

Phonological and Lexical Parallelism in Aqib's A Stardust Drape (2021)

Muhammad Hassan Shah

Lecturer in English, University of Science and Technology, Bannu (UST)

muhammadhassanustb@gmail.com

Zafar Iqbal

Department of English and Applied Linguistics, University of Science and Technology, Bannu

zafar8000711@gmail.com

Waleed Khan

MA Applied Linguistics and TESOL, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge

wknuml22434@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the interplay of phonological and lexical parallelism in Aqib's A Stardust Drape (2021), with a particular emphasis on anagrammatic interpretations as a stylistic device. Anagrammatic interpretation involves rearranging the letters of a word or phrase to produce a new word or phrase, typically revealing hidden meanings. The study also argues that the intentional repetition of sounds and words transcends mere aesthetic function, deeply reflecting the existential, emotional, and socio-political dimensions of the text. The analysis draws on Leech and Short's foregrounding model to demonstrate how sound-symbolism and lexical selections serve as powerful vehicles for meaning, resistance, and socio-political commentary.

Keywords: A Stardust Drape, Phonological Parallelism, Lexical Parallelism, Anagrammatic Interpretations, Stylistic Strategy, Cohesion, Psychological States, Socio-Spiritual Tensions

Introduction

In contemporary stylistic studies, the interplay of sound and word choice has emerged as a critical focus in understanding the aesthetic, emotional, and ideological dimensions of poetry. Among the various poetic techniques, phonological and lexical parallelism serve as powerful tools to enhance cohesion, foreground meaning, and evoke nuanced psychological and socio-political resonances. Farzana Aqib's A Stardust Drape (2021) offers a compelling landscape for examining these stylistic devices, as her poetry is rich with patterned repetitions, sound-symbolic structures, and semantic layering that transcend mere ornamentation.

This paper explores how phonological and lexical parallelism function in Aqib's work, with particular attention to anagrammatic constructions—a less-studied but impactful strategy that reveals underlying themes of existential struggle, spiritual yearning, and socio-cultural critique. Drawing upon the stylistic model proposed by Leech and Short (2007), this study investigates how repeated syntactic and phonemic structures contribute to both textual cohesion and thematic depth. It situates Aqib's poetic expression within a broader theoretical context that includes cognitive poetics (Freeman, 2015) and systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1985), arguing that stylistic repetition in her poetry is not merely formal but deeply reflective of the poet's engagement with inner and outer conflicts. By focusing on the strategic deployment of repetition—lexical, syntactic, and phonological—this study aims to demonstrate how Aqib's stylistic choices foster a unique poetic voice that simultaneously captures individual emotion and collective experience. In doing so, the research highlights the aesthetic and socio-political implications of foregrounded language in contemporary poetry.

Literature Review

Leech and Short (2007) define parallelism as a deliberate repetition of syntactic structures that enhances thematic clarity and cohesion. Simpson (2014) further argues that stylistic features like repetition and patterning contribute to the foregrounding of meaning in poetic texts. Halliday (1985) explains that repetition at both lexico-grammatical and phonological levels performs textual and ideational functions, often tied to emotional and experiential representations. Freeman (2015) introduces the concept of "the poem as a mind-event," where phonological patterns act as triggers for emotional and cognitive resonance. Jakobson (1960) underlines that parallelism plays serve not just decorative purposes but act as central poetic functions in organizing meaning.

While earlier studies have emphasized stylistic elements such as foregrounding and deviation (Leech & Short, 2007; Simpson, 2014), little research has integrated phonological anagrammatic layering as a stylistic and interpretive technique. Additionally, the socio-political implications of repeated lexis in contemporary poetic expression remain under-investigated (Wales, 2011).

Methodology

This qualitative research employs close reading and stylistic analysis, following the framework of cognitive poetics (Freeman, 2015) and systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1985). Selected poetic lines are analyzed for phoneme combinations, semantic domains, and syntactic parallelism. Foregrounding strategies, anagrammatic derivations, and sound-symbolic effects are documented through interpretive commentary, supported by lexical and phonetic tables.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic model, which emphasizes the importance of syntactic parallelism and textual cohesion in literary texts. According to Leech and Short (2007), stylistics is the study of linguistic features in a text, focusing on how these features contribute to the creation of meaning and emotional impact. In particular, their model highlights the role of parallel structures—both syntactic and phonological—in shaping the rhythm, flow, and overall cohesion of a narrative.

Syntactic parallelism refers to the repetition of grammatical structures, which serves to enhance the coherence and unity of a text. As Leech and Short (2007) argue, such repetition creates a sense of balance and symmetry within the text, reinforcing its thematic concerns and emotional intensity. In the case of Aqib's (2021) poetry, syntactic parallelism is evident in the repeated use of determiners like "every" and "any," which organize the spatial and emotional journey depicted in the poem. This use of parallel structures mirrors the poet's exploration of universal struggle and individual yearning, providing cohesion to the thematic progression of the poem.

Additionally, textual cohesion—a central concept in Leech and Short's (2007) model—is achieved through the use of repeated lexical items and syntactic structures, which link various parts of the text together. Cohesion, as defined by Leech and Short (2007), is the network of relationships that binds different parts of a text and ensures its intelligibility. In Aqib's (2021) work, lexical parallelism through phrases like "every corner," "every nook," and "every cranny" contributes to the cohesive structure of the poem. These repeated structures not only reinforce the poem's rhythmic quality but also underline its narrative progression from exhaustive effort to fragile hope.

Leech and Short (2007) also stress the role of phonological features, such as sound patterns and alliteration, in establishing textual cohesion and enhancing the emotional tone of a literary work. The use of anagrammatic sound symbolism in Aqib's (2021) poetry—where the phonemes in words like "moon," "lost," and "dust" evoke emotions of longing, despair, and transience—can be understood through this theoretical lens. The phonological patterns are not arbitrary but are strategically employed to support the poem's thematic tone, reflecting the existential themes of isolation, decay, and spiritual yearning, as proposed by Leech and Short (2007).

By applying Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic model to the analysis of Aqib's (2021) poetry, this study highlights how syntactic parallelism, lexical repetition, and phonological features work together to create a cohesive and emotionally resonant text. These stylistic elements not only enhance the poem's thematic depth but also mirror the socio-political and spiritual concerns that Aqib explores.

Data Analysis and Discussion

a. Phonological and Lexical Parallelism: Anagrammatic Interpretations

This analysis illustrates how phonological and lexical parallelism—including anagrammatic interpretations—serve to create foregrounding, emotional resonance, and socio-political commentary. Techniques such as semantic repetition, sound symbolism, and lexical duality enrich the poetic texture of Farzana Aqib's work (2012I) particularly in *Down to the Dust*, enhancing its thematic depth and emotional impact.

b. Phonological Parallelism through Repetition

The repetition of "every" and "any" creates rhythmic cohesion and emotional intensity, reinforcing the universality of struggle and the individual's persistent search for meaning or purity (Aqib, 2021).

c. Lexical Parallelism via Structured Syntax

Phrases like every corner, every nook, every cranny exhibit lexical parallelism through syntactic structure and semantic field clustering, enhancing the poem's narrative progression and spatial metaphor for life's journey (Aqib, 2021).

d. Sound Symbolism and Emotional Suggestiveness

The /m/, /u:/, /n/ phonemes in moon (as anagrammatically derived) evoke serenity and longing. Similarly, lost and dust, formed through structured phoneme alignment, evoke themes of despair and transience. These anagrams are not random but phonologically grounded to support the poem's thematic tone (Aqib, 2021).

e. Foregrounding through Repeated Determiners

The parallel use of "every" and "any" serves as foregrounding devices, placing emphasis on comprehensive effort (every) and elusive hope (any) in a world marred by conflict and spiritual decay (Aqib, 2021).

f. Parallel Structures as Psychological Mapping

The every + noun and any + noun constructions chart psychological progression—first, the exhaustive effort (every corner, every door), then the fragile hope (any glimpse, any shadow). This maps an emotional shift from persistence to yearning (Aqib, 2021).

g. Anagrammatic Layering as Stylistic Innovation

The semantic reconstruction of words like moon, lost, and dust through anagrammatic phonological elements provides a subtle poetic strategy for encoding themes of isolation, existential loss, and decay—while staying rooted in phonetic realism (Aqib, 2021).

h. Lexical Duality and Juxtaposition

Each "every" phrase has a physical/spatial referent, while "any" phrases refer to ephemeral/intangible objects. This lexical contrast deepens the poem's spiritual versus material tension, illustrating parallelism in contrast (Aqib, 2021).

i. Cohesion via Semantic Fields

All repeated structures are drawn from related semantic domains (space, movement, perception), showing cohesion and stylistic intent. Nook, cranny, door belong to the domain of physical passage; glimpse, shadow, wisp to that of fleeting vision (Aqib, 2021).

g. Alliteration and Consonance as Reinforcement

In anagrammatic constructions, consonantal patterns (/s/, /t/, /d/) recur across lost and dust, reinforcing acoustic memory and subtly signaling loss, decay, and finality in both meaning and sound (Aqib, 2021).

j. Socio-spiritual Parallelism

Phonological and lexical repetitions symbolically parallel spiritual searching (any) and physical striving (every), making the stylistic patterns deeply reflective of moral, existential, and social struggles (Aqib, 2021).

This analysis, as demonstrated by Aqib (2021), illustrates how phonological and lexical parallelism—including anagrammatic interpretations—serves to create foregrounding, emotional resonance, and socio-political commentary.

Summary: Phonological and Lexical Parallelism: Anagrammatic Interpretations

Word	Stylistic Interpretation & Social Message
Less	Reflects emotional states like hopeless, loveless, lifeless; indicates societal despair.
Lament highlighted.	Expresses sorrow for poor health and poverty in Pakistan; obesity and chronic diseases
Light	Symbol of optimism and guidance; calls for good governance to dispel social darkness.
Labor	Points to exploitation of the working class; emphasizes psychological and economic harm.
Loneliness	Signifies alienation and mental health struggles, linked to spiritual and social disconnection.
Living	Peaceful living is portrayed as a challenge due to political chaos and instability.
Loot	Symbolizes systemic corruption and the pillaging of national resources.
Luxurious	Highlights class disparity; appeals to the elite to support the underprivileged.
Unsettled	Represents a bleak future for youth; metaphors of destruction and lack of direction used.
Widows	Focus on societal neglect of widows; religious and ethical obligations emphasized.
War	Metaphor for conflict and failure of humanity; criticizes war as destructive and regressive.
Night	Denotes darkness and danger; symbolizes the unknown, fear, and societal decline.

This analysis illustrates how phonological and lexical parallelism, including anagrammatic interpretations, are used to create foregrounding, emotional resonance, and socio-political commentary. Techniques such as semantic repetition, sound symbolism, and lexical duality enrich the poetic texture of Farzana Aqib's work, particularly in "Down to the Dust."

Findings and Conclusion

The study reveals that Repeated structures like "every + noun" and "any + noun" enhance emotional depth, reflecting universal struggles and the search for meaning. Moreover, the anagrammatic constructions like "moon," "dust," and "lost" evoke serenity, despair, and transience, supporting existential themes. However, lexical parallelism charts an emotional shift from persistence (every) to yearning (any), mapping psychological tension. Therefore, the contrast between "every" (physical) and "any" (ephemeral) deepens socio-spiritual commentary on materialism and existential searching. Further, it finds out that semantic fields and sound symbolism (e.g., /s/, /t/, /d/ in "lost" and "dust") reinforce thematic weight, signaling decay and finality (Aqib, 2021).

The study shows that phonological and lexical parallelism in poetry—especially through anagrammatic reconstruction—functions as a powerful stylistic and semiotic device. It creates rhythm, cohesion, and emphasis while also reinforcing the poem's thematic concerns with emotional struggle, existential loss, and social critique. This study highlights the need to integrate phonological insights into stylistic analysis and affirms the relevance of sound-based interpretation in understanding the multi-dimensional nature of poetic meaning.

References

- Alshamout, M. A. (2023). Parallelism in the Poetry of Shawqi Bzaie: A Stylistic Study. *Jurnal of Language Teaching and Research*, 14(4), 933-938.
- Aqib, F. (2021). *A Stardust Drape*. Nastalique Publications Feroz Centre Ghazni Street Urdu Bazar, Lahore.
- Freeman, M. (2015). *Cognitive Poetics and Literary Theory: The Poem as a Mind-Event*. Bloomsbury.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. Edward Arnold.
- Jakobson, R. (1960). Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics. In T. A. Sebeok (Ed.), *Style in Language* (pp. 350–377). MIT Press.
- Leech, G. N., & Short, M. H. (2007). *Style in fiction: A linguistic introduction to English fictional prose* (2nd ed.). Pearson Longman.
- Leech, G. N., & Short, M. H. (2007). *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.
- Simpson, P. (2014). *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Wales, K. (2011). *A Dictionary of Stylistics* (3rd ed.). Routledge.