

SEMANTIC AND LEXICAL PARALLELISM IN *FROM SOIL TO SOUL*: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF OPPRESSION AND RESILIENCE

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Abstract

This study examines the use of semantic and lexical parallelism in Farzana Aqib's (2021) poem From Soil to Soul, focusing on how linguistic structures reinforce themes of oppression, resilience, and hope. Through a stylistic analysis, the paper explores the repetition of key lexical items (e.g., the, "will still") and contrasting semantic fields (destruction vs. endurance). The findings reveal that parallelism serves as a foregrounding device, intensifying emotional engagement and socio-political commentary. The study draws on theories from Leech & Short (2007), Wales (2014), and Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) to argue that grammatical and lexical choices shape the poem's ideological stance.

Keywords: Lexical parallelism, semantic opposition, stylistic analysis, foregrounding, resilience, oppression

Background of the Study

Parallelism is a fundamental stylistic device in literature, enhancing cohesion, emphasis, and thematic depth (Leech & Short, 2007). In poetry, repetitive structures and semantic contrasts amplify emotional and ideological messages. *From Soil to Soul* (Aqib, 2021) employs such techniques to depict the struggles of marginalized groups, particularly women and laborers, while asserting resilience. This study builds on stylistic theories to analyze how linguistic patterns contribute to the poem's socio-political commentary.

Problem Statement

While previous research has explored parallelism in poetry, few studies have examined its role in postcolonial feminist texts like *From Soil to Soul* (Aqib, 2021). This paper addresses the gap by answering:

1. How does lexical parallelism reinforce oppression and agency in the poem?
2. What semantic oppositions emerge, and how do they enhance thematic tension?
3. How do temporal linguistic choices (present vs. future) reflect the poem's ideological stance?

Literature Review

Prior scholarship highlights parallelism as a tool for foregrounding (Leech, 1969) and emotional engagement (Wales, 2014). Semino (2008) emphasizes its role in aligning readers with a narrator's worldview, while Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (2014) links grammar to social meaning. This study synthesizes these frameworks to analyze *From Soil to Soul* (Aqib, 2021), extending their application to postcolonial feminist discourse.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis employs:

1. Leech & Short's (2007) *Stylistics*: Examines parallelism as a foregrounding device.
2. Halliday's *Experiential Meaning* (2014): Interprets tense and verb choices as reflections of social reality.
3. Semantic Opposition Theory (Semino, 2008): Analyzes contrasts (e.g., "crush me" vs. "will still spark") to decode ideological tensions.

Analysis

1. Lexical Parallelism of the Word "Me"

The word "me" is repeated five times in *From Soil to Soul* (Aqib, 2021), each following violent verbs (hack, pluck, smash, crush, grind). This syntactic parallelism underscores the speaker's objectification, mirroring the systemic oppression of women in patriarchal societies (Aqib, 2021). Wales (2014) notes that lexical repetition "enhances emotional engagement" (p. 299), and here, the juxtaposition of aggression ("smash me") with fragility ("pluck me") symbolizes the dehumanization of marginalized voices.

2. Semantic Parallelism in "Will Still" Phrases

The triadic repetition of "I will still remain precious / I will still be blossomed / I will still spark" (Aqib, 2021) constructs a mantra of resilience. Semino (2008) argues that such parallelism "foregrounds thematic strands" (p. 45), and in this case, the future-tense assertions counterbalance the poem's earlier violence, offering a vision of unbroken dignity.

3. Semantic Opposition: Destruction vs. Resilience

The poem's tension arises from contrasting imperatives ("Smash me / Crush me / Grind me") and declaratives ("I will still..."). Leech (1969) describes this as "foregrounding through deviation" (p. 57), where grammatical symmetry amplifies thematic dissonance—oppression versus defiance.

4. Temporal Semantics: Present Suffering vs. Future Hope

Aqib (2021) avoids past-tense constructions, focusing instead on present brutality ("smash") and future perseverance ("will still"). Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) posit that tense choices construct social realities; here, the exclusion of the past suggests a deliberate erasure of historical subjugation, redirecting focus toward agency and change.

Conclusion

From Soil to Soul (Aqib, 2021) employs lexical and semantic parallelism to articulate a dialectic of oppression and resilience. Through repetitive structures and temporal framing, the poem amplifies its feminist and class-conscious message, aligning with stylistic theories of foregrounding and experiential meaning.

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