
МОВОЗНАВСТВО • LINGUISTICS

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31499/2415-8828.2.2023.295590>**Andrii Bezrukov***^{ID}, **Oksana Bohovyk****^{ID}
**LEXICAL REPETITION AS A TEXTUAL ELEMENT AND
MEANS OF EXPRESSION IN A WORK OF FICTION
(RUMAAN ALAM'S *LEAVE THE WORLD BEHIND*)**

The re-actualisation of the stylistic device of repetition as an element of textuality and means of expression in a work of fiction, which is manifested in its power to impact readers, their linguistic consciousness, emotional evaluation and culture of perception in a specific manner, meets the research purpose. The article focuses primarily on lexical repetition which is a means of rhythmising words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc. Rumaan Alam's most recent novel *Leave the World Behind* (2020) which has been selected for analysis is full of repetitions to give expression to the text. This is explicated through the stylistic functions of repetition which actively participate in creating literary images and semantic compatibility, ensuring narrative integrity and lexical coherence. The research methodology is primarily based on a combination of the methods of hermeneutic, linguistic and stylistic, and semantic analysis. In the article, lexical repetition is proposed to be a structural means of representation and embodiment of the concept of intensification and actualisation. Since the compositional organisation of the novel is found to be linked to its semantic structure, repetition as a textual element accentuates certain paragraph features across the book, making them semantically consistent, thus forming the semantic structure of the novel. Lexical repetition serves as a crucial element of an author's writing style contributing to the representation of authorial intent.

Keywords: author's writing style, emotion, lexical coherence, repetition, semantic structure.

Андрій Безруков, Оксана Боговик. Лексичний повтор як текстотвірний елемент і засіб експресивізації у художньому творі (на матеріалі роману Румаана Алама «Залиш світ позаду»).

Реактуалізація стилістичного прийому повтору як одного з ключових елементів текстотворення й експресивізації художнього твору, що виражається у його здатності певним чином впливати на читача, його мовну свідомість, емоційну оцінку й культуру сприйняття, визначає мету репрезентованої розвідки. Стаття насамперед фокусується на лексичному повторі, що є засобом ритмізації тексту на рівні слова, фрази, речення, абзацу тощо. Пропонований для аналізу останній роман Румаана Алама «Залиш світ позаду» (2020) насичений різного роду повторами, завдяки яким текст набуває додаткових емоційно-експресивних відтінків. Це експлікується через стилістичні функції повторів, які беруть активну участь у створенні художніх образів і формують семантичну сполучуваність слів, забезпечуючи цілісність оповіді і лексичну когерентність. Методологія дослідження базується на поєднанні насамперед методів герменевтичного, лінгвостилістичного, семантичного аналізу. У статті лексичний повтор постає структурним засобом репрезентації і втілення концепту посилення й актуалізації викладеного у тексті. Оскільки композиційна організація роману співвідноситься з особливостями його семантичної структури, повтор як текстотвірний елемент актуалізує ті чи інші характеристики конкретного уривка навіть у різних сегментах твору, роблячи їх семантично узгодженими, формуючи у такий спосіб смислову структуру твору. Лексичні повтори функціонують у межах ідіодискурсу, постаючи невід'ємним компонентом репрезентації авторських інтенцій.

Ключові слова: ідіостиль, емоційність, лексична когерентність, повторення, смислова структура.

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Introduction. The use of certain stylistic devices by authors is of research interest since helps to understand an author's writing style, as well as the thoughts and emotions of characters, conveyed through authorial intent. One of those devices is repetition, which broadly refers to the "repeated use of an expression (morpheme, lexical item, proper name, phrase, etc.) which has already occurred in the context" [Leech & Short 2007, p. 197]. From a narrow perspective, it can be seen as a deliberate deviation from a syntactic norm. That is manifested in the repeated use of identical or similar sounds, words or their parts, and syntactic constructions within the context in a certain sequence immediately or intermittently. In the article, we focus on lexical repetition. In fiction, writers use this stylistic device with the aim of captivating the reader's attention and creating the illusion of action, and rhythm. Furthermore, this device may be used to emphasise significant thoughts or information, provide a new perspective on given narratives, intensify the emotional atmosphere being created, etc.

Lexical repetition, the repetition of words and syntactic constructions in a sentence or text, is widely used in fiction to add expressiveness to a text. This type of repetition is closely related to lexical cohesion the study of which is "relevant as the role of lexical repetition patterns in English written text is controversial" [Adorján 2013, p. 2]. Lexical repetition can perform only the syntactic function of link, i.e. be stylistically neutral, and can simultaneously highlight the significance of new information, i.e. serve as a stylistic device that focuses the reader's attention on the semantics of the repeated words and the content of the sentences they appear in. When done stylistically, repetition helps the audience remember and recognise the significance of a message. Lexical organisation and its role in establishing coherence have been the focus of some influential studies [Halliday & Hasan 1976; Hoey 1991; Tyler 1994; Sinclair 1998].

Most research on expressive syntactic forms is in the field of expressive syntax which mostly continues the traditions of stylistic description of expressive syntactic structures. Among the means of expression is repetition characterised by a significant number of configurations. The *purpose* of the study lies in the re-actualisation of repetition augmented by various stylistic means to understand the emotions of characters and authorial intent. To appreciate the purpose, the following *methods* should be addressed: hermeneutic, linguistic and stylistic, and semantic analysis. Of special interest are the repetition of certain words and their relationship to the repetition and development of themes central to the narrative [Hunter & Smith 2013, p. 9]. That determines the significance of narrative strategies in a work of fiction.

For the study, the most recent novel by the American writer Rumaan Alam (b. 1977), *Leave the World Behind* (2020), has been selected. In his novel, the writer tends to use repetition to add expressiveness to the text since imagination and repetition are linked intrinsically [Casey 1975, p. 249]. Since we focus on the expressive function of repetition, we consider it appropriate to add our comments regarding the emotional colouring of both the characters' speech and the author's statements. *Leave the World Behind* contains diverse types of repetition which makes it an appropriate literary source. The book was a finalist for the 2020 National Book Award for Fiction and was assessed to have been included on twenty year-end lists featuring the best novels of 2020. Commencing as a family narrative, the plot follows Clay and Amanda and their two children, Archie and Rose, as they rent a house on Long Island to unwind. They do not notice the signs or feel the changes in the environment until the strangers (the house owners) knock on the door. The family learns that there has been a blackout in New York, communication networks are out of work and they have been left alone with an invisible terror outside. The novel creates "a pervasive atmosphere of dread that

escalates as the uncertainty of the situation the characters are facing deepens their fears” [Caracciolo 2022, p. 122].

Lexical repetition in expressing authorial intent. In the opening lines of Alam’s *Leave the World Behind*, we find an example of intermittent repetition of the noun *the sun* which appears in a short paragraph four times: “WELL, THE SUN WAS SHINING. THEY FELT THAT BODED WELL – people turn any old thing into an omen. It was all just to say no clouds were to be seen. The sun where the sun always was. The sun persistent and indifferent” [Alam 2020, p. 1]¹. The author complicates it with sentence fragmentation to create the effect of ‘broken’ thoughts. This introduction triggers anxiety, and the use of the Past Simple contributes to the notion that the depicted time marks the onset of the end for all living beings. In Alam’s novel, we often find comparisons to natural phenomena, celestial bodies, animals and plants: “[...] maybe it was traffic on a highway somewhere distant that reached you just as the persistent beat of the ocean did when you were near the ocean. They were not near the ocean” [p. 8]. The sound of water creates an atmosphere of peace, so the characters of the novel are upset by the remoteness of the vacation spot from the ocean.

Among the types of repetition with different functions in the novel, we find the following:

- nominative-chain: “A middle-class thing for middle-class people [...]” [p. 2]. The repetition of the nominative construction indicates the consumer capabilities of representatives of the middle-class individuals;
- identical: “A workday was several communiqués about the workday then under way, some bureaucratic politesse, seventy minutes at lunch, twenty minutes caroming around the open-plan, twenty-five minutes drinking coffee” [p. 4]. Such repetition indicates the passage of time, the course of events that are determined by a certain schedule and is felt as an excess in the use of the lexical item *minutes*. The repetition of words used to indicate time or direction is often used to create the illusion of motion: “Left then right then left then left then another mile or so, then left again, then two more miles, then right, not quite lost but not quite not lost” [p. 6]. The repetition of *not* in *not quite not lost* results in the transformation of the negative sentence into a positive one;
- synonymous: “What a marvel, to have a body, a thing that contained you” [p. 20]. Such repetition is used to emphasise or interpret the previously mentioned information. Sometimes such usage leads to tautology, especially when the initial reference refers to semantic primes and does not require explanation. In fictional discourse, synonymous repetition is mostly used to create an emotional impact on the readers;
- antonymous: “The car was not so new as to be luxurious nor so old as to be bohemian” [p. 2]. The lexical items *luxurious* and *bohemian* in negative parallel constructions indicate the characters’ dissatisfaction with their family’s financial situation. Some of these repetitions produce antonymy at the semantic level rather than the grammatical level: “The brain abets the eye; eventually your expectations of a thing supersede the thing itself” [p. 3]. At times, the repeated use of opposing modal verbs to express uncertainty may suggest the character lacks confidence in their convictions: “The man

¹ When referring to Rumaan Alam’s *Leave the World Behind* (2020), only a page number appears hereafter.

placing every item into brown paper bags was maybe in high school but maybe not” [p. 12].

Repetition is characterised by lexical and syntactic heterogeneity since it can include the repetition of phrases, sentences or function words, separately or in phrases or sentences, to create a coherent text. Inverted phrases repeated with comparisons emphasises the author’s focus on what is being narrated, with the aim of separating the first part of the information from the other one: “There was a scent of milk about him, as there was to young babies, and beneath that, sweat and hormone” [p. 2]. This effect is achieved by the repetitive use of the comparative conjunction *like* which describes the character: “The house was obscured by a sculpted hedgerow, someone’s pride, like a snowbank, like a wall” [p. 8]. The use of repetition with italics of a repeated lexical item enables the author not only to focus the reader’s attention on one or another piece of information but also to highlight individual components of the message: “And he did love Amanda, he loved her, he *loved*” [p. 126].

To rhythmise the text, the author uses a type of polyptoton repetition formed by the repetition of monosyllabic words with different affixes: “Amanda was account director, Jocelyn account supervisor and one of her three direct reports in the parlance of the modern office” [p. 3]. This type of repetition is further emphasised by the use of alliteration and can be observed in the following sentence: “The gravel made its gravelly sound under Clay’s leather driving shoes” (8). Use polyptoton to specify information like “Amanda had a feeling like being watched, but there was no one out there watching her, was there?” [p. 21] or to introduce a nuanced meaning to the narration: “She felt alive and if not sexy, then sexual [...]” [p. 20].

Sometimes Alam excessively repeats anaphora, adding no subject-logical information and only stylising the message. For instance, the phrase “She bought [...]” [pp. 12–13], when the author describes Amanda’s shopping during the holiday, introduces 14 sentences each of which contains information about the character’s purchase of a different set of products. Anaphoric repetition in several rhetorical questions also catches the readers’ attention. There are 11 such repetitions in the novel, indicating the character’s confusion: “Did it matter if a storm had metastasized into something for which no noun yet existed? Did it matter if the electrical grid broke apart like something built of Lego? Did it matter if Lego would never biodegrade, would outlast Notre Dame, the pyramids at Giza, the pigment daubed on the walls at Lascaux? Did it matter if some nation claimed responsibility for the outage, did it matter that it was condemned as an act of war, did it matter if this was pretext for a retaliation long hoped for, did it matter that proving who had done what via wires and networks was actually impossible? Did it matter if an asthmatic woman named Deborah died after six hours trapped on an F train stalled beneath the Hudson River, and that the other people on the subway walked past her body and felt nothing in particular? Did it matter that machines meant for supporting life ceased doing that hard work after the failure of backup generators in Miami, in Atlanta, in Charlotte, in Annapolis? Did it matter if the morbidly obese grandson of the Eternal President actually did send a bomb, or did it matter simply that he could, if he wanted to?” [p. 120]. The author’s use of repetition can appear excessive, yet a thorough examination of the examples illuminates the intentions, emotions, and behaviours of the characters. Alan reiterates the name of the house’s colour and illustrates the details to underscore its elevated position in the family’s vacation rental. To emphasise the status of the house the family has rented for their holiday, the author repeats the name of the colour and describes the details: “The en suite bath was all white (tile, sink, towels, soap, a white dish of white seashells), that particular fantasy of purity to escape the reality of your own excrement” [p. 10]. It is

evident that each colour holds a particular association, and in European culture, white is linked with affluence and success. A notable instance is a repetition accompanied by a pun, leading to an ironic response to the given information. The repetition augmented by a pun creates an ironic reaction to the information: “Millennia earlier or even just centuries, some shirtless Iroquois in hide loincloth, stoking a fire that the flesh of his flesh might dine on flesh” [p. 17].

There are instances of epiphora to clarify information or to show the character’s confusion: “Amanda watched for sharks because she had heard there were sharks. What would one of those teenage lifeguards do if there were sharks?” [p. 27]. The use of repetition in a combination of anaphora and epiphora leads to the creation of a highly expressive text: “There was a beep, then a quiet hiss, the sound of something that was not much of a sound, then another beep. They kept coming, the beeps. There was nothing but the beeps, steady but not reassuring” [p. 57]. Epiphoric repetition is an aid to the focus of attention on the information or particular reflection: “[...] thinking about some slight at the office, or remembering a production of *The Pirates of Penzance* you saw the summer between sixth and seventh grades. [...] He wasn’t actually thinking about the production of *The Pirates of Penzance* he’d seen the summer between sixth and seventh grades, though he remembered that as the golden, temporary season in which he’d still been his mother’s favorite child [...]” [p. 92]. The repetition of a key lexical item in the sentence-fragmented text indicates the character’s hesitation: “But at this point it’s home. Or home away from home” [p. 45].

Among the functions, apart from those repetition is used to increase expressiveness, its role in creating a particular intonation pattern is important. When analysing a stylistic device, it is worth mentioning the combination of parallel constructions with an anaphoric beginning, such as “Or she might just be another woman from the city spending too much money on too much food” [p. 12]. The use of anacalipsis produces a certain emotional effect to the message and consists of the use of sound imitation, recitative and chanting of individual words, phrases or sentences: “Crickets or whatever bug that was, various maybe sinister footfalls in the dried leaves of the woods beyond the lawn, the stealthy breeze moving everything, maybe the vegetal growth actually made a sound, even, the barest *scritch, scritch* of the advancing grass [...]” [p. 22].

With the help of extended repetition, that is reproduction of a speech unit with additional components, the author resorts to explanation, and sometimes to clarification of information: “Amanda stood in the astonishing, humid afternoon, listening to that strange sound of almost quiet that she missed, or claimed she missed, because they lived in the city” [p. 8]. Amanda is often given negative features in the novel, so the remark *claimed she missed* adds certain characteristics to her image depicting a person who has developed a talent for adaptation and deception. Sometimes such repetition is used to give additional details or characteristics to the object: “She folded this all together into a thick paste. The hot pasta would dull the taste of the garlic” [p. 29]. Usually, this stylistic device is used to convey information from the general to the specific. In the novel, however, we find the use of the opposite, for example: “Get out of the city and into the fresh air. It’s so different out here, the air” [p. 56]. To clarify information, anadiplosis is used when what has been said in the previous message receives additional explanation and clarification: “There was a knock at the door. A knock at the door of this house, where no one knew they were, not even the global positioning system, this house near the ocean but also lost in farmland, this house of red bricks painted white, the very material the smartest little piggy chose because it would keep him safest. There was a knock at the door” [p. 32].

Messages containing repetitions of the proper name are particularly emotional. Basically, such cases are characterised by double repetitions, and an increase in the number of repetitions indicates increased emotionality, unrestrainedness, the importance of the message: “She sat, the engine idling, to see if she had cell-phone service, and the endorphin rush of the arriving emails – Jocelyn, Jocelyn, Jocelyn [...]” [p. 13]. A general stylistic feature of sentences with redundancy of their constituents is their emphatic character, associated with an emotional impact, which draws the reader’s attention to the most important parts of the statement, as in the case of the use of framing: “There was nothing important happening at work, but it was a relief to know that for certain rather than worry that there was [...]” [p. 13]. The use of framing has the effect of constructing a more concise text in which the most important information is included precisely between repetitions. The use of this stylistic device is most characteristic of poetic works, but it can also be found in a significant proportion of expressive prose. This form of repetition can occur anywhere in the text, including a sentence, paragraph or page, to clarify the concept expressed at the beginning of the sentence: “Frightened, he was not frightened” [p. 35]. Sometimes we find examples of framing in the middle of the previous paragraph with a similar arrangement in the next: “She did not draw the curtains – let them watch, the deer, the owls, the stupid flightless turkeys – admire Clay’s still impressive latissimus dorsi [...]” [p. 23] – “The house was too far from the world to offer cellular service, but there was WiFi, a preposterously long password (018HGF234WRH357XIO) to keep out whom – the deer, the owls, the stupid flightless turkeys?” [p. 21]. The ultimate instance occurs when the framing commences with the heading and persists throughout the whole content, signifying that the title and final sentence of the text are the same. During the interval between the initial and subsequent manifestations of reiterated information, the portrayal of events occurs, elucidating and elaborating on it, leading up to the repeated usage. Notably, the repetition of the novel’s title on its pages is intriguing. For the first occasion, we note such a recurrence in the second chapter, when the family embarks on a holiday: “*Step into our beautiful house and leave the world behind*” [p. 7]. Highlighting in italics draws additional attention to the message. The same concept is reiterated later in the text when the family isolates themselves in a leased property: “He closed the door, leaving the world out there, where it belonged” [p. 38].

When analysing Alam’s novel using syntactic stylistic techniques, it becomes clear that the author frequently employs various types of syntactic repetitions to create emotional tension and describe the characters’ states. This serves to express satisfaction. Both the repetition of entire sentences and lexical items can occur in this case: “‘I’ve got it, I’ve got it.’ A little *Christ* under the breath, which was more a reflex than he realized” [p. 26] and “‘Fine, fine. Put those away and let’s eat?’” [p. 30]. Repetitions serve as a means of expressing the structural textual categories of coherence and integrity, the structural and semantic textual category of personalisation, as well as the linguistic category of expressiveness in its relationship with the adjacent categories of intensity, evaluability and emotionality. Addressing verbally or mentally the same lexical item indicates the character’s focus on a certain thought. For example, when Clay’s wife suggests that he use *a bat* to ward off uninvited guests, he is struck by a suggestion that contradicts his beliefs, as indicated by the repetition of the given noun: “‘A bat?’ Clay pictured the flying mammal. ‘A bat?’ He understood, then, but where would he get a bat? When had he last held a bat? Did they even have a baseball bat at home, and if they did, had they brought it on vacation?’” [p. 33]. The frequent use of the pronoun provides the readers with insight into the character’s preoccupation with their own thoughts and actions: “And I drove down the lane and I passed that egg stand and

I thought I knew where I was going, and I was wrong. I drove around, then I turned around, then I was really lost. I don't know how I found my way back. I heard that noise and I thought I was going to lose my mind and then there it was, the turn I had been looking for, the road up to the lane up to the house" [p. 198]. The 15-time repetition of the personal pronoun indicates the character's loss of control over his emotions and a high degree of confusion and fear. In the novel, we often find repetitions of adverbs in the constructions *such-and-such* / *so-and-so*, which are used for generalisation, perception of information as redundant or reluctance to delve into details: "Ask so-and-so about such-and-such" [p. 22].

One notable instance of repetition is polysyndeton which organises information in a chain of statements, clarifying a specific element with each iteration: "She was right, in that she didn't know the whole story, nor did Clay, nor did the people in the kitchen, nor did the junior editor who, seeing the news cross the wire, issued the alert to the millions of people who had the *New York Times* app installed on their phones" [p. 53]. The combination of inversion and conjunction directs the reader's attention to the information whilst consolidating it into a cohesive unit. Furthermore, the use of polysyndeton in conjunction with a distinct lexical unit signifies deliberate effort expended to act: "She'd pull and pull and pull at the screen, waiting for the connection to be established, waiting to see what she had missed" [p. 101].

Special attention should be given to analysing the use of modal verbs of deduction as they obscure the actual state of affairs and leave readers to speculate on future developments: "It could be a symptom of something bigger [...]. It could be fallout. It could be terrorism. It could be a bomb" [p. 58]. The confidence level of the character in the reported information is contingent on the modal verb choice, subsequently impacting the reader's assessment: "Maybe it was sixteen. Maybe he was misremembering. Maybe it was fewer!" [p. 113]. Sometimes the use of a modal verb in character speech or thought description implies prediction: "She was not yet old enough that her words would be believed. They would say she'd made it up. They would say she'd exaggerated. They would say she was a child" [p. 87]. Contextual repetition, which is often constructed using synonyms rather than exact lexical item repetition, is a type of repetition that distinguishes itself in terms of structure, e.g.: "And wonderful initials, I think. G. H. Sounds like a captain of industry, a master of his business" [p. 106].

Depending on the context in which it is used, repetition can produce different effects:

Emphasis: "Something had happened, something was happening, it was ongoing, the noise was confirmation even as the noise was mystery" [p. 127]. The repetition is used to emphasise and focus attention on repeated words.

Contrast: "Clay could make her feel better not psychically but physically" [p. 171]. The repetition of a particular word, in combination with negative conjunction, reveals the contradictions in the ideas, actions and thoughts of the characters. Nonetheless, polyptoton is one of the exemplary means of providing contrast: "In the house, Ruth lay on the bed, thinking of her daughter, and Archie slept dreamless, and Rose slept dreamful, and Clay filled glasses with ice, thinking of nothing" [p. 177].

Change: "We'll know more, and once we know more, we can decide the best thing to do" [p. 153]. The repetition might suggest a transition from one state to another, even if the repeated word remains unaltered. Sometimes such repetitions denote a shift in location: "I want to go home. Can we go home? Let's go home" [p. 221]. However, there may be a change of the word to a synonymous one which details and highlights

the described images, actions or events: “It was a zombie, it was an animal, it was a monster, it was a ghost, it was an alien” [p. 179].

Connection: “He looked at the sky. He looked at the car. He looked toward the trees” [p. 116]. The repetition links together various aspects of a sentence, multiple sentences, or distinct concepts within a paragraph or passage: “A disaster response. A disaster indicator. A disaster unfolding” [p. 199].

Conclusion. Lexical repetition is a stylistic and syntactic device that can serve as an element of textuality and add expressiveness to a work of fiction. Repetition is classified as a syntactic phenomenon based on formal structural features. This stylistic device, often augmented by figures of speech, relies on syntactic parallelism. Repetition is a stylistic feature that emphasises important elements and creates a thematic field in fiction. Additionally, it serves to intensify the author’s position and realise authorial intent.

Alam’s *Leave the World Behind* employs a range of repetitions, adding expressive power to the text. These are explicated for stylistic purposes, actively contributing to the development of an image, and generating semantic compatibility. By promoting lexical cohesion, the use of repetition integrates the various parts of the text, thereby ensuring narrative integrity. In the novel, we have found repetition taking such forms as polyptoton, anaclasis, anadiplosis, framing and polysyndeton, etc.

Exploring repetitions is relevant not only due to its theoretical significance in linguistics and stylistics but also the potential to gain a deeper understanding of artistic creativity. An author’s writing style reflects the linguistic consciousness within a unique culture. The process of conceptualising and realising the meaning of a text involves the use of repetition as a means of linking the parts of a text. The structure of a literary text relates to its semantic features. Textual elements that are repeatedly used in each fragment of a text serve to emphasise specific characteristics of an excerpt, creating semantic coherence and contributing to the overall structure of a work of fiction.

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