



FOREGROUNDING THROUGH PARALLELISM: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF FARZANA AQIB'S *WHEN WILL THESE WALLS GO DOWN*

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Abstract

This study explores the use of stylistic foregrounding through parallelism in Farzana Aqib's poem When Will These Walls Go Down. Using Leech and Short's theory of foregrounding, particularly the concept of parallelism, the analysis identifies repeated structures and deviations in the poem that contribute to its emotional and thematic intensity. Using qualitative textual analysis, the study explores the ways in which lexical, syntactic, grammatical, and semantic parallelism foreground the speaker's emotional turmoil and the poem's broader social critique. The research concludes that foregrounding through parallelism in Aqib's poem is not merely aesthetic but deeply functional in voicing emotional urgency, resistance, and a call for personal liberation. The findings suggest that parallelism in Aqib's poem serves not merely an aesthetic function but underscores a powerful poetic voice of protest and passion.. A key contribution of this study lies in its novel application of Leech and Short's stylistic theory to contemporary South Asian English poetry—an area underrepresented in linguistic literary studies

Keywords: Foregrounding, Parallelism, Stylistics, Farzana Aqib, Resistance, Love, Poetry Analysis

Background of the Study

Stylistic analysis offers a valuable lens for understanding how literary devices contribute to meaning. Leech and Short (2007) introduced foregrounding as a key concept in stylistics, which includes deviation and parallelism. Parallelism, as a repetition of linguistic structures, often intensifies emotional and thematic content. Farzana Aqib's poem, *When Will These Walls Go Down* is a rich text for stylistic analysis due to its emotionally charged language and rhythmic structure that calls for freedom, love, and self-expression.

Farzana Aqib is a contemporary poet whose works reflect themes of emotional resilience, resistance, love, and socio-political consciousness. Her poem *When Will These Walls Go Down* (2021) resonates with a deep yearning for freedom, love, and emotional connection in the face of societal and psychological barriers. The title metaphorically refers to the invisible "walls"—emotional, cultural, or institutional—that separate individuals from one another or from their desires. Written in a free verse style, the poem carries a lyrical, almost musical



rhythm through the use of repeated structures and refrains, a hallmark of stylistic foregrounding (Leech & Short, 2007).

The poem's narrator questions the delay of emotional and social liberation, using repetitive phrasing and parallel structures such as "When is the right time" and "If it's not now then tell me when," to express a state of anxious longing and suppressed passion. Aqib's voice is both tender and defiant, as she articulates a willingness to embrace societal punishment for the sake of forbidden love, echoing the feminist and humanistic undertones of her broader literary work (Ahmad, 2022). Her poetry often navigates the intersections of personal emotion and collective struggle, situating individual experiences within broader social realities.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing interest in stylistics as a means to analyze literary texts, the poetry of emerging South Asian female voices, such as Farzana Aqib, remains underexplored within this framework. While her poem *When Will These Walls Go Down* (2021) reflects deep emotional, social, and political undertones, there has been little scholarly attention paid to the stylistic devices she employs to construct meaning. Specifically, the use of parallelism as a form of foregrounding, as theorized by Leech and Short (2007), has not yet been systematically applied to this poem.

This gap raises important questions: How does Farzana Aqib use parallel syntactic, lexical, and semantic structures to emphasize themes such as forbidden love, resistance, and emotional struggle? What role does foregrounding play in shaping the reader's interpretation of the speaker's psychological and social realities? This study aims to address these questions by conducting a detailed stylistic analysis of the poem using the theoretical lens of parallelism in foregrounding.

Literature Review

Farzana Aqib's *When Will These Walls Go Down* (2021) is part of her critically acknowledged collection *The Stardust Drape*, a volume celebrated for its lyrical expression of identity, resistance, and emotional complexity. While the poem itself has not been the focus of extensive academic inquiry, literary reviews and critical essays have noted the stylistic and thematic consistency across Aqib's work, particularly her use of repetition, metaphoric structure, and emotional directness (Riaz, 2022).

According to Khan (2023), *The Stardust Drape* presents a unique voice in contemporary South Asian poetry, blending poetic intimacy with socio-political commentary. The collection explores themes such as forbidden love, gender norms, inner conflict, and emotional endurance, often through a female narrative lens. "*When Will These Walls Go Down*", one of the more prominently quoted pieces from the collection, epitomizes these themes through its use of rhetorical questions, refrains, and metaphoric language, although few academic efforts have systematically examined its structure through stylistic frameworks such as that of Leech and Short (2007).

Critics like Ahmed (2022) emphasize the musicality in Aqib's verse, noting how her recurrent structures mimic oral traditions of lament and protest poetry, particularly in South Asian feminist literature. However, much of the existing commentary remains impressionistic rather than analytical. Thus, this study addresses a critical gap by applying the theory of



foregrounding—specifically, parallelism—to offer a detailed stylistic reading of the poem and to foreground its rhetorical and emotive power.

Leech and Short (2007) discuss foregrounding as the linguistic technique of making specific elements of a text more salient. They divide it into deviation and parallelism, both of which can occur at phonological, lexical, and syntactic levels. Wales (2014) supports this view by asserting that stylistic choices foreground meaning and emotion. According to Freeman (1971), foregrounding in poetry often evokes deeper emotional and psychological responses. Studies on protest poetry (e.g., Vendler, 2002) also highlight the role of repetition and rhythm in voicing dissent and identity.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs Leech and Short's (2007) theory of foregrounding with a focus on parallelism. Parallelism is viewed as the patterned repetition of grammatical or lexical structures that draws attention and intensifies meaning. This framework allows for the identification of linguistic patterns that function as stylistic tools in Aqib's poem. Leech and Short (2007) define foregrounding as the linguistic strategy by which certain elements of a text are made more prominent through either deviation or parallelism. Deviation involves breaking linguistic norms, creating surprise or heightened attention (e.g., unexpected syntax or neologisms). Parallelism, by contrast, is the deliberate repetition of forms, structures, or patterns (e.g., phonological, syntactic, or semantic repetition). This repetition highlights emotional states, emphasizes key themes, and enhances poetic rhythm.

Analysis and Discussion

To analyze Farzana Aqib's poem *When Will These Walls Go Down* (2021) through the lens of Leech and Short's theory of foregrounding, particularly focusing on parallelism, it is crucial to first grasp the theoretical principles before applying them to the text. Farzana Aqib's poem offers rich material for stylistic examination. Parallelism in various forms is used to amplify the emotional resonance of the poem and to foreground the speaker's struggle against societal constraints.

A. Repetition of Questions

"When is the right time"

"When will the walls go down"

"If it's not now, then tell me when is the right time"

The repeated interrogative form builds rhythmic intensity and highlights the speaker's urgency and longing for emotional release and societal acceptance. These repeated structures dramatize the emotional conflict and existential questioning central to the poem, underscoring the speaker's entrapment and desire for liberation.



B. Lexical and Phonological Refrains

Examples:

"Ohh my my / Ohh my darling"

These refrains function as lyrical anchors, both soothing and provocative, infusing the poem with a musical, chant-like quality. The intimacy and passion embedded in these phrases elevate the speaker's emotional vulnerability and affection, building a voice that is both personal and defiant.

C. Conditional and Temporal Clauses

"If it's not now, then tell me when is the right time"

"If a stone is pelted on you, I will be in front-line"

The conditional constructions emphasize loyalty and steadfastness, reinforcing the speaker's willingness to sacrifice for love. These clauses contrast idealistic love with real-world resistance, portraying emotional resilience and political defiance.

D. Semantic and Metaphorical Juxtaposition

"Like the space-time continuum / Like the race time redrum"

These similes are structurally parallel but semantically dissonant. The first invokes scientific abstraction; the second alludes to chaos and horror ("redrum" being "murder" reversed from Stephen King's *The Shining*). These unconventional images evoke the surreal and perilous nature of the speaker's love, simultaneously profound, imaginative, and transgressive.

E. Binary Opposition in Imagery

"Blue day / red Valentine"

These color-based juxtapositions evoke emotional contradiction — peace vs. danger, melancholy vs. romantic fervor. The binary imagery encapsulates the inner conflict of the speaker, illustrating the tension between societal constraints and personal desire.

3. Summary of Foregrounding via Parallelism

Type of Parallelism	Examples	Foregrounding Effect
Lexical repetition	"Ohh my my", "When is the right time"	Emphasizes emotional urgency and longing
Grammatical	"If it's not now, then tell	Highlights conditional hope and



structure	me..."	determination
Syntactic repetition	"When will... / When is..."	Builds intensity and rhetorical insistence
Semantic Parallelism	"Blue day / red Valentine"	Contrasts emotional tranquility and danger
Metaphorical structures	"space-time continuum / race time redrum"	Blends surreal and psychological depth with chaotic undertones

Farzana Aqib's *When Will These Walls Go Down* powerfully utilizes stylistic parallelism as a form of foregrounding to dramatize the speaker's emotional and ideological struggle. The repetition of phrases, structures, and images is not merely decorative; it constructs a poignant and defiant poetic voice. Leech and Short's theory elucidates how these linguistic choices foreground not only emotion but also socio-political themes. In this poem, parallelism intensifies meaning, making personal resistance audible and affecting in its lyrical form.

Findings

The analysis reveals that Farzana Aqib's poem uses parallelism not only as a poetic device but as a strategic stylistic tool. Through repeated structures and rhythms, the poet underscores themes of resistance, forbidden love, and emotional turmoil. Parallelism effectively foregrounds the speaker's voice, making the emotional and political subtext more pronounced.

Conclusion

Farzana Aqib's *When Will These Walls Go Down* effectively employs parallelism as a powerful foregrounding strategy that reinforces its thematic concerns of longing, defiance, and constrained love. The repetitive syntactic and lexical structures are not simply poetic flourishes but strategic stylistic devices that render the speaker's emotional state visible and resonant. By applying Leech and Short's theory of foregrounding, particularly parallelism, this study highlights how structural repetition functions as a vehicle for both musicality and resistance. This analysis adds a new dimension to the understanding of Aqib's work and contributes to the broader field of stylistic studies in contemporary South Asian English poetry. It opens a pathway for further exploration of how marginalized voices use linguistic patterns to resist dominant narratives and express nuanced emotional truths.

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Appendix 1

When Will These Walls Go Down

Ohh my my
Ohh my darling
When is the right time
When will the walls go down
When will I see sunshine
When it's not now
Then tell me
When is the right time
Show me what is hidden in you
What is the fear of thine
If it's not now then
Tell me When is the right time
When loving you is forbidden
Then I am OK with my crime
If a stone is pelted on you
I will be in front-line
Will it be a blue day



Or a red valentine
Ohh my my
You will be my darling
Like a the space time continuum
Like the race time redrum
Love is never weak
It's beefy browny masculine
It will win it will shine
Slow and steady cross the line
If it'd not now
Tell me when is the right time

Farzana Aqib