

REPETITION AS A NARRATIVE STRATEGY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR IN POE'S "THE TELL-TALE HEART"

The phenomenon of stylistic *repetition* is recognised to be one of the most significant and powerful expressive devices in literary discourse, which draws the reader's attention to details, certain words and ideas. Kucharenko defines repetition as "recurrence of the same word, word combination, phrase for two and more times" [4, p. 41]. It is not only taken as a mechanical repetition of linguistic units, but as a meaningful reappearance of sounds, words, expressions and clauses in order to provide emphasis. Simpson considers repetition as a source of foregrounding that creates salience in a literary text by drawing attention to certain patterns of language. As he states: "...foregrounding typically involves a stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or, alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the foregrounding through repetition or parallelism" [3, p. 50]. He then defines two main guises of foregrounding: foregrounding as "deviation from a norm" and foregrounding as "more of the same" [3, p. 50].

Another key concept here is the *unreliable narrator*. In narrative discourse, unreliability appears when the narrator cannot be fully trusted due to limited knowledge, psychological instability or deliberate distortion. Therefore, the reader is supposed to differentiate between what is said and what is implied.

The case study of "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Poe demonstrates how repetition functions not merely as a stylistic device but rather as a tool for constructing an unreliable narrator; it becomes the linguistic marker of instability and obsession. This paper aims to demonstrate how in "The Tell-Tale Heart" repetition becomes a strategy in the construction of the unreliable narrator by reflecting psychological tension, creating narrative rhythm, and shaping the reader's perception.

Per Krogh Hansen proposes four different forms of unreliable narration; the one used in 'The Tell-Tale Heart' he defines as intranarrational unreliability – "that is unreliability established and supported by a large stock of discursive markers – or unresolved self-contradictions, etc." [1, p. 241]. This description is particularly relevant to "The Tell-Tale Heart", for the narrator here constantly tries to persuade the reader of his sanity and reasonableness. However, his language reveals the signs of psychological instability. The narrator's speech is filled with various types of lexical repetition, which progressively unveils his obsessive thinking and inability to maintain logical consistency.

Besides the ordinary and successive repetitions, which appear quite often throughout the text, the most frequent and important forms of repetition used in "The Tell-Tale Heart" are:

1. Anaphora – "I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell." [2, p. 1].
2. Epiphora – "Object there was none. Passion there was none." [2, p. 1].
3. Anadiplosis – "Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim." [2, p. 2].

4. Framing is used as follows. At the beginning of the, story narrator marks: “TRUE! – nervous – very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am...” [2, p. 1]. Later, he returns to this point: “I have told you that I am nervous: so I am.” [2, p. 3]. In the text, the use of this form of repetition marks the point of no return, which the narrator reached right before the murder of the old man.

5. Root repetition – “And every night, about midnight...” [2, p. 1].

6. Synonymous repetition – “Hearken! and observe how healthily – how calmly I can tell you the whole story...” [2, p. 1].

These examples demonstrate that repetition operates at different stylistic levels and appears in several forms, as listed above. Though they differ in structure, they perform a similar function. Through the constant recurrence of words, phrases and ideas, the author draws the reader’s attention to the narrator’s obsessive thoughts, his attempts to justify his actions, and the internal contradictions in his speech. As the narrator often returns to the same arguments – particularly his claims about calmness, rationality, and heightened sensitivity – it gradually reveals his psychological instability. Rather than reinforcing the narrator’s credibility, these patterns contribute to his unreliability. Moreover, they create the rhythm of the story – the narrator’s thoughts pound as the old man’s heart did, escalating the tension and anxiety.

Thus, repetition in “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Poe performs a dual function: it acts both as the source of foregrounding and as a linguistic marker of the narrator’s insanity. This combination of features makes it more than just a stylistic device. Instead, it becomes an essential narrative strategy.

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