

Decision Processes Colloquium

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Poets and Poetry: What's Going On, and How Can We Know?

Evidence, both anecdotal and scientific, suggests that people rate products of prestigious sources differently than those of less prestigious, or of anonymous, sources. The present "products" are poems, and the "sources" are the poets. We explore how the poet's name affects the experience of reading a poem. Study 1 shows that a poet's reputation enhances the evaluation of a poem, whereas the poem's quality is hardly discernible to lay readers. Study 2 asks whether the poet's name only enhances the reader's outwardly reported evaluation of the poem (as was the case for The Emperor's New Clothes), rejecting this model. Study 3 explores whether a poet's name alters the poem somehow, and rejects that possibility as well. We conclude that poet's name alters the experience through priming.