



EXPLORING FARZANA AQIB'S POEM *WHERE AM I GONE* THROUGH SYNTACTIC AND LEXICAL PARALLELISM

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Abstract

This study examines how the poet employs lexical and syntactic parallelism to underscore significant social and political issues. By repeating specific words, phrases, and lines, the poet draws attention to themes such as freedom, injustice, women's struggles, and the oppression of Muslims, especially in Palestine. Using an integrated stylistic approach, the research examines how these repeated patterns create rhythm and emphasis, while also reflecting the poet's deeper message. The study combines both qualitative and quantitative methods and supports interpretation through real-world references. It concludes that parallelism in the poem is not just a stylistic choice but a powerful way to protest against injustice and express hope for change.

Keywords: Parallelism, Stylistics, Lexical Repetition, Syntactic Parallelism, Foregrounding, Sociopolitical Context, Integrated Stylistic Analysis, Where am I gone, Freedom of Expression, Injustice, Pakistani Poetry.

Background of the Study

Stylistics is a branch of applied linguistics that focuses on the analysis of literary texts through linguistic features. Among various stylistic devices, parallelism plays a significant role in creating rhythm, emphasis, and coherence. Scholars like Leech and Short (2007) emphasize that repetition of words, phrases, and structures often foregrounds key themes and emotional intensity in poetry.

In contemporary times, poetry has become a powerful medium to express social and political concerns. Poets often use stylistic tools not only for artistic expression but also to reflect deeper meanings related to identity, struggle, injustice, and resistance. In countries like Pakistan, where freedom of expression is often restricted, poetry becomes a voice for the voiceless, especially in addressing issues such as women's rights, political oppression, and global injustices like the situation in Palestine.

This study investigates how a modern poet utilizes lexical and syntactic parallelism to express such concerns. Through an integrated stylistic analysis, the research aims to explore the deeper meanings created by these repeated structures and how they connect to the poet's sociopolitical context.

Statement of the Purpose

This study aims to analyze how lexical and syntactic parallelism in the poem emphasizes key themes such as freedom, injustice, and social struggles in Pakistan. Using an integrated stylistic approach, it explores how repeated linguistic patterns reflect the poet's message within a broader sociopolitical context.

Literature Review



Stylistics is the study of how language is used in literary texts. It helps readers understand how writers create meaning through their choice of words, sentence structures, and literary devices. One important stylistic feature is parallelism, which means repeating similar words, phrases, or sentence patterns to create emphasis, rhythm, and meaning.

According to Leech and Short (2007), parallelism in lines and phrases is a key technique that gives balance, draws attention to important ideas, and enhances the beauty of a text. It allows writers to foreground certain themes and make their messages more powerful. Simpson (2004) also explains that stylistics connects language with interpretation, helping to uncover the deeper meanings hidden in texts.

Furthermore, parallelism is often used in poetry to strengthen emotional impact and reflect on personal or social issues. For example, Wales (2014) notes that poets use repetition and parallel structures to express strong feelings, such as pain, hope, or resistance. These repeated patterns are not just for style, but also reflect the poet's message and tone.

Besides, studies also show that stylistic features like lexical and syntactic parallelism are commonly found in politically or socially charged poetry. These features help poets highlight injustice, inequality, or struggles for freedom. For instance, Jeffries (2010) states that language choices in literature can reflect ideologies and challenge dominant power structures. In the Pakistani context, poetry has long been used as a tool for expressing resistance, especially in situations where free speech is limited. When poets repeat lines like "Where am I" or "I melt in you," they are not just using artistic devices but also questioning society and calling for change. Scholars like Fairclough (1995) argue that analyzing language this way reveals how power, control, and resistance are represented in texts.

In short, this study builds on these works by focusing on how parallelism is used in a selected poem to reflect social, emotional, and political themes, especially those affecting women, the oppressed, and the situation in Palestine. The study combines stylistic analysis with social interpretation, making use of both linguistic and contextual insights.

Methodology

This section presents the research methodology adopted for the study. It outlines the research design, type of research, data collection method, and the data analysis technique used to interpret the selected poem. The methodology is aligned with the objectives of the study, which seeks to examine the lexical and syntactic parallelism in the poem through an integrated stylistic approach within the sociopolitical context of Pakistan.

Research Design

The study employs a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative elements. The qualitative component involves the interpretation of stylistic features and their sociopolitical significance, while the quantitative aspect focuses on the frequency and repetition of specific linguistic elements such as words, phrases, and lines to highlight the foregrounded aspects of the poem.

According to Creswell (2014), a mixed-methods design allows researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding by incorporating the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research. The study thus benefits from the depth of interpretation as well as the support of objective, countable linguistic patterns in the text.

Type of Research

This study is qualitative in its interpretive nature and quantitative in its treatment of textual repetition. The qualitative dimension allows for the detailed interpretation of stylistic features, such as lexical and syntactic parallelism, which are understood within the sociopolitical and cultural context of Pakistan. The quantitative aspect is reflected in the way



the scholar identifies and counts repeated words, phrases, and lines that serve as indicators of foregrounding and emphasis.

This dual nature strengthens the validity of the findings, as stylistic features are not only interpreted but also supported with data in numerical form, offering objectivity to the analysis.

Data Collection Method

The study employs the documentation method of data collection, where the poem itself serves as the primary source. The poem was selected from the collection of poetry named *A Stardust Drape* by Farzana Aqib through purposive sampling. No fieldwork or human participants were involved. The poetic text was studied closely to extract patterns of repetition and foregrounding. As noted by McKee (2003), documentation is a common method in stylistics and textual analysis, allowing the researcher to collect and analyze data already available in written form.

Data Analysis Method

The data was analyzed using the method of Integrated Stylistic Analysis, as proposed by Leech and Short (2007) and further developed by Simpson (2004). Integrated stylistics is a holistic approach that brings together multiple stylistic levels, graphological, phonological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic, to derive deeper meanings from a literary text.

In this study, the scholar particularly focused on lexical and syntactic parallelism, as evident in the repetition of lines such as "I am getting out of my own ways," "Where am I," and "I melt in you." These repeated patterns were analyzed for both their linguistic form and contextual implications, especially relating to freedom of expression, women's conditions in Pakistan, and political repression.

The analysis also draws on secondary sources to support interpretations. For instance, the symbolic use of the word *eyes* is connected to the Eye of Horus and is further supported by scholarly sources such as Refaey et al. (2019), Islamic hadiths, and recent psychological studies on jealousy and envy (The Science Behind Jealousy and Envy, 2024). These references validate that the linguistic choices made by the poet are reflective of broader social and cultural concerns.

This method also incorporates critical awareness of how linguistic features contribute to foregrounding, thereby enabling the readers to focus on the emotional and political undertones of the poem. The analysis is thus not purely descriptive but also interpretative, aiming to connect textual features with real-world social, religious, and political contexts.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theory of foregrounding from stylistics, especially as discussed by Leech and Short (2007), in the book "Style in Fiction". Foregrounding means making certain parts of a text stand out through patterns like repetition, parallelism, or deviation from normal language. In this research, lexical and syntactic parallelism are seen as foregrounding tools used by the poet to emphasize important ideas and emotions.

The framework also follows integrated stylistics, which combines different levels of analysis, words, grammar, structure, and context, to understand both the style and meaning of the poem. The theory helps explore how the poet uses language not just for beauty, but also to reflect real social and political problems.

Analysis & Discussion

Flow Chart

The following flow chart illustrates the application of the theory of foregrounding, based on the theoretical framework of Leech and Short (1981) as presented in *Style in Fiction*. It



highlights how parallelism, a major stylistic feature in the selected poem, functions as a form of foregrounding. Parallelism is divided into syntactic and lexical levels. Syntactic parallelism involves the repetition of lines and phrases such as "I am getting out of my own ways", "Where am I", and "I melt in you". Lexical parallelism refers to the repetition of individual words, such as "eye", which recurs for stylistic emphasis.

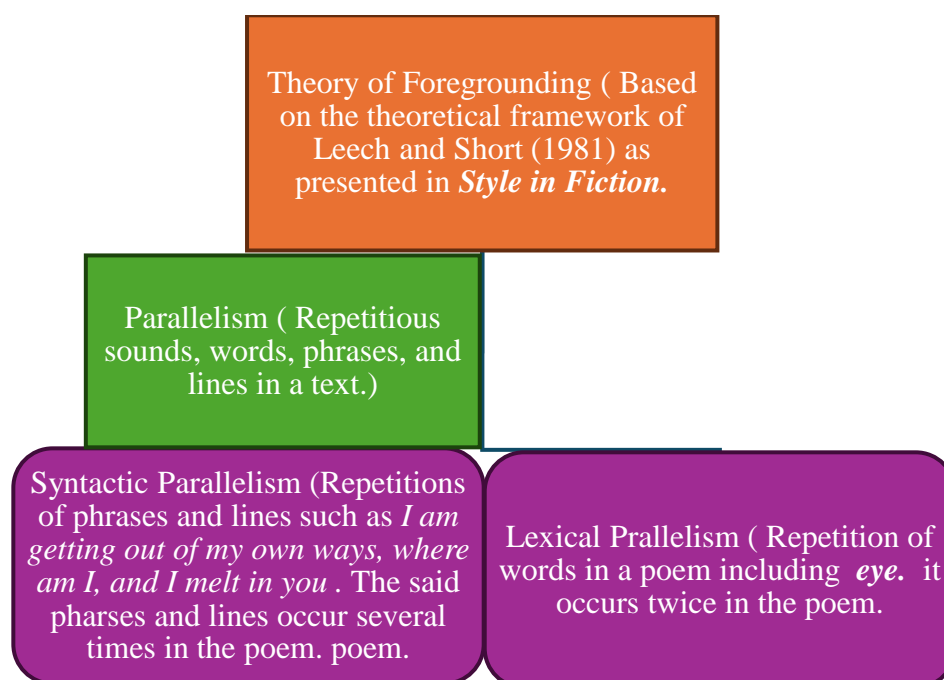


Table: Repeated Words, Lines, and Phrases in *Where am I gone*

No	Lines, phrases and word	Frequency
1	I am getting out of my own ways	Thrice
2	Where am I	Thrice
3	I melt in you	Twice
4	I made you my home I made you my comfort	Twice
5	Eyes	Twice

Syntactic Parallelism (Repetition of lines and Phrases)

Leech and Short (2007) suggest that "parallelism of lines and phrases is a key stylistic device that creates rhythm, balance, and emphasis, allowing the writer to foreground key themes and enhance the emotional and aesthetic impact of the text" (p. 62).

a) *I am getting out of my own ways*

The line *I am getting out of my own ways* occurs thrice in this poem, thereby emphasizing the idea that one should stop thinking negatively and overcome negative thoughts. The line itself sounds negative, as leaving something cannot be good; it must be bad for oneself. That is why the scholar has taken the phrase own ways for bad things or wrong methods of one's life, which are poisonous for success. Hence, it signifies that until or



unless they start thinking positively, they will not reach their goals, aims, and purposes. They will always face failure.

In addition, it also suggests letting go of the self-imposed barriers that have stopped them from self-improvement. Besides, it has almost finished its personal growth. The phrase his ways is taken for the way of one's life, the principles, based on which a person lives life. The poet is getting freedom from the incorrect methods of her life, thereby suggesting the readers too, to get rid of such hypocrisy, negative thoughts, and wrong methods of their lives, which are the obstacles to their personal growth.

In this connection, the phrase getting out in the aforementioned line also symbolizes freedom, which can be associated with the freedom of expression. In Pakistan, one cannot express oneself freely. Similarly, the line is in the present continuous tense, which reflects the continuity, thereby portraying the freedom of the speaker. The scholar opines that the poet himself is doing that thing to get liberation and freedom and to talk freely against the atrocities done to Muslims, especially in Palestine. Here, the present continuous tense reflects the ongoing protest that the speaker of the poem is still doing and protesting against Israel.

In short, the poet is trying to convey the message to say something against Israel, as they are doing the worst to Muslims in Palestine. The poet puts stress on her stance. The speaker wants the readers to have a serious talk over this issue as it is getting worse each passing day.

b) *Where am I*

The line *Where am I* occurs thrice in this poem. The line seems like a question, but it has come without a question mark. Thus, it must have a hidden meaning. Firstly, in this line, the poet is not asking but rather telling or asserting a statement. Here, this line contains the falling intonation as it is without a mark, which shows that the poet is giving information about herself. Besides, the word where is taken for this world. The line sounds very exhausting for today's world as it contains the falling intonation. It suggests that the world is full of hypocrites, liars, miseries, poverty, unhappiness, failure, betrayers, extremists, and so on. In this connection, the poet asserts that it is this world where I am, surrounded by fake and bad people, who are not even loyal to their parents. Hence, this line condemns today's world.

c) *I melt in you*

The line *I melt in you* happens twice in this poem, thereby addressing the women in Pakistan who are in pain and miserable conditions. The poet is deeply emotionally involved with those women in Pakistan who need to be sympathized. In the aforementioned line, the I shows her and you reflect those women who are in distress. Besides, it suggests that when something bad or injustices happen to them, the speaker of the poem is badly hurt. Hence, in this line, the poet has portrayed his affection towards the women in Pakistan, especially those who live in hell.

D) *I made you my home*

I made you my comfort

The lines *I made you my home*, and *I made you my comfort*, appear twice as the parallel lines in this poem. The concept of peace is shown through the words home and comfort as both words suggest peace. For the poet, peace is to serve humanity, to help the needy, to raise a voice against the atrocities done to women and poor people in Pakistan.

In this connection, the lines are in the past indefinite tense, which shows the past time. In this regard, the scholar relates the situation in Palestine to the behavior of people in Pakistan. The past reference reflects the behavior of people who used to raise their voices



against Israel. But right now, in today's Pakistan, nobody is free to say something in favor of Palestinians. At that time, to say something in favor of the Muslims in Palestine was considered peace. However, in today's Pakistan, it is no longer a peace that is why the future time reference has been avoided. Thus, the avoidance of future time reference in the poem indicates that peace is something else for today's people.

Lexical Parallelism (Repetition of words)

Leech and Short (2007) assert that "parallelism of words helps to create rhythm, balance, and emphasis, making key themes and ideas more prominent and reinforcing their significance within the text" (p. 63).

a) Eyes

The line *I fixed my eyes on your return way*, and the line *My eyes bleed in dismay* contain the word eyes twice in lines 13 and 25, in this poem. The word *eyes* leads the scholar's attention towards the ancient Egyptian deity or God who is falcon-headed and known as the Eye of Horus. Similarly, it symbolizes wisdom, healing, power, and protection from evil forces. Additionally, it was used to protect one from the evil forces at that time. It was seen as a symbol of divine protection. (Refaey et al, 2019)

In this context, in today's world, every individual is suffering from the evil forces. The evil forces can be associated with the evil eyes too, as they also have a bad influence on another person, like evil forces. Similarly, from the shadow of evil eyes in today's world, hardly anybody is left. According to the hadith, it was confirmed by the Prophet Muhammad that jealousy produces evil eyes and is capable of causing harm to others (Other Beliefs and Practices, 2012).

Besides, according to (The Science Behind Jealousy and Envy, 2024), the jealousy or envy that is borne is because of the resources, hard work, class, and opportunities. It is produced when the mentioned things we have, others do not have. Here, jealousy and envy are witnessed. Similarly, jealousy and envy are also created when experiencing someone else's success.

Thus, it grabs the scholar's attention towards those in Pakistan who are poor and do not have a class. It also suggests those who do not work hard. Hence, to do something for poor people and not hard workers or lazy people, this has been portrayed by the poet using the word eyes, thereby trying to reduce jealousy and envy, which in turn, will minimize the number of people who carry evil eyes.

Moreover, it also stands for knowledge, wisdom, understanding, protection, and vigilance. Here, it can also be taken to mean being watchful and alert to the threats. It also suggests having awareness and cleverness, as far as decision-making and interactions with others are concerned. Besides, it can also be associated with intelligence, light, and truth. (Eyes, n.d)

In this context, it is a message to those in Pakistan who are in power and have the government in their hands. The poet awakens the government of Pakistan to be alert and active at times. Anything should be expected from the neighboring countries. The speaker of the poem wants the Pakistani government to have vigilance at the border, as safety is important for the survival of every individual Pakistani.

Furthermore, it also implies creating understanding with other countries, as one country must keep the relation friendly with another. The poet also spreads the concept of getting knowledge among the illiterate people in Pakistan, as it is essential for one to have that much knowledge based on which he could spend his life without any problem.



Findings

The study found several significant stylistic and thematic patterns in the poem:

1. Lexical and Syntactic Parallelism as Foregrounding Tools

The repetition of key lines and phrases (e.g., "I am getting out of my own ways" and "Where am I") created rhythm, cohesion, and emphasis, serving as a method of foregrounding. These repeated structures guided the reader's attention to central themes such as personal liberation, internal conflict, and political protest.

2. Use of Present and Past Tense for Thematic Contrast

The contrast between present continuous and past tense verbs showed a shift from ongoing resistance to lost peace. For example, "I am getting out" suggested ongoing self-liberation, while "I made you my home" reflected nostalgia and disappointment in lost values.

3. Sociopolitical and Religious References through Language

The line "Where am I" reflected despair in a corrupt and hypocritical society. Similarly, the repeated word "Eyes" invoked both spiritual symbolism (Eye of Horus, Islamic beliefs) and modern psychological issues (jealousy, envy), linking personal suffering to broader social injustices.

4. Stylistic Features Reflecting Real-World Problems

The poet's choice of repetition, symbolism, and tense shifts reflected issues like oppression in Palestine, women's suffering in Pakistan, and the lack of freedom of expression. These stylistic features were used not just for beauty, but to highlight injustice, resistance, and hope.

5. Objectivity Through Evidence-Based Interpretation

The scholar maintained objectivity by supporting each interpretation with linguistic analysis and references from religious, cultural, and psychological sources (e.g., Hadith, Eye of Horus, and studies on jealousy), linking language to real-life struggles.

Conclusions

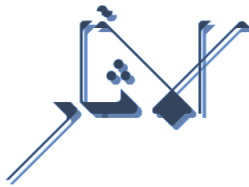
This study concludes that the use of parallelism in the selected poem is not just a literary device but a powerful stylistic and ideological tool. The repeated lines and phrases create rhythm and cohesion while expressing the poet's personal, social, and political concerns. The analysis proves that language is not neutral—it reflects power, emotion, and identity.

Through an integrated stylistic approach, the research shows how linguistic features in the poem reflect real-world problems such as political oppression, religious conflict, and social hypocrisy in Pakistan and beyond. The poem urges readers to recognize these issues and challenges them to engage in critical reflection and resistance.

Hence, stylistic devices like parallelism serve both artistic and communicative purposes, helping poets speak against injustice while offering readers a deeper emotional and intellectual experience.

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Appendix

Where am I gone by

Farzana Aqib

I am getting out of my own ways

Where am I

I melt in you

I stopped my own growth

You were the axis of my life

My south my east

And my north

Thy love trapped me like a silkworm

Now I am gone, I am unknown

I laid all my hopes on your path

I made you my comfort

I made you my home

I fixed my eyes on your return way

I wrote poems on your chivalry

I sang song for thy glory

Where I lost in between

Where am I

I melt into you

I am getting out of my own way

I have to go far away

To find me somewhere

Where am I

My mirror deny

Where is my face

My eyes bleed in dismay

I am getting out of my own way