



Stylistic Structures in the Poetry of Belkacem Khemmar: The Aesthetic Significance of Repetition as a Model

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Abstract

This study seeks to uncover the aesthetic significance of repetition as a stylistic phenomenon characterising modern Algerian poetry, particularly its revolutionary strain. It undertakes an applied examination of the poetry of Mohammed Belkacem Khemmar, attempting to discern the essence of repetition, the manifestations of its forms in his verse, and the literary, linguistic, and expressive motives that impelled the poet to employ this stylistic device. The study further explores the extent to which repetition contributes to the intensification of the poetic surge, the structuring of meanings, the deepening of semantic layers, and the enrichment of poetic text with multiple aesthetic dimensions.

Keywords: Repetition; aesthetics; stylistics; function; effect; significance; phenomenon

Structures stylistiques dans la poésie de Belkacem Khemmar : la signification esthétique de la répétition en tant que modèle

Résumé

Cette étude vise à mettre en lumière la signification esthétique de la répétition en tant que phénomène stylistique caractéristique de la poésie algérienne moderne, en particulier de son courant révolutionnaire. Elle entreprend une analyse appliquée de la poésie de Mohammed Belkacem Khemmar, en tentant de discerner l'essence de la répétition, les manifestations de ses formes dans ses

vers, ainsi que les motivations littéraires, linguistiques et expressives qui ont poussé le poète à recourir à ce procédé stylistique. L'étude explore en outre la mesure dans laquelle la répétition contribue à l'intensification de l'élan poétique, à la structuration des significations, à l'approfondissement des couches sémantiques et à l'enrichissement du texte poétique par de multiples dimensions esthétiques.

Mots-clés : *Répétition ; esthétique ; stylistique ; fonction ; effet ; signification ; phénomène*



Introduction

Repetition constitutes a technique that operates at the textual level, permeating it with a perceptible movement marked by sweetness and appeal, which in turn grants it absolute artistry and aesthetic quality. Repetition also functions as the focal point of rhythm in all its forms. Given the importance of this effective technique in weaving meaning, structuring ideas, and harmonising rhythm, modern Arabic poetry in general, and Algerian poetry in particular, has paid considerable attention to it in its construction. Algerian verse has consistently preserved this presence to stabilise its rhythm, regulate its intonations, and capture the reader's attention, allowing meanings and ideas to flow with ease. This, precisely, was the purpose pursued by Belkacem Khemmar through his use of repetition in his poetic collection.

1. Repetition: Essence and Concept

1.1. Linguistic Meaning of Repetition

Arabic lexicons have examined and clarified the term *karrara*. In *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* by al-Fīrūzābādī, it is stated that the expression derives from the root (kar), where he notes, “*Karra ‘alayhi karran wa kurūran wa takrāran*—he turned back upon him, returned; thus, he is *karrār* and *mikar*, with a kasrah on the mīm. *Karrarahu takrīran wa takrāran wa takirrah*, like *taḥillah*. *Karkarahu*: he repeated it time after time.”ⁱ

Ibn Manzūr in *Lisān al-‘Arab* affirms that the verb *karrara* signifies returning and restoring, from which derives the verbal noun *takrār*. He explains: “(*karrara*) al-karr: the act of

returning; it is said: *karrarahu* – he returned against him, and likewise *karra binafsihi*, a verb which may be transitive or intransitive. Al-karr: the act of turning back, as in *karr ‘alayhi* – he attacked him – *yaku r karran wa kurūran wa takrāran*; *‘atafa* also implies turning upon him. *Karra* means turning away or retreating. *Karra ‘alā al-‘aduww* means charging against the enemy. A man is *karrār* or *mikar*, as is a horse. *Karrara al-shay’ wa karkarahu*: he repeated it many times. *Al-karrah* refers to one instance, its plural being *al-karrāt*. It is said: *karrartu ‘alayhi al-ḥadīth wa karkartuhu* – I reiterated the discourse upon him; *wakarkartuhu ‘an kadhā*: I diverted him. *Al-karr* also denotes returning to the same matter, hence *al-takrār*.ⁱⁱ

Furthermore, Ibn Manzūr extends the meaning of *takrār* to signify iteration, recurrence in an affair, or persistent engagement with a subject: “*Karrartu al-shay’ takrīran wa takrāran... wa takarkara al-rajul fī amrihi*: the man vacillated in his matter.” He also notes that *al-mukarrar* among the phonemes is the letter *rā’*, due to the vibratory fluctuation of the tongue when it is pronounced.

Accordingly, the linguistic concept of repetition may be defined as follows: it derives from the verb expressive of withdrawing and then returning once more, as in *karra ‘alayhi kurūran*. Likewise, *karra ‘alayhi rumḥahu karran wa farran*; *karrartu ‘alayhi al-ḥadīth karran*; *karrartu ‘alayhi takrāran wa karra*.ⁱⁱⁱ

1.2. Terminological Meaning

Repetition is defined as "the occurrence of a word twice or more without generating a secondary meaning beyond the original without what may arise from the context".^{iv} Repetition is also described as "the indication of a meaning



by a word that is reiterated, as when you call someone saying 'Hurry, hurry,' wherein the meaning is repeated but the word is identical".^v Repetition manifests as a phenomenon in daily life, on the basis of alternations between movement and stillness, or the recurrence of something across equal intervals, involving the reiteration of one word and one meaning, which is termed *returning* or *refraining*.^{vi}

2. Instances of Repetition in the Poetry of Belkacem Khemmar

The repetition under discussion involves the alternation and recurrence of words within the expressive context, thereby forming a musicality intended by the poet. This poetic organisation fundamentally rests upon repetition. Belkacem Khemmar adheres to the initial tone set in the first line of his poem. Accordingly, repetition enhances poetic imagery and endows the poem with a revolutionary emotional atmosphere. This indicates that when expressing an idea, he repeats a word two or three times. Repetition pertains to actual words rather than meanings and serves multiple purposes, such as emphasis, alerting, astonishment, and intensification, thus clarifying the image and its artistic beauty. Khemmar uses this device for an affective purpose aimed at engaging the reader's emotions and sensibilities, as exemplified in the poem "Du'ā' al-Ḥaqq" (Prayer of Truth), where repetition occurs both at the level of letters and words.

The theme of revolution constitutes a sonic prominence in the poet, which is apparent in the phonetic formations composed of letters articulated at various points of

articulation. The repetition of these letters leads to their reiteration and thus creates symmetry in terms of intensity and softness. Consequently, Mohammed Belkacem Khemmar maintains the formations in terms of distribution, variation, and similarity, even if the nature of the sounds differs. The constant remains the persistence of prominence and phonetic harmony, manifested through the repetition of certain letters across the poem. This necessitates the recurrence of specific letters in speech, endowing the words bearing these letters with dimensions that highlight the poet's identity. An example is found in the verse:

No imprisonment, no treachery, deters her once she has set off

Neither time nor threat nor pain^{vii}

In this context, the repetition of the letter *lām* reveals the poet's psychological state. Moving to lexical repetition, this is clearly manifested in the verse:

The people behind you are like a launching hurricane
And behind them a nation, behind which are nations^{viii}

In addition, as in another verse: *France said, and there is no wonder in the statement*

If the one who said it has a tumour in his brain^{ix}

From these couplets, it becomes clear that lexical repetition reinstates the identical word within the discourse, enriching the semantic value of the words and conferring upon them a powerful rhetorical effect, as embodied in the lines:

Our revolution came to you, roaring and thundering

Like a flood rushing over the plains of the land of the letter *Ḍād*^x

It came to you, it came to you; no sea or mountain

Can protect you from it, neither an alliance nor servants



In these verses, repetition occurs at the word level rather than at the meaning level, and repetition at the meaning level is less frequent than at the word level.^{xi} Ibn Rashīq al-Qayrawānī contends that if both the word and the meaning are repeated, it results in a failure or loss of effect. Accordingly, the focus should be on the meanings derived from such repetition rather than on the display of artistic features. Our poet exemplifies this in his previous verses, where he repeats the words "It came to you" and "Our revolution" in other verses, such as:

Tell them, the National Liberation Front is our revolution^{xii}

Repetition is an element of the linguistic text that has made the poetic text we selected for study a cohesive and interconnected structure, with its foundation and axis being the key words through which revolution was formed as the focal point of poetic meaning.

Undoubtedly, Belkacem Khemmar was able, through repetition, to enrich meaning and elevate it to the level of authenticity. In doing so, he was able to fully control it and employ it appropriately as a poet who lived through terrible revolutionary events. Repetition thus became an active factor in the poet's experience of alienation, aiming to affirm the reality of the situation (namely, the alienation of the people within their own homeland).

Repetition has become a linguistic device capable of performing a clear expressive role in the poem *Du'ā' al-Ḥaqq* (Prayer of Truth). The repetition of a word or phrase initially suggests the dominance and insistence of this repeated element on the poet's thought or feelings. Subsequently, it

persistently emerges within the horizon of the poet's vision from one moment to another.^{xiii}

The poet's desire to repeat words during his poetic discourse reflects his keenness to emphasise the meaning carried by those repeated words, namely, love for the homeland, its sanctification, and longing for it.

The poet succeeded in choosing words suitable for his poetic purpose, through which he sought to express his emotions and suffering in a country that was not his own. This reveals harmony and coherence within his discourse, which in turn led to consonance between words and meaning. Among the words he chose to embody and paint that image, interwoven with nostalgia for the homeland and the bitterness of alienation, is the word "land," which appears in the following line:

Our land rumbled with thunder, telling it
That Algeria is neither foreign nor alien^{xiv}
In the sixteenth verse, he says:
Neither tongue nor religion unites us
Nor blood, land, nor kinship^{xv}
An army supported by united people
Land shakes, and battle fury intensifies

From these verses, it becomes clear that the poet's use of the word "land" alludes to his deep attachment to his homeland (Algeria), his love for it, and his rejection of estrangement and distance. Thus, the repetition employed by Mohammed Belkacem Khemmar is vertical repetition, which enhances the sonic texture and is realised through the resonance of letters and words. Linguistic sounds respond with varying degrees of intensity and softness, giving the poem a rhythm that corresponds to the poet's psychological state and emotions. This imparts a refined aesthetic



experience to the reader; the more repetition increases, the denser the rhythm becomes from one verse to another.

Notably, repetition is a stylistic phenomenon that is especially prevalent in contemporary poetry for semantic purposes, indicating that our poet (Mohammed Belkacem Khemmar) aligns with that contemporary period because the movement of his linguistic fabric was in the form of regulated artistic expression. Consequently, semantic dimensions flowed through the stylistic markers he indicated in his poem via textual units or artistic creativity linked to his revolutionary domain. Repetition is an expressive device portraying the turmoil within the soul and conveying the poet's escalating emotions. Hence, repetition serves as a key that spreads light through a close connection to the emotional core, stirring the reader's feelings when it enhances rhythm. Its importance manifests in two modes:

- Aesthetic importance lies in what is found in literary texts and artistic works on the basis of rhythmic movement alone, although not every movement constitutes rhythm.^{xvi}
- Utilitarian importance: This importance is reflected in facilitating memorisation and improving performance in poetic works, whether written or oral, by relying on colouring the poem to attract both auditory and visual engagement. Through these two types of importance, artistic enjoyment is achieved for the poet despite variations in repetition style between poets and from one approach to another. This variation is attributed to each poet's ability to control the pattern of repetition according to their different experiences, artistic skills, and living conditions.^{xvii}

The poet in this poem alternates between vertical and horizontal repetition, employing horizontal repetition as expressed in the line:

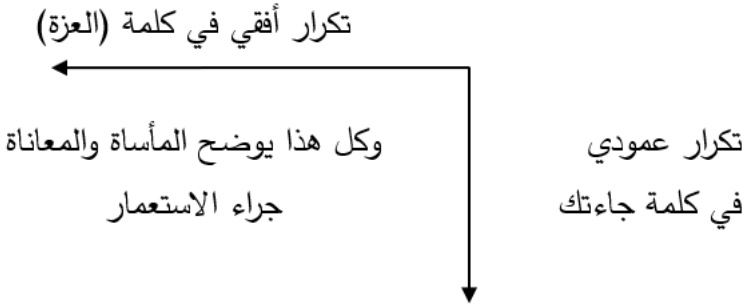
إلا إذا عزّ فيه السيف والقلم *** لا يعرف الشعب عزّا بعد ذلّته^{xviii}

However, vertical repetition is embodied in the following:

كالسيل فوق بطاح الضاد تزدهم *** جاءتك ثورتنا ثورتنا تدوي مزجرة

يقيك منها ولا حلف ولا خدم *** جاءتك جاءتك لا بحر ولا جبل^{xix}

On the basis of these verses, the horizontal and vertical forms can be illustrated in a schematic diagram:



Conclusion

Repetition in Belkacem Khemmar's poetry functions as a powerful stylistic device that enriches meaning, reinforces emotional depth, and shapes rhythmic harmony. It reflects the poet's patriotic sentiment and revolutionary experience, creating a cohesive and expressive poetic structure that deeply engages the reader's senses and emotions.



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