix) and “Si Murgh” (Thirty Birds).
2. Similarity in the characteristics of the Simurgh.
3. Similarity of the birds.
4. Similarity in the Seven Valleys (which refer to the seven stages of spiritual journey: Seeking, Love, Knowledge, Self-Sufficiency, Oneness, Wonder, Poverty, and Annihilation).
5. Similarity of the Simurgh’s wing to the light of God.
6. Similarity of ten groups of people in the world to ten birds.
7. Similarity of existence in “Simurgh” and “Si Murgh.”

And in the analysis based on the **Law of Proximity**:

#### **Analysis from the perspective of poetic form**

1. Proximity based on the inherent nature and characteristics of language (such as linear flow), proximity of consonants and vowels, proximity of words, couplets, and verses.

#### **And in the analysis from the perspective of meaning**

Proximity in allegory. Proximity of the two words “heart” (del) and “eye” (dideh) in one couplet for understanding the truth of the Simurgh. Proximity in the association of meanings.

And in the analysis of the **Law of Continuity or Closure**:

**Analysis from the perspective of poetic form:** Encountering terms such as “thread of speech” or “chain of words” means that linguistic elements, whether phonetic, morphological, syntactic, or verbal, appear sequentially like links in a chain.

**And in the analysis from the perspective of meaning:** The ultimate destination of the birds is reaching the Simurgh, which is essentially the truth of the Simurgh (the existence of God).

And in the analysis based on the **Law of Closure/Wholeness**:

**Analysis from the perspective of poetic form:** Upon reading the first hemistich, due to the space between hemistichs and verses (owing to the style of writing the poem), the mind continues to the second, third, and subsequent hemistichs to complete the meaning and message of the poem, thus finishing the verses. Based on the Law of Closure, the human mind perceives incomplete shapes as complete; in a literary text, the reader unconsciously completes any perceived gap in visual or grammatical structures because the feeling of incompleteness causes tension, discomfort, and mental disarray.

**And in the analysis from the perspective of meaning:** It can be asserted that we perceive the movement towards the Simurgh as a unified whole.

And in the analysis based on the **Law of Figure/Ground Relationship:**

**Analysis from the perspective of poetic form:**

1. Unified shapes are perceived as the figure.
2. Horizontal and vertical directions are perceived as the figure relative to other directions.
3. Symmetrical surfaces are seen as the figure.

**Analysis from the perspective of meaning:** There are words in the Masnavi *The Conference of the Birds* that have close concepts and are considered the “figure.” There are other words that highlight this figure like a “ground.”

And in the analysis based on the **Law of Common Fate:**

**From the perspective of poetic form:** Based on this principle and the movement of the elements within a Gestalt, we can assert that all words, hemistichs, and verses of the poem are perceived as a single group or set, and their form moves in a common direction, conveying a shared sense of direction and purpose, and works towards completing a message.

**And in the analysis from the perspective of meaning:** The theme of *The Conference of the Birds* is the movement of a multitude of the world’s birds to find the Simurgh on Mount Qaf and their collective flight towards Qaf and Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is the heart (of the matter).

### Discussion and Conclusion

The present article, which was prepared with the aim of familiarizing the reader with the function of each of these principles in art, and specifically in poetry, answered the question: What are the characteristics of the organization of the poetry of *The Conference of the Birds* in terms of visual (form) and semantic aspects based on the aforementioned theory? The results of this research show that the method of organizing the poetry, both in form and meaning, can be studied and evaluated according to the seven Gestalt laws, including: the Law of Proximity, the Law of Similarity, the Law of Continuity, the Law of Closure, the Figure/Ground Relationship, the Law of Wholeness, and the Law of Common Fate, by applying which the process of visual perception is formed.

**Keywords:** Mystical Interpretation, Poetry, Attar of Nishapur, Gestalt Theory, *Conference of the Birds*.