



## Rhetorical Resonance: Exploring the Role of Repetition and Parallelism in Pablo Neruda's Poetic Style

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### Abstract

Pablo Neruda's love poetry derives much of its poetic force from the deliberate use of repetition and parallelism, both of which constitute the poems' emotional resonance and meaning. This essay examines the aesthetic, rhetorical, and affective valences of repetition and parallelism in the love poetry of Pablo Neruda, with particular attention to *The Captain's Verses*. In this collection, Neruda's iterative phrasing, syntax, and imageries act as the means through which desire, longing, and absence are intensified. These recurring patterns generate a rhythmic and musical cadence of repetition that is distinct. Guided by Roman Jakobson's concept of poetic function, generative approaches of classical rhetoric, and stylistics based in contemporary scholarship, repetition and parallelism are analyzed as processes that assist interpretation and solicit interactivity as a reader. The strategies Neruda deploys mediate the porous boundary between private desire and communal emotion. This essay contends, through the close reading of Neruda's emblematic poems and the integration of critical theory, that these poetic devices operate in synergistic concert as instruments of structural innovation, emotional amplification, and stylistic distinction.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Pablo Neruda is one of the most recognised poets of the twentieth century. He is known for his use of imagery, lyricism, and urgency of voice. While much of the academic conversation surrounding Neruda has focused on the significance of issues like love, nature, history, and resistance, less examined has been the specific stylistic features and devices used by Neruda in order to achieve a poetic embodiment that circulates across cultures and historical moments. Repetition and parallelism are two of these devices. They should be seen not as superfluous stylistic devices, but as structural devices related to the meaning created, the rhythm orchestrated, and the emotional and interpretive connection made with readers. This essay will examine repetition and parallelism as rhetorical and poetic strategies that determine the experience and interpretation given by the reader by examining a singularly specific collection, *The Captain's Verses* (1952), which navigates both intimate and universal emotion.

While not invented by Neruda, as they are some of the oldest devices used in poetics, the stylistic elements of repetition and parallelism are used successively in his poetry. Classical

rhetoric, as seen in early texts such as Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, describes forms of speech involving repetition and parallelism as a means of bolstering persuasion but also rhythm and mnemonic resonance (Kennedy 56; *Rhetorica ad Herennium* IV). This idea carries over into modern language and literary theory. For example, Roman Jakobson's poetic function of language portrays parallelism as the essence of poeticity itself, that is, the structural repetition of forms that presents language as an aesthetic medium (*Grammatical Parallelism* 399; *Language in Literature* 27; Waugh 51). The alignment of classical rhetoric and modern linguistics as oppositional trajectories illustrates the importance of repetition and parallelism in any serious account of poetic style.

In the case of Neruda, these devices matter because they are bridges between the personal and the collective, the lyrical and the rhetorical. In *The Captain's Verses*, written during Neruda's exile and published initially anonymously, there's a cycle of love poems that oscillate between public declaration of love and affection shown privately. At first, the collection could claim to be love poetry; however, the rhetorical form is so striking, especially with repetitions and parallels, that it takes the poems beyond simple private confessions and makes them into invocations of culture, politics, tradition, and aesthetics. While repetition signals the corporeal expression of desire and also shows its repeated states of mind and recovery (Simpson 76), parallelism places personal feeling with archetypal responses that grant the poems' phrasing a musicality that matters for language (Fabb 102; Simpson 88).

The use of repetition and the parallelisms in Neruda's poetry is also meaningful when considered in respect to other theories about style and discourse. In her analysis of parallelism, Jeanne Fahnestock explains that parallelism is an argumentative and aesthetic resource: the parallels align clauses, images, or beliefs that suggest equivalence or contrast, which have meaning in their own right (*Verbal and Visual Parallelism* 154; *Rhetorical Style* 57). Likewise, Elizabeth Margulis's research on repetition in both music and speech argues that repetition promotes emotional communication because it engages anticipation and participation on the part of the audience (Margulis 2). When applied to poetry, this perspective suggests that Neruda's refrains, his repeated motifs, and his syntactic repetitions are not merely ways of composing but ways of deepening readers' understanding of and emotional investment in the experience of the poem.

The musicality induced by repetition and parallelism also situates Neruda in a transhistorical continuum of poetic practice. Scholars have noted that parallelism constitutes Western rhetoric as well as many different oral and written traditions throughout the world (Silverstein 183; Jakobson, 402). Neruda's parallelism relates to the verbal aspect of his contemporary lyricism, but there is also nothing implicitly modern about his use of it. The musicality of repeating

sounds and the structurally repeating forms of *The Captain's Verses* reveal what Nigel Fabb calls "verse as memory," the idea that repetition creates an experience of cognitive memorability for the poetic text and an intense emotional experience for the reader (Fabb 99). Repetition and parallelism embed Neruda's poems in a form where the reverberation of each poem extends beyond the private love affair they document.

While acknowledging the value of these stylistic features, scholarship on Neruda has mostly emphasised themes over form. In their respective critical studies of *The Captain's Verses*, scholars emphasize its autobiographical intensity and its transitional place in Neruda's poetics based on the poet's relationship with Matilde Urrutia or as a transitional position for Neruda himself which moves between political and personal poetics (de Costa 47; Santí 88). These are both relevant contexts, however, one can also lose sight of how the poems accomplish their ambitions at the level of language and form. If the focus is on repetition and parallelism, Neruda can be appreciated better as a poet of passion and politics and also as a poet and rhetorician. This leads to an appreciation of how all of his poems, even the most intimate, participate in traditions of persuasion, rhythm, aesthetic foregrounding, and other practices encouraged by rhetorical traditions.

When the rhetorical nature of *The Captain's Verses* are considered, another way to delineate those elements becomes clear if Aristotle's model of rhetoric is examined. As Waugh observes, the poetic function that Jakobson describes allows for a shift of attention from what is being said to how it is being said, which creates an opportunity for a more profound interpretive investment (Waugh 62).

Repetition and parallelism in Neruda also signify his intertextual relation to other traditions. Many critics have argued that Neruda draws on European modernism as well as the oral traditions of Latin America, and combines avant-garde experiments with folk rhythm and song (Perriam 75; Santí 102). In this sense, readers can understand his use of parallel structures as a product of both modernist technique and cultural inheritance. The refrains in *The Captain's Verses*, for example, draw on the cyclical repeats of popular song, which links the personal love affair to collective cultural expression. Meanwhile, the boldly articulated variations in the repetitions point to the modernist sensibility of reconnecting iteratively without reproducing culture wholesale.

This dual function, that is the simultaneous personal-collective and modern-traditional function, helps to explain why *The Captain's Verses* is still engaging readers more than seventy years after its publication. The emotional resonance in these poems arises from their rhetorical property, and this rhetorical property arises from the repetition and parallelism that make up the poems. As Fahnestock and Simpson explain, stylistic devices are ornamental as well as

they are constitutive. They impact how the texts say what they say and how audiences respond (*Rhetorical Style* 61; Simpson 92). By placing Neruda's love poetry into the context of rhetorical and poetic theory, it becomes clear how these stylistic options make intimate experiences seem universal.

These devices are used in form and in function as rhetorical actions that create emphasis, cadence, and emotions. Analysis of the selected texts in the collection showcases how repetition illustrates both tenacity and yearning, and how the devices of parallelism provide hints of equivalence and contrast, which creates an auditory experience with layers of meanings. In the end, the essay hopes to show that Neruda's distinctive poetic manner arises not simply because of the power of his themes, but because of the rhetorical stance of his forms. In this sense, this analysis engages discussions of style in modern poetry, and asserts that modes of sound, rhetoric, and cross-cultural poetics derived from ancient forms of rhetoric still energise language for literary use in the contemporary moment. It also calls for a renewed sense of engagement with Neruda in contemporary scholarship, not only as a poet of love and politics but as a rhetorical craftsman. The rhetorical devices of repetition and parallelism, which make his words memorable and persuasively poignant, also help his poetry live on as a timely conversation between past and present, personal and collective, form and feeling.

The present study is justified by a conjunction of theoretical advance and contemporary critical exigencies. While repetition and parallelism in Pablo Neruda's verse have long engaged scholarly attention, there remains an undeniable lacuna that calls for a new and more rigorously contextualised examination. This study does not repeat older readings. What it does is to reconceive the same formal phenomena of repetition and parallelism as operative mechanisms of cognition and sociality, whose meanings can only be fully apprehended in light of recent developments in literary theory, rhetorical studies, and digital methods.

Theoretical developments since the 1980s create new conceptual resources for understanding why form matters. The argument that poetic devices are merely ornamental has been superseded by frameworks that regard form as constitutive of thought and feeling (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). At the same time, reader-response and reception theories have refined the account of how texts solicit interpretive activity (Iser 1978). Bringing these traditions into deliberate conjunction with Jakobsonian insights on poetic equivalence and with contemporary work on rhetoric as a cognitive practice (Jakobson 1960; Fahnestock 2011) helps the study position repetition and parallelism as mechanisms that structure perception not only expression and regulate emotional expectations. In short, formal repetition becomes a site of epistemic performance and a means by which cognition and feeling are orchestrated in the act of reading.

Also, methodological innovations distinguish this research from predecessors. Earlier treatments were largely descriptive and close-interpretive. This inquiry supplements close reading with: a cognitive-poetic vocabulary that links syntactic and phonetic recurrence to processes of anticipation and affective entrainment (Stockwell 2002; Margulis 2014); and stylometric and corpus-analytic techniques that permit the systematic mapping of recurrent patterns across *The Captain's Verses* and comparable lyric corpora. This mixed method of hermeneutic finesse and empirical patterning renders claims about repetition and parallelism explanatorily richer and evidentially more robust. The result is an augmentation of quantitative patterns that guide attention to loci and where formal repetition most densely mediates affect and meaning.

In sum, the study is important now because it reconceives long-studied stylistic devices in the light of new theoretical vocabularies and methods. It also supplies analytic precision by joining hermeneutics to empirical patterning; and it presents the contemporary stakes of performativity and translatability that render Neruda's repetition and parallelism freshly instructive for twenty-first-century criticism.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In order to appreciate Pablo Neruda's unique poetic style in *The Captain's Verses*, there's a need to use a methodological framework that attends to the linguistic fabric of his language and the rhetorical effects of his devices on the reader. Repetition and parallelism are two major devices that permeate Neruda's verse, and they do not function merely as surface adornments, but as key devices for effecting rhythm and emphasis in his poems.

In considering their use in Neruda's poems, this study will draw upon two different theoretical traditions which developed independently in distinct intellectual environments: Roman Jakobson's theory of the poetic function (with its structuralist emphasis on parallelism as the key feature of poetry) and the classical rhetorical tradition (which recognises repetition and parallelism as persuasive and stylistic devices that increase effect and memory). Taken together, the concepts these theories subsume will allow for a more detailed understanding of Neruda's work by accounting for the structural aspects of his poetic style and its pragmatic aspects.

Roman Jakobson, one of the most important linguists and literary theorists of the twentieth century, placed parallelism at the centre of what makes poetry different from other languages in his well-known statement, "the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection to the axis of combination" (*Language in Literature* 27). What may seem like a technical statement actually has deep meaning. In addressing standard everyday language usage, a corresponding term from a paradigm is selected, that is, choose one word from all of

the possible synonyms, and then string them together in an utterance in some sequential manner. For Jakobson, poetry initiates a different process that uses the relations of equivalence that exist across the categories of choice or selection and those of sequence and order of combination.

Equivalence itself is not an absence of relation. Equivalence produces parallelism, which Jakobson identifies as the formative act of poetic discourse. This can be understood using references to *The Captain's Verses*. Neruda is particularly adept at using parallel structures, those that allow successive lines to share structure commensurately while varying lexically. In doing so, Neruda, like Jakobson states above, reaffirms that equivalence relations create the structure for poetic combination. By repeating a phrase or rhythm, the poet sustains the verse's integrity beyond ornament and compels readers to attend to the words and to the emotional tones that the language generates. Jakobson's essay, *Grammatical Parallelism and its Russian Facet*, develops this intuition with cross-linguistic examples to show that parallelism is not a feature of one tradition, but a nearly universal principle of poetic construction. Thus, with Neruda, one observes that repeated imagery and repeated phrases are not merely stylistic tics. Rather, they are central to the very existence of his poetry.

Jakobson's ideas resonate with the idea of foregrounding, which was later developed by the Prague School stylisticians and some contemporary linguists. Foregrounding is how poetic language calls attention to itself, either through deviation from normative language use or intensification of patterning (Simpson 88). Parallelism is a particularly effective foregrounding. When readers encounter repeated structures, they are prompted to shift their attention and understanding from propositional content to linguistic form, which helps to frame their interpretation. Thus, Neruda's incessant repetitions of words, phrases, and rhythmic units are ways to foreground intensity itself, and focus on the overwhelming force of love, longing, or loss. The form adds to the emotion as much as it does to the meaning, which is then experienced as rhythm.

Subsequent developments in linguistic anthropology have drawn further attention to the cognitive and cultural dimensions of parallelism. Linda Waugh concurs with others who have noted that parallelism governs how readers see and engage texts to forge expectations of connection and of contrast. Similarly, in his consideration of parallelism in oral and ritual discourse, Michael Silverstein notes that it is effective for rank ordering importance in the drive for memory stages for oral depositions, as well as for the marking of heightened significance (Jakobson 183). These consistently suggest that the use of parallelism in Neruda is an evidence of a general human proclivity, in which the fact of repetition conveys something beyond aesthetic gratification or provides a hook into the brain for organising thought. From a narrative



perspective, this means that Neruda's verse is not simply a self-representation but one that relies on a cultural structure (in this case, a genre to which the audience brings their own cultural understanding) and utilises the mental workings of the audience's apparatus that are symbolically represented through repetition and order to create meaning.

While Jakobson investigates the structural logic of parallelism, classical rhetoric offers another complementary framework that categorises these devices into their history of development within the tradition of persuasive style and ornamental style. Repetition and parallelism have long been recognised as central to practical discourse, beginning with Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*. Even before Aristotle established that his considerations of style could contribute to more than beauty, he argued that it could help an argument be clearer, more memorable, and more emotional (Kennedy 132). Recognising the power of rhythm, balance, and repetition to soothe and unite listeners was just as advantageous to memory retention. Rhetorically, repetition and parallelism are framed not as structural necessities, but as intended choices. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, the earliest surviving example of a Latin rhetorical manual, articulately details the most extensive inventory of these devices. The manual distinguishes figures of repetition such as anaphora (the repetition at the beginnings of clauses), epistrophe (the repetition at the ends), and symplexe (combining both); as well as figures of parallelism such as isocolon (clauses of equal length) and antithesis (balanced oppositions) (IV.14).

Each of these figures aims to recall meanings, embed phrases in the memory of the others, and amplify a rhythmic effect. Neruda's poetic practice is similar, though from a contemporaneous historical moment. The recurrence of phrases in the openings of lines is a repetition of form that is anaphora; the balance of clauses suggests isocolon; and his swings of desire and denial often occasion an antithesis. Rhetorically, these are not merely formal gesticulations of a style or aesthetic. They are persuasive acts that aim to convince the beloved of devotion, the reader of sincerity, and the crowds to share a rhythm of emotion.

Modern rhetorical scholarship is indeed developing this kind of work. In *Rhetorical Style*, Jeanne Fahnestock shows how parallelism is rewarding with symmetry and allows for logical inference to take place, as syntactic equivalence leads to semantic equivalence or semantic contrast, directing how an audience makes sense of communicated information (61). Repetition serves to focus attention on elements that require retention or affirmation. Drawing on research in music, Elizabeth Margulis contends that repetition facilitates anticipation and intensifies emotional response, thereby enabling audiences to form emotional connections with recurring structures (2). From one angle, Neruda's repetitions serve as rhetorical intensifiers that shape the emotional involvement a reader feels when they engage with the poem.

The conjunction of Jakobsonian poetics and rhetorical stylistics allows for a rich understanding of Neruda's writing style. Jakobson provides insight into the structural necessity of parallelism within the context of defining poetic discourse. At the same time, rhetoric facilitates a discussion about a pragmatic usage of parallelism for purposes of persuasion, emphasis, and memory. One way to view poetry is from the angle of its form, and another way is from the angle of effect. In Neruda's *The Captain's Verses*, interfacing parallelism reflects how the two sides can work together. His use of parallel structure, at times, emphasises equivalence according to Jakobson and emphasises the language itself. At the same time, the parallelisms operate rhetorically to persuade and address love interests, engage the reader, and locate desire or memory through repetition. The result is poetry that is structurally patterned and pragmatically useful.

This theory positions repetition and parallelism as the chief features of Neruda's poetic style. These are necessary operations that produce an experience of rhythm, convey a meaning, and connect readers on the intimate and universal levels. Jakobson gives a reminder about equivalence structures as producing poeticity, whereas rhetoric also reminds readers that equivalence structures exist as persuasion and emotion. Combined, the traditions assist in analysing *The Captain's Verses* as a text where language is both an art and action.

### **3. REPETITION AND EMPHASIS ON THEME**

Repetition in Neruda's *The Captain's Verses* is the central poetic strategy through which the poet constructs intimacy. His use of recurrent phrases, refrains, and cyclical structures produces the architecture of feeling the anthology is riddled with. Repetition in these poems generates continuity between the immediacy of emotion and its recollection in language. It is through recurrence that Neruda gives shape to the persistence that comes with love, and it also through repetition that Neruda turns speech into an encomium of remembrance. The rhythmic reiterations and refrains extend the poem's temporal reach. As Jakobson observes, poetic repetition heightens the "palpability of the sign" and transforms language into an experience that is simultaneously cognitive, musical, and affective (*Language in Literature* 27).

In the collection, *The Captain's Verses*, repetition is the foundational stylistic and emotional device through which Neruda sustains the continuity of passion and the rhythm of remembrance. In "Lovely One," for instance, the recurrence of the titular phrase at the beginning of each stanza, except the fifth, establishes an anaphoric rhythm that personalises and ritualises affection.

This recurrence draws the readers attention to every verse that follows the titular phrase and marks it as important. One such is:



all that is mine, lovely one,  
all that is mine, my dear,  
when you walk or rest,  
when you sing or sleep,  
when you suffer or dream,  
always, (35)

This sustained anaphora achieves a devotional quality and the reader feels the impact more because it is led with a call. Each recurrence of “lovely one” renews the utterance of affection, which makes the act of naming an affirmation of love’s constancy. The repetition enacts the persistence of desire and devotion and stands as an invocation of an incantation. Through the mention of phrases that represent daily gestures, such as walking, resting, singing, sleeping, the poetic persona merges and creates a relation between the habitual and the sacred. This, in turn transforms the ordinary habitual moments and actions into expressions of possession and tenderness.

In “The Fickle One,” Neruda employs refrain and incremental repetition to express the inevitability of pursuit and the relentlessness of longing. He uses the lines “After them all / I go” twice to appear as a sort of refrain. This gives a pulse throughout the rest of the poem and performs what Roman Jakobson would call the “equivalence in sequence” that characterises poetic language (*Language in Literature* 27). This cyclical return dramatises the speaker’s unceasing movement toward the beloved, while also suggesting emotional futility. Later in the same poem, the poet turns to a series of syntactic repetitions that form a cumulative structure of creation and belonging:

made of all the gold  
and of all the silver,  
made of all the wheat  
and of all the earth,  
made of all the water  
of the sea waves,  
made for my arms,  
made for my kisses,  
made for my soul. (23)

Here, anaphora is used together with epistrophe to create what Fahnestock identifies as semantic reinforcement, and it produces a sonic rhythm that both intensifies and stabilises emotion (*Verbal and Visual Parallelism* 162). The repeated “made of” and “made for” phrases generate a catalogue of possession and devotion. This creates an almost liturgical tone. The

repetition serves as the architecture of emotional logic. Each of the iteration reasserts love's omnipresence and the speaker's total surrender to it.

In "September 8<sup>th</sup>," the opening lines demonstrate a triple repetition of temporal reference, functioning as both anaphora and epizeuxis:

Today, this day was a brimming cup,  
today, this day was the immense wave,  
today, it was all the earth. (9)

This repetition situates experience within the immediacy of the present and magnifies the emotional intensity of the day described. The recurrence of "today, this day" performs what Margulis terms "cognitive-emotional amplification," where repetition induces heightened attentiveness and affective resonance (2). Through this device, the poem suspends time by transforming the temporal into the eternal moment of passion.

In "Lives," Neruda's repetition assumes an existential mode:

that I am not,  
that I do not exist,  
that I am only the front of those who go with me,  
that I am stronger (97)

The successive clauses display syntactic repetition, where the repetition of "that I am" and "that I do not" forms a structure of negation and affirmation. The device here embodies what can be termed duality of structure. It allows contrastive meanings to coexist through parallel form. The reiteration of self-denial paradoxically constructs identity through negation. This in turn converts the poet persona's absence into presence and his fragility into strength.

"Epithalamium" is another poem in the book that gives another form of repetition that is similar to ritual invocation.

Our love was born  
outside the walls,  
in the wind,  
in the night,  
in the earth, (135)

Later, in the same poem, he makes another invocative verse:

as if I had never walked  
except with you, my heart,  
as if I could not walk  
except with you,  
as if I could not sing

except when you sing. (141)

The repeated syntactic frame “as if I could not” exemplifies a prosodic alignment, which is simply a situation where rhythm and syntax produce continuity of sentiment. This sort of repetition enacts the dissolution of individuality in love, constructing a shared existence through linguistic mirroring. The phrase “Our love was born” is followed by a series of spatial and elemental complements that situates love as a natural and cosmic event. The repetition adds emotion as a core condiment of material imagery by giving it a mythic and human dimensions.

In “The Infinite One,” repetition is used as a corporeal motion:

In that territory,  
from your feet to your brow,  
walking, walking, walking,  
I shall spend my life. (31)

The triple repetition of “walking” acts as a sonic embodiment of persistence. It suggests continuity, movement, and devotion, whose end goal is to evoke the rhythm of pilgrimage. The line performs the content and also aligns verbal pattern with the embodied motion itself.

Another poignant example of repetition is seen in “The Queen”. The poem accurately demonstrates Neruda’s use of parallel repetition through comparative structures:

There are taller ones than you, taller.  
There are purer ones than you, purer.  
There are lovelier than you, lovelier.  
Only you and I,  
only you and I, my love,  
listen to it. (5)

The repetition of “There are... than you” is syntactic and it constitutes a parallel triad of comparisons, each of which doubles in intensification. This technique aligns with classical isocolon, where balanced clauses enhance memorability (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* IV.14). The refrain “only you and I” concludes the poem in epistrophe. It reduces multiplicity to singularity and transience to intimacy. The repetition converts the poem’s comparative logic into a unique affirmation and transforms contrast into unity.

All through *The Captain's Verses*, Neruda uses repetition as the pulse of his lyrical vision not as mundane rhetorical excess. Through his use of recurrent phrases, similar structures, and rhythmic repetitions, Neruda reconstitutes the emotional space of love and longing. His repetitions engage cognition and emotion alike, but more importantly, the use of repetition transforms the language into a lived and resonant experience.

#### 4. PARALLELISM AND MUSICALITY

In *The Captain's Verses*, the voice of Pablo Neruda is not driven by repetition alone, but also by parallelism, which is a structural and rhythmic method of creating musicality as well as amplifying the expression of themes. What's more, parallelism is also the systematic alignment of grammatical, semantic, or phonetic forms, works with repetition to create a rhythm that feels like a song. By using parallel forms, Neruda creates a layered, cyclical mode of engagement with the text that allows the readers to see emotion existing both as a semantic meaning and as a form of music (Jakobson 27; Fahnestock, *Verbal and Visual Parallelism* 160).

In Neruda's poetry, parallelism is almost always syntactic, meaning that the repeated forms for sentences or clauses align sequential lines with clear rhythmic parallels. Consider the line from another of his poetry collection, *One Hundred Love Sonnets* titled "Sonnet XVII": "I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where."

Each clause in the line has reflected syntax that all conjoin to produce a rhythmic quality to the text. The coordination of the temporal modifiers mar the indefinable permanence of love. Fahnestock states that parallel structure "allows a complete series of clauses to produce both semantic reinforcement and a sense of auditory continuity" (*Verbal and Visual Parallelism* 162). So, it's not just in *The Captain's Verses*, but many of Neruda's poetry that he uses parallel structures to register closeness of meaning and to also encourage the reader to enter into the emotional modulation of the speaker, which reflects the pulsating cycles of desire.

From a Jakobsonian perspective, parallel structures demonstrate the projection of equivalence. According to Jakobson, poetry highlights equivalence relations, whether syntactic, phonetic, or semantic, so that the literary form of the language is made visible to the reader (*Language in Literature* 27). Neruda's poetic use of parallel syntactic structures functions as musical motifs that generate meaning as well as sound (Jakobson, "Grammatical Parallelism and Its Russian Facet" 412). The parallels of form and feeling create a reading experience that is simultaneously emotional and thoughtful, (Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style* 61). For example, take the excerpt below;

If suddenly you do not exist,  
if suddenly you are not living,  
I shall go on living.

...

if you die

I shall go on living." (*"The Dead Woman,"* 107)

Here, Neruda uses **syntactic and semantic parallelism** to reinforce emotional durability. The conditional “if” structure initiates each clause, and this creates rhythmic equivalence while the verb phrase “I shall go on living” shows constancy amid potential absence. The effect is both musical and existential in the sense that the persistence of life becomes a refrain that mirrors the endurance of love beyond physicality.

Repetition is used in parallel structures to amplify thematic intensity. As Fahnestock elaborates, meanings conveyed by repeated patterns have associative meanings with the meanings conveyed by parallelism. Both repeated patterns and parallelism create recognition for the reader (“Verbal and Visual Parallelism” 162). In the poetry of Neruda, love enumerations, gestures of desire, or equivalents for absence are usually completed using structures in parallel form that build cumulative dramatic tension.

if little by little you stop loving me  
I shall stop loving you little by little.

If suddenly  
you forget me  
do not look for me,  
for I shall already have forgotten you. (“If You Forget Me,” 77)

This passage exemplifies syntactic and antithetical parallelism. Each clause begins with “If” to establish conditional symmetry, yet the meaning shifts from affection to negation. The symmetry of structure against the asymmetry of emotion produces a reciprocal tension that renders love as a conditional equilibrium. The emotion is almost dialogic. On the one hand, love is sustained only in mutual rhythm; on the other hand, the structure shows the reciprocity of affection and loss.

The repetitions discussed resonate with recognised patterns of cadence and emphasis for readers. This gives them a sense of the constancy and urgency of feeling as a reflection of the emotional experience of the poem (*Language in Literature* 28).

Parallelism is not simply operationally agenda-ridden. It is also operationally semantic and allows thoughts about differences even in sameness. Waugh warns that parallel structure may almost invite an expectation of association and contrast, thus influencing the incipient interpretative experience since it focuses attention on patterns of relationship (59). In *The Captain's Verses*, Neruda parallels and juxtaposes love and absence, presence and distance, desire and denial, in parallel structures on several occasions.

If your foot slips again,  
it will be cut off.

If your hand leads you  
to another road  
it will rot away.  
If you take your life from me  
you will die  
even though you live.” (“*The Slip*,” 59)

This is a clear instance of **syntactic and moral parallelism in the excerpt above**, in which the repetition of the conditional “If” and the resultative “it will” constructs a rhythmic triad of admonition. The structure reinforces inevitability through recurrence and makes the moral law of fidelity sound almost incantatory. The effect is ritualistic, with each condition and consequence continuing on like stanzas in an ancient edict.

To explore these parallel structures acknowledges the fluidity of polar oppositions, which arguably enhances the emotional experience of the poem. Margulis also sees this link between expectation and parallelism in language. He notes that repetition and aligned structure in language increase tension of anticipation, and therefore emotional engagement, which is similar to what is experienced in music (2). Neruda’s recurrent use of parallelism in non-representational ways creates a similar phenomenological effect through the aural representation of desire and longing.

Classical rhetoric can add to our understanding of the musical and structural effects of parallelism. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* lists figures such as isocolon (—the balance of clauses of the same length) and antithesis (the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in parallel structures (IV.14). Neruda often draws upon isocolon in creating a balance of metre and a balance of rhythm where antithesis allows for musical tension and resolution in text (Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style* 61). The composition of both can allow for a type of lyric orchestration where repetition and balance in structure (without needing to have form rhyme) resonate with readers as a sense of the underlying musical composition of the song.

It is I, my love,  
who knocks at your door.  
It is not the ghost, it is not  
the one who once stopped  
at your window. (“*The Question*,” 61)

This excerpt demonstrates **isocolonic and antithetical parallelism**. The opening repetitions of “It is” and “It is not” create measured symmetry while also marking difference. The opposition between presence and absence is structured grammatically through parallel syntax. This



parallel choice is intentional and it transforms the line into a rhythmic and rhetorical declaration of identity.

Moreover, parallelism patterns have a phonetic depth influenced by sound or music. Jakobson elaborates that phonetics built by repeated consonants, repeated vowels, or stressed syllables should also be thought about in the development of seams and coherence in poetry (*Language in Literature* 28). For example, in the poem “Your Feet”, Neruda writes: “When I can not look at your face / I look at your feet” (11). Here, short-line parallelism heightens intimacy by paring syntax to essential gestures. The parallel choice establishes a rhythmic equivalence that mirrors devotion and persistence. The sound pattern of “l” and “k” create phonetic cohesion, and the structural mirroring converts physical absence into visual substitution. The feet, then, becomes a metonymy for presence.

Throughout *The Captain's Verses*, when phonetic representations of patterns such as assonance and consonance are created, rather than single repeated sounds, phonetic sound patterns are combined more often than not with parallel syntactic structures, which highlights the multi-layered aural qualities of a principal repetition that reinforce thematic intensity throughout the poetry. In the concurrence between sound patterns created by phonetic repetition and parallel construction, Neruda suggests a more engaged reading experience that simultaneously trains the reader in lyric and performance.

Computational works looking at poetic style, like those by Kaplan and Blei, offer further empirical evidence for the meaning of parallelism at the structural level. Kaplan and Blei show that syntactic recurrence patterns are highly predictive of rhythmic coherence for reader perception. Bothwell et al. show that parallel structures increase reader predictability and aesthetic recognition. Both studies suggest that repetitively, structurally aligned lines have meaning, thereby they increase cognitive fluency.

In a related fashion, parallelism in Neruda's verse also invites participation, thus linking it directly to the effect of repetition, which is engagement. Silverstein notes that repeated, parallel patterns help to create memory (184). Iser's implied reader and Rosenblatt's transactional model imply that the structural components that serve to explicate or align parallel structures invite the reader to expect and act to complete rhythmic arcs and thematic pathways (Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style* 62). In *The Captain's Verses*, for example, parallelism is used consistently as a structure that is predictable and flexible. These patterns guide interpretive processes and usher the reader into the poem's rhythm. This results in an interactive, immersive experience of the text.

Also, parallelism places Neruda in larger lyrical and cultural conventions. Biblical verse, Spanish lyric poetry, and Whitman's long lines all follow parallel structures to create

musicality and emotional depth (Kennedy 132). With these adaptations, Neruda shows that parallelism can work well with historical poetic conventions, but also pushes form to create a unique style. The musicality of the poems reinforces thematic meaning and reveals Neruda's command of traditional and contemporary forms (Fabb 45).

Our love was born  
outside the walls,  
in the wind,  
in the night,  
in the earth." (*"Epithalamium,"* 135)

This illustrates **anaphoric and isocolonic parallelism**, where prepositional phrases of equal measure follow one another in rhythmic sequence. The effect is ritualistic and incantatory, and draws on biblical and liturgical cadence. The recurrence of "in" grounds the poem's transcendence in the physical world.

In culmination, parallelism and repetition generate a polyphonic effect that causes lines and stanzas to have multiple layers of meaning and sound. Fahnestock states that parallel structures, combined with repeated prototypes, produce expectation as well as surprise that, in turn, intensifies both cognitive and emotional engagement (*Verbal and Visual Parallelism* 165).

Parallelism in *The Captain's Verses* serves as a primary agent of musicality, and it relies heavily on repetition as its natural partner to engage cadence, rhythm, and thematic perspectives. By using syntactic, semantic, and phonetic alignment, Neruda literally turns linear verses into cyclical experiences that enact love, desire, and absence as continuous and often ruler-less (Jakobson *Language in Literature* 27; Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style* 61).

Generally, the use of parallel structures determines direction and meaning, opens up participatory experience, and increases emotional intensity, which enables a lyrical and co-constructive reading experience (Margulis 2; Kaplan and Blei). Therefore, the combined use of parallelism and repetition in *The Captain's Verses* creates music that cannot be divorced from meaningfully expressing the thematic content, so that what his poetry provides is not just the text, but an auditory and emotionally immersive experience.

## 5. READER ENGAGEMENT AND INTERPRETIVE RESONANCE

Neruda's use of repeated phrases and parallel form in his poetry engages readers in a way that the physical act of reading becomes an experiential and therefore interpretive act. These strategies enable the reader to engage not just by meaning or sound, but also by rhythm, emotional content, and the thematic trajectory of the poem. The interplay between repetition, parallel phrases with similar syntactic forms, and cumulative parallel form only guides the

reader to pre-empt and instantiate the lyrical gestures described by Neruda emotionally (Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style* 62).

Some theoretical approaches to reading explain this. Wolfgang Iser argued that the implied reader represented by texts is specifically designed to appeal to participation, which often requires filling in missing ideas or seeing visible relations between two or more ideas (Silverstein 184). The repeated features of desire motifs and recurring parallel forms allow the reader to tap into their participation as they follow a pre-established structure that is open to interpretation. For example, by repeating the phrases about desire for absence in earlier sections of the stanzas, Neruda invites the reader to create similar themes, anticipate emotional ideas as they arise, and engage emotionally with the speaker. Similarly, Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory emphasises the co-creation of meaning between reader and text. In Neruda's work, repetition and parallelism establish the conditions for such co-creation, which enables readers to become partners in the poetic interpretation (Waugh 61).

Additionally, the musicality of parallel structures also adds to emotional engagement. Cadenced sentences, equally semantically itemised, and repeated sounds create soundscapes that invite emotional resonance (Jakobson, *Language in Literature* 27; Margulis 2). Readers absorb these rhythmic patterns and join in with the poem's musical metre and emotional engagement as the patterns of temporal comparison signal strong connections to each poem's themes. In creating a performative reading experience, Neruda converts the act of solitary engagement into an experience of sharing, whereby the reader's recognition of patterns can heighten emotions of desire, longing, and intimacy (Fahnestock, *Verbal and Visual Parallelism* 165).

Repetition and parallelism also bear mnemonic functions that refer to their role within a text in structuring it so that its themes and emotions persist and are repeated. Silverstein suggests that the patterns, when used with repetition of verb forms, secure cognition and highlight the importance of both spoken and written texts (184). Through Neruda's use of repetition and parallel clauses, poetic features are sometimes intended to be revisited. Repetition, that is, the repeated imagery and repeated parallel clauses, functions as a deliberate strategy that helps readers linger while constructing the poem's essential meanings. It develops unity and an emotional flow throughout the poem and its stanzas. Significant repetitions in the poem facilitate sustain engagement. Rather than treating the poem as a singular event, these repetitions render its meaning more enduring. Emotional engagement acknowledges individual differences in recognising patterns, thereby it causes a better understanding and connection between readers and the poetry.

Finally, the aggregate effect of repetition and parallelism provides interpretive resonance, in which readers find emotional universality in a particular expression. According to Margulis, repeated patterns are cognitive and affective; they create expectation and enhance emotional volatility (2). These aligned and reiterated structures enable readers to feel the emotions of love, absence, and longing from Neruda's perspective, and this resonance invites an emotional closeness. These literary devices draw readers to remember, feel, and think alongside the poet. In opening a window to the poet's inner world, the poem sparks a shared imaginative experience that extends beyond the page (Kaplan and Blei).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, repetition and parallelism in *The Captain's Verses* are the compositional logic through which Neruda constructs meaning, emotion, and reader engagement. The analyses developed throughout this essay demonstrate that these figures operate as the poem's internal engines, in that they regulate the cadence, articulate thematic continuities, and serve as the poem's formal self-awareness in ways consistent with Jakobson's account of poetic equivalence. What appears at first as simple recurrence becomes, in Neruda's poetry, the method by which intimacy is created and maintained.

Viewed through the evidence at hand, it becomes clear that repetition and parallelism are constitutive principles of Neruda's lyric architecture. They intensify emotion and invite readers into a communal field of responsiveness. The reader is not positioned as a distant observer. Instead, the structural patterns draw them into the poem and turn interpretation into an act of participation. This dynamic helps in explaining the peculiar emotional undertone of these poems, that is, how private desire, grief, or longing becomes suddenly communal.

Recognizing the architectonic role of these devices has other implications for Neruda studies and for rhetorical stylistics more generally. It shows literary scholars the need to treat poetry as a system of rhetorical operations that shapes how feeling is produced, perceived, and shared, and not just as an inert container for emotion. It also suggests that Neruda's poetics can productively be read alongside traditions of rhetorical theory, cognitive poetics, and discourse analysis to reveal intersections between ancient techniques of language patterns and modern conceptions of reader engagement. On a broader terrain, this approach encourages a diversified attention to how formal repetition across poetry functions as a mode of thought.

From this perspective therefore, *The Captain's Verses* becomes an exemplar of a body of work in which the recursive linguistic pattern of language is inseparable from the emotional life it conveys. Neruda's poems speak through what they say as well as through how their patterns

compel readers to listen, anticipate, and respond. It is in this reciprocity and rhetorical resonance that the power of Neruda's poetry resides.

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### **AUTHOR'S BIO**

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