
Thematic Resonance through Stylistic Repetition: A Multidisciplinary Analysis of Rhythmic and Recurrent Phrases in Literature

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the use of repetitive and rhythmic phrases in literature through the lenses of cognitive poetics, narrative theory, textual analysis, corpus linguistics, and reader response analysis. We consider the two novels *Paradise* and *Gravel Heart*, exploring how the recurrent use of language structures and phoneme clusters reinforces thematic elements and shapes the reader's experience. We employed cognitive poetics (Stockwell, 2019) as the methodology, emphasizing the significance of rhythm and stylistic repetition in ingraining themes into the reader's mind. Meanwhile, narrative theory clarifies how these elements affect narrative structure and emotional growth. Textual analysis explores the use of parallelism and imagery, while corpus linguistics evaluates the frequency and significance of recurring phrases. Finally, reader response analysis examines how readers interpret and internalize the themes of love and blessings. The main objective of this multidisciplinary approach is to furnish a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between language and thematic development in literature.

INTRODUCTION

Abdulrazak Gurnah, noble laureate (2021), has a signature in bringing back the historical narrative of South Africa during the post-colonial period (Brainee, H.J. (2022)). Gurnah's literary works adroitly participate in the nuanced exploration of various societal, economic, traumatic, gender-related, philosophical, and religious issues. The literature review underscores that researchers extract the rich, multilayered content from Gurnah's novels, contributing to the creation of comprehensive research papers and dissertations. In essence, it is acknowledged that Gurnah's novels are scrutinized through the lenses of "what" and "why", rather than delving into the aspect of "how" (Leech, G. N., & Short, M. 2007). A fundamental aspect of stylistics is the use of language to achieve aesthetic functions.

In literary studies, stylistic repetition performs as a powerful stylistic device, contributing to the rhythm, emphasis, and thematic development of a text. This theoretical framework investigates the role of repetition in literature by analyzing its functions, underlying theories, and methodological approaches to analysis. Based on stylistic and linguistic theories, this framework aims to elucidate how stylistics repetition enhances literary expression and reader engagement.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Several key theoretical lenses can help us understand stylistic repetition in literature. Stylistic Theory focuses on the use of language in literature, analyzing the choices authors make and their effects on readers. Repetition, from a stylistic perspective, can create rhythm, emphasize themes, and establish cohesion within a text (Leech & Short, 2007). Narrative Theory examines how stylistic repetition can influence the structure and pacing of a story, highlight significant events, reinforce motifs, and contribute to the narrative's emotional impact (Genette, 1980). Cognitive Poetics explores how readers process and interpret literary texts, suggesting that stylistic repetition aids memory retention, enhances understanding, and evokes emotional responses, making the reading experience more immersive (Tsur, 1992).

2.1 METHODOLOGY

To analyze stylistic repetition in literature, a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques is recommended. Textual Analysis involves close reading of literary texts to identify instances of stylistic repetition and their contextual significance. The analysis should consider how stylistic repetition contributes to the overall meaning, tone, and style of the work. Corpus Linguistics utilizes software tools to analyze large corpora of texts, revealing patterns of stylistic repetition, frequency, and distribution of repetitive elements across different genres and periods (Baker, 2006). Reader Response Analysis utilizes surveys and experiments to comprehend readers' perceptions and reactions to stylistic repetition in literature, thereby establishing a connection between textual features and their psychological influence on readers (Fish, 1980).

2.2 COGNITIVE POETICS

To examine the role of rhythm and stylistic repetition, we will analyze the selected excerpts using tools and frameworks from cognitive poetics (Tsur, 1992). This involves identifying and mapping rhythmic patterns and repetitive phrases, and exploring how these elements contribute to theme reinforcement. We will conduct a qualitative analysis of how these linguistic features aid in embedding thematic concepts in the reader's cognitive framework.

2.3 NARRATIVE THEORY

Utilizing the principles of narrative theory (Genette, 1980), we will investigate how repetitive phrases shape the narrative structure and emotional trajectory. This includes analyzing the placement and function of these phrases within the narrative arc, and their impact on character development and plot progression. We will create a narrative map to visualize the distribution and frequency of repetitive elements throughout the texts.

2.4 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Through textual analysis, we will examine the use of parallelism and imagery in the selected excerpts. This entails a close reading of the texts to identify instances of parallel structures and descriptive imagery, as well as assess their role in reinforcing central themes. We will annotate the texts to highlight these features and perform a thematic analysis to understand their contribution to the overall narrative.

2.5 CORPUS LINGUISTICS

Using corpus linguistics techniques (Baker, 2006), we will quantify the prevalence and significance of the repetitive phrases within the texts. This involves creating a corpus of the selected excerpts and employing software tools to conduct frequency and concordance analyses. We will generate statistical data to support our qualitative findings and demonstrate the thematic importance of these phrases.

2.6 READER RESPONSE ANALYSIS

To explore how readers interpret the relationship between love and blessings, we will conduct reader response analysis (Fish, 1980). This includes gathering reader responses through surveys or interviews, and analyzing how these interpretations shape their understanding of the novel's message. We will categorize and analyze the responses to identify common themes and insights, and relate them to our findings from the other analytical approaches.

By integrating these methodologies, this study aims to provide a holistic view of the complex interplay between language, theme, and reader experience in literature.

3. HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the theoretical background and key concepts, the following research questions and hypotheses can guide the analysis:

- Research Question 1: How does stylistic repetition enhance thematic development in literary texts?
 - Hypothesis 1: stylistic Repetition reinforces central themes by creating patterns that highlight key ideas and emotions.
- Research Question 2: What are the cognitive effects of stylistic repetition on readers' memory and comprehension?
 - Hypothesis 2: Stylistic repetition aids memory retention and comprehension by providing multiple exposures to important concepts.
- Research Question 3: How does stylistic repetition contribute to the stylistic distinctiveness of an author's work?
 - Hypothesis 3: Authors use repetition to establish a unique style that differentiates their work from others, creating a recognizable voice.

4. APPLICATION TO LITERARY ANALYSIS

To apply this theoretical framework, researchers should select literary works that exemplify the use of stylistic. For instance, analyzing the poetry of Walt Whitman, known for his extensive use of anaphora, can illustrate how repetition shapes the thematic and emotional landscape of his work. Similarly, studying the prose of James Joyce, with his intricate use of parallelism and epizeuxis, can reveal how stylistic repetition contributes to narrative complexity and depth. These analyses can uncover how authors use stylistic repetition not merely for aesthetic purposes but as a tool to reinforce meaning, evoke emotions, and enhance the reader's engagement with the text.

The given excerpts illustrate the repetitive and ambiguous use of language through syntax, phonology, and semantics. For instance, in the novel *Paradise*, there is a quotation that reads, "Learn from my terrible example, my little friend. Shun the weed, I beg you!" (Gurnah 2022), is reiterated with slight variations throughout the text, as seen on pages 100 and 11, emphasizing the command through stylistic repetition of the verb phrase (VP+VP+NP) structure and phoneme cluster (/n/ /ə/). Similarly, the statement "He ain't your uncle" (Gurnah 2022), found repeatedly on pages 23, 25, 32, 173, 188, and 189-190, demonstrates the power of stylistic repetition in reinforcing a narrative point. The text presents this statement in a variety of forms, ranging from direct statements (NP Statements) to more nuanced declarative and interrogative phrases, frequently accompanied by the phoneme cluster (/t/ /l/). Additionally, the description of cowardice in "Later he dreamt that he saw his cowardice glimmering in moonlight, covered in the slime of its afterbirth" (Gurnah 2022) is echoed later in the text, reinforcing the imagery through the stylistic repetition of noun phrase structures (NP+X) and phoneme clusters (/ə/). Furthermore, the philosophical musing "The beginning of love is the recollection of blessings" and its variations throughout *Gravel Heart* (Gurnah 2017) utilize parallel structures (NP+X) and imperative forms (VP+X), creating a rhythmic and memorable exploration of the theme. This recurrent use of phoneme clusters (/ŋ/ /t/) and semantic ambiguity adds depth to the narrative, inviting readers to ponder the underlying meanings and

connections between the stylistic repetitions.

Text 1

Although the elements are similar, their word order and emphasis are different. The sentence expresses a request but still provides a command. Here the performative verb “beg”, connects the utterance and action of the omniscient narrator. Each of the three repetitive phrases is independent and in the simple present tense, which corresponds to the three occurrences. It is rare to come across a text that exhibits a limited scope, such as relying solely on simple verb phrases, or... (Hope, J., & Wright, L. 2005).

It is rare to find a written text in English where the clauses are not linked in some way: absence of linkage produces a staccato, apparently crude style (Hope, J., & Wright, L. 2005). The phrase "Learn from my terrible example" may suggest similarities between the experiences of the beggar, protagonist, and author, but the phrase "shun the weed" carries more ambiguity—it could be the author's firm request to the readers. The sounds /n/ and /ə/ also support the firmness, as /n/ (nasal consonant) associates clarity, stability, and straightforwardness, and the sound /ə/ (schwa+I) creates uniqueness. But what does the word “weed” actually mean? In the novel *Paradise*, the term "weed" suggests an impediment that compels individuals to abandon their homeland. All models have independently linked a history of family separation due to migration to depression and post-traumatic stress (Thela, L., et al., 2017). Also, the syntax “death is better than shameful bondage to weed” (Gurnah 2022) describes the abstract concept "weed." Writers can, and do, play around with the notion of the sentence (Hope, J., & Wright, L. 2005). The sentences display both syntactic and semantic ambiguity, and the author provides clues to unravel the mystery of "weed."

From a cognitive poetics perspective, the stylistic repetition aids in embedding the warning deeply into the reader's memory, making the plea more memorable and impactful (Tsur, 1992). Narrative theory suggests that this repeated warning structures the narrative by highlighting a recurring motif that underscores the protagonist's struggles (Genette, 1980). Textual analysis shows how the simple yet potent syntax serves both to command and implore, reflecting the character's desperation. Corpus linguistics could reveal how often and in what contexts similar warnings appear in the text, providing quantitative backing for its thematic importance (Baker, 2006). Reader response analysis might explore how different readers interpret the warning and its implications for the characters' futures, illuminating diverse perspectives (Fish, 1980).

Text 2

Almost nine times in the novel *Paradise*, the main class phrase "he ain't your uncle" recurs. In the novel, the phrase “he ain't your uncle” (with modulation) progressively travels from impractical to practical as Yusuf's maturity blossoms out of his innocence. Except one, all eight times, it is Khalil, who utters the words, to make Yusuf accept the practicality. Except for the last one, (which Yusuf parried), Yusuf got hit from Khalil as a punishment for being impractical. The prepositional phrase “For a start” as a modifying adverbial, proposes surreptitious deeds, which influence the reader's opinion in a negative way. If you omit the prepositions and prepositional phrases, you can follow the bare bones of the action, but you lose the relation of cause and effect between the typhoon and the battered ship (Hope, J., & Wright, L. 2005). "For a start" is placed before the rest of the sentence, peevishly to understand the word "uncle" before "not your," This placement not only makes the sentence precise, but also adds phonological aptness to its semantics. The final consonant /t/, which is difficult to read aloud, mirrors the neat, abrupt sound of the words "start" and "isn't." However, the writer has deliberately employes a confrontational, straight, and assertive tone, drawing the reader and context closer together, his lexis (noun, adverbial, preposition, etc.) to achieve an abstract idea, but undoubtedly peering to reach reality and practicality. Here Gurnah used the linking adverbial not primarily for cohesiveness, but to co-refer and cross refer to some other expression contextually and linguistically related in the text. Here, the key expressions centre around "not your uncle," recognized as a "marked theme" (Randolph Quirk et al., 1985), and "rheme" (Micheal Halliday, 1997), both of which share a semantic connection with theme. When co-refer and cross refer “uncle” or “not your uncle,” it captures incidents related to that uncle and stands on the present and cinematically flashbacks the actions

done by that particular uncle. The first and second phrases in text 2 refer to the uncle who takes Yusuf away from his parents; phrase three refers to the trauma underwent by Yusuf mentally (nightmares) and physically (got red hot iron in his back); The fourth phrase describes Yusuf's life as a beggar and vagabond. As the five reminds the readers of Yusuf's stupidity as he accepts Aziz as his uncle; phrase six shows Yusuf's acceptance of reality and practicality; Phrase seven Yusuf accepts Aziz as a smuggler who seems to have cancer like disease not only for him but for the nation and mankind; Phrase eight became capable of escaping from that uncle and the disease. While cross referring all the phrases, the narrator controls the reader's reaction to the character Aziz, who is primarily a villain, though the writer portrayed him as calm, mature, and silver-tongued. Hence Iddrisu. A, proposed that the slave trade was the apogee of human evil and avarice—the notion of slavers saving the enslaved from themselves.

Cognitive poetics emphasizes how the stylistic repetition of this phrase aids readers in tracking Yusuf's changing understanding and emotional responses throughout the narrative (Tsur, 1992). From a narrative theory perspective, the repeated phrase punctuates key moments in the story, contributing to the pacing and emotional tension (Genette, 1980). Textual analysis reveals the phrase's syntactic simplicity yet semantic depth, emphasizing its thematic weight. Corpus linguistics can quantify the phrase's recurrence, showing its significance across the narrative arc (Baker, 2006). Reader response analysis might examine how different audiences perceive Khalil's repeated assertions and their impact on Yusuf's character development (Fish, 1980).

Text 3

Here, the author attempts a rich and nuanced portrayal of Yusuf's dream image, aiming to add depth to the content or theme. Even though phrase 1 contains a main clause filled with descriptive phrases, it remains straightforward and has a direct object. This descriptive phrase conveys a vivid but to some extent discomfoting image. As a complex noun phrase, the emphasis lies on the action of remembrance (cowardice glimmering in the moonlight) and state of cowardice (covered in the slime of afterbirth).

Phrase 2 is also a descriptive phrase where the imagery "cowardice glimmering in the moonlight" gives a perception of vulnerability and self understanding. Also, the complementizer "how" introduces a subordinate dependent clause, making the sentence particularly complex, where the emphasis lies on "breathing." This particular word generates ambiguity, which enhances memory by blurring perception and image. Both phrases emphasize the theme of cowardice and its remembrance, not only in the present but also in flashbacks and flash forwards. Fretz, C. Dreams and animal symbolisms highlight the distance between their idealized selves and the social and political reality. Also, the distinct phoneme cluster /ər/ in cowardice /kaʊərdəs/, glimmer /ɡlɪməɪŋ/, afterbirth /æftərbɜːθ/, remembered /rɪ'membərd/, covered /'kʌvərd/ make a smooth transmission of theme and time between words. In particular, the author emphasizes the theme of cowardice as a flaw that the protagonist must overcome to progress, which creates discomfort for both the dream image and the reader.

Cognitive poetics would focus on how these repeated images evoke strong emotional responses and reinforce memory through vivid, sensory language (Tsur, 1992). Narrative theory highlights how these stylistic repetitions mark significant emotional and psychological turning points in the story (Genette, 1980). Textual analysis shows the interplay of syntax and imagery in creating a haunting, reflective tone. Corpus linguistics could track the occurrence of similar imagery throughout the text, illustrating its thematic importance (Baker, 2006). Reader response analysis could reveal how different readers interpret the recurring imagery and its impact on their perception of the protagonist's cowardice (Fish, 1980).

Text 4

The novel *Gravel Heart*, which features both the original author and the translator, uses the phrase 1 as a forehead mark, emphasizing the theme of love and the importance of remembering or acknowledging. The author specifically centered this theme throughout the novel, as evidenced by the repeated use of these phrases.

The sentences range from imperative, declarative, and interrogative using literary device parallelism structure (beginning of love, the recollection of blessings and recollection of blessings, beginning of love), imagery (Open your eyes in the dark), and deviation (omission of article before blessing and a comma when a subordinate clause starts). The author employs all these manipulations, confusions, and ambiguities solely to elucidate the theme of love and blessing, symbolizing a glimmer of light amidst profound darkness and unwavering hopelessness.

Cognitive poetics would emphasize how the rhythmic and repetitive nature of these phrases aids in embedding their thematic importance in the reader's mind (Tsur, 1992). Narrative theory examines how these stylistic repetitions shape the narrative structure and emotional arc (Genette, 1980). Textual analysis highlights the use of parallelism and imagery in reinforcing the novel's central themes. Corpus linguistics can quantify the prevalence of these phrases, showing their significance in the text's thematic fabric (Baker, 2006). Reader response analysis could investigate how readers interpret the relationship between love and blessings, and how this shapes their understanding of the novel's message (Fish, 1980).

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR EFL CLASSROOMS

Understanding the role of stylistic repetition in literature has significant implications for English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Teachers can use stylistic repetition to teach language patterns, enhance vocabulary acquisition, and improve reading comprehension (Cook, 1994; Nation, 2001; Wray, 2002). By exposing EFL learners to texts with rich repetitive structures, educators can help students recognize and internalize language patterns, making the learning process more intuitive and engaging (Cook, 1994). Additionally, stylistic repetition in literary texts can serve as a model for learners to practice and apply in their own writing, fostering a deeper appreciation for stylistic devices and their effects on communication (Wray, 2002). Overall, incorporating stylistic repetition in literature into EFL instruction can enhance both linguistic proficiency and literary appreciation, providing students with a more holistic understanding of the English language (Nation, 2001).

6. CONCLUSION

This theoretical framework provides a structured approach to analyzing stylistic repetition as a stylistic device in literature. By integrating stylistic theory, narrative theory, and cognitive poetics, and employing a mixed-methods methodology, researchers can uncover the multifaceted role of stylistic repetition in literary expression. This framework not only enhances our understanding of literary texts, but also contributes to broader discussions on language, cognition, and aesthetics in literature. Furthermore, this analysis provides practical applications in EFL classrooms, where stylistic repetition serves as a powerful tool to enhance language learning and literary appreciation.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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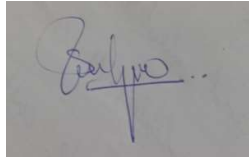
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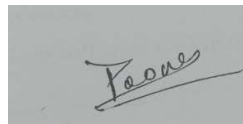
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