The OSCAR PUBLISHING Services
American Journal of Philological Sciences

VOLUME Vol.05 Issue02 2025
PAGE NO. 48-51
DOI 10.37547/ajps/Volume05Issue02-14

Imperative Repetition as a Rhetorical Device in Shakespeare's Tragedies

Kseniya Aleksandrovna Chistyakova
MA student of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, Uzbekistan

Received: 11 December 2024; **Accepted:** 13 January 2025; **Published:** 15 February 2025

Abstract: The article explores the use of imperative repetition in Shakespeare's tragedies as a rhetorical and dramatic device that intensifies emotional, thematic, and character-driven elements. By examining instances where characters repeat commands or exhortations, the study highlights how this technique conveys urgency, desperation, and authority, often during moments of heightened tension. Repetition of imperatives also reveals inner conflict, obsession, or loss of control, amplifying the psychological depth of characters like Hamlet and Othello. Furthermore, this device creates rhythmic emphasis, enhancing the dramatic and poetic resonance of the plays. Imperative repetition emerges as a critical tool for Shakespeare to underline themes such as power, fate, madness, and human frailty, offering insights into the interplay between language and the tragic form.

Keywords: Repetition, rhetorical device, imperative, exclamatory, tmesis, reiteration, locution, independent sentence, emphatic, interjection.

Introduction: Imperative repetition is a significant rhetorical device in Shakespeare's tragedies, often employed to heighten dramatic intensity, reveal character motivations, and underscore themes of power, desperation, or emotional turmoil.

The doubling of imperative is often an independent sentence, complete in itself, and as the frequent use of the exclamation mark after an imperative form shows, it often has some of the exclamatory force of an interjection. It is therefore very natural to find the imperative repletion used in the same manner as the exclamatory- to make excitement or emotion, as when Horatio addresses the ghost! Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee speak! I i 51. But it may also be used with a more rhetorical purpose, to achieve greater emphasis and ensure the listener's attention, as in the ghost's List, list, O list! I i 22 or Laertes' Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister. I iii 33: in both these cases the tmesis, breaking the repetition in two, serves to slow down the speed and give a more solemn air to the words in perfect keeping with the emphatic tones of the speaker. Horatio's speech, though it apparently contains a similar interruption of the reiteration has not this slow, solemn ring. The difference lies in the heaping of the monosyllables at the interruption: for oddly enough, it is the single word, the interjection or apostrophe, it is felt to be a real interruption, while the repetition placed after a more lengthy interruption is felt to be a resumption of the former strain, not a repetition at all.

Hamlet's repetitions in this group are emotional rather than rhetorical; they seem to express great depth of feeling and are spoke in circumstances of great stress: O fie! Hold, hold, my heart! I 5 93, Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! I 5, 182, Why, look you there! look, how it steals away…Look! III 4 133. The last example in particular with its variations, resulting in a series of complex exclamatory phrases, strikes a note of extreme excitement or wildness even, that is peculiar to Hamlet. But the peculiarity lies in the greater force alone, not in any characteristic pattern formed by the repetition.

The phrase come, come, though technically an imperative form, belongs in a group apart, since it has become more or less fossilized and hardly can be said to convey an emotion at all. On the one hand, as in the modern phrase, it has lost its imperative force completely, and is used as an interjection of remonstrance or encouragement in Hamlet's Come, come, deal justly with me: come, come, nay, speak. II ii 290 or the queen's Come, come, you answer with an

idle tongue III iv 11 with Hamlet's answer Go, go you question with a wicked tongue. Polonius's Go to, go to. I ii 112 is also of this type. It is a question whether these phrases can be considered as repetitions at all, they are rather a single exclamation. But they are of considerable interest, especially the more usual come, come, since for the Elizabethans they seem to have had a strongly colloquial flavor and to have been a favorite means of lending realism to scenes of low life, while the more elegant authors like Beaumont and Fletcher, for whom realism was a superseded ideal, avoid them in tragedy. On the other hand, come, come can also be used with its original imperative force; and, since that is tantamount to an invitation, such forms are frequently used with tmesis to soften the abruptness, as in the king's Come, Hamlet, come. V ii 239 and Hamlet's Come, bird, come. I V 116; but also with simple repetition as in Hamlet's Come, come and sit you down. III iv 18.

Finally, not only can a verbal imperative be used in this way, but, as with the exclamations, an adverb or noun can be made to perform the same function, and the repetition again serves for greater insistence, excitement or emotional stress. Polonius hurrying his son on- Abroad, abroad, for shame. I iii 55, or self-importantly preparing his trip for the prince- Away! I do beseech you, both away. II ii 169, the actor, declaiming his set speech- Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! II ii 524, Hamlet, disturbed in his meditation- But soft, but soft! aside. V I 239, the courtiers, as the King rises hurriedly from his seat- Lights, lights, lights! III iii 286- all make use of such forms.

In none of these cases does Hamlet's usage differ in any way from that of the remaining characters, not even by the greater frequency, if we bear in mind the length of his part. But there are some special cases, in which Hamlet's personality does actually seem to shine through. Here the repetition, is delayed; not merely interrupted by tmesis as in Come, bird, come, but postponed so long that one is made to think of anaphora: Prithee, say on: he's for a lig or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps. Say on. II ii 530 Come, give us a taste of your quality, come, a passionate speech. II ii 461, Come some music! Come, the recorders!..Come, some music! III ii 308 (in a passage of high hysterical excitement), But come, for England!.....Come, for England! IV iii 52-56. Here one may, perhaps recognize a personal trait, an idiosyncrasy of Hamlet's of which more will have to be said with regard to some later examples, a tendency of his to brood on a subject, to revolve it in his mind, returning to it again and again, as with the reccuring theme of get thee to a nunnery in his conversation with Ophelia. In the above cases the tendency is by no means so plain, nor is there, as in those to be mentioned later, any obvious reason for his harping on the particular words, especially in the second example, where the twice repeated come has only the queen, on the contrary, when she makes use of a similar figure is in extreme mental distress: O Hamlet! speak no more…O! speak to me no more….No more, sweet Hamlet. III iv 88-95, and Polonius in his excitement at having discovered a reason, as he supposes, for the prince's madness makes use of a cadence similar to those of Hamlet: Come, go we to the king…Come. II I 117-120. The peculiarity of these repetitions of Hamlet's is, then, that they are produced more frequently and without the objective stimulus that is otherwise a necessary condition for them. They show an impatience, an almost petulant urgency that again find their roots in the prince's nervous excitability.

The repetition of the imperative is not naturally pathetic, unless the pathos is imparted by the situation, but even here Shakespeare, by an elaboration of the form, conveys a pathetic note in the very music of the speech. The addition of an O, somewhat rhetorical though it sounds, lends a feeling of helplessness and sentimentality, as in Albany's Run, run! O run! V iii 249 and O! See, see! V iii 305, or the gentleman's Help, help! O help! V iii 224. The ghost's List, list, O list! in Hamlet has, apparently, an exactly similar cadence, but, coming in the middle of a long speech, the effect is slow and solemn, not hurried and pathetic. For the position is quite as important for the effect of a repetition as the form. Still more pathetic in effect is the brokenness of Lear's dying words Look on her, look, her lips, look there, look there! V iii 212. The heavy repetitions of Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill! V vi 192 and Howl, howl, howl, howl! V iii 259 can be made to sound wild and terrifying, or weak and exhausted, as the actor determines, but they certainly lack the sharp insistence or urgency of a single repetition. In his farce of Pyramus. This be Shakespeare had poked fun at this very device, letting the suicide Pyramus expire with the words Now die, die, die, die, die, on his lips, and altogether making much play with heavy, pathetic repetitions. Here he is ready to use the effect himself in all seriousness. Yet another effect, solemn and terrific this time, far more terrific than any of the ghost's repetitions, is achieved in Lear's adjurations in the opening act: Hear me, recreant! On thine allegiance, hear me! I i 169 and Hear, Nature, hear! Lear goddess, hear!, where the heavy tmesis the variations of the phrase, and, in at the one case, the treble repetition, give the utmost weight to the language, lending that elevation and those titanic proportions to the character on which the whole tragedy is built. The variety of forms and nuances of mood are considerable

as compared with Hamlet, and again they tend, on the whole, to increase the pathetic effect. And these elaborate forms represent one half of the verbal imperatives in the play.

The elliptic imperative sound naturally more hurried and urgent than the correct verbal forms, and elaborations of the repetition, which mostly tend to slow down the motion, would be in conflict with this effect. The combination of the two tendencies has a definitely comic ring in the fool's Down, wantons, Down. II, iv 126. Otherwise, where a tmesis occurs in such locutions, it is used either in calling to a distance, as in dear's unruly Dinner, ho! Dinner! I iv 45 and Edmund's A herald, ho! A herald! V iii 102, or else the forms are so far apart that they cease practically to be repetitions, as in Away, old man, give me thy hand: away! V ii 5. Only Gloucester's Away, get thee away, good friend, be gone. IV I 15 represents with its reversion to the fuller type, a definite weakening of the tension, quite in consonance with his weak ineffectual character. Mostly, however the elliptic imperatives follow the simple type, as in Hamlet, and express hurry, excitement, urgency, as in Lear's Stop her there! Arms, arms, sword, fire! III vi 58 and Off, off, you lendings! III iv 111, Regan's Hard, hard. O filthy traitor! III vii 52 and several other such forms.

It marked contrast with this extension of the exclamatory forms is the rarity of imperative types, of which no more than four occur in Othello's part. And of these two might better be reckoned to the dependent types, since they consist of considerably more than the simple imperative. Villain, be sure, thou prove my love a whore, be sure of it. III iii 360, and Sweet soul, take heed of perjury,V ii 50. The two simple types are both of them elliptic, the one, as he turns Emilia out of the room, sharp and urgent- Your mystery, your mystery, nay, dispatch. IV ii 29, the other with a retarding apostrophe placed before, and expressing grief and despair rather than urgency-Ah! Desdemona, away, away, away! IV ii 40. Compared with Hamlet's 11 imperatives and Lear's 14 these of Othello strike one as remarkably few. One would say that he was too accustomed to command, too sure of his authority, to feel the need for urging his subordinates on with reiteration.

Such an explanation, it is true, comes dangerously near to a type of criticism that we would wish to avoid at all costs- the criticism that fixes on a character, the creation of a poet's mind, and treats it as an objective, living personality, with an existence of its own, apart from the play or story of which it is an element. Yet this attitude, dangerous and foolish as it often is, is not altogether impermissible once we think of the author imagining himself into the circumstances of his characters and writing as though he were actually speaking at that moment, assuming, in fact, the personality of the character. That is, to a certain extent, what every author does, and his power of delineating character will largely depend on his ability to imagine himself successfully and completely into the largest variety of personalities. In so far too his creations may be said to have a real existence, independent of their function in the play. But while such semi- automatic writing is probably the rule for any truly creative artist as regards the speeches, the manner in which a given character talks, especially when the characters are so subtly differentiated in the tones of their speech as Shakespeare's it is highly improbable that any author does his plotting, the adaptation of character to action, automatically. Intuition, the power of imaging another person's actions and reactions, will play their part here too, but this part will mostly be too much under the control of the critical faculty to be regarded in any way as automatic. The broader outlines of a character's personality will nearly always be drawn consciously and with a definite purpose in mind, they will bear a definite relation to the work of art as a whole. But slighter, more elusive traits are, especially with a writer of high imaginative powers, not infrequently produced unconsciously, by intuition alone, they are, so to speak, the spirit writing dictated by the disembodied inhabitants of the poet's imaginary world, who, for the moment, assume control of his pen.

Saying that Othello is too sure of his authority to reiterate his commands does not mean therefore that Shakespeare was consciously trying to bring out a facet of the Moor's personality. It is more than probable that he himself never became aware of this peculiarity of his creation. It means rather that, in writing Othello's part, Shakespeare assumed that calm authority with which he had consciously endowed him in his imagination, and that frame of mind effectually prevented him from introducing such signs of what, for a man like Othello, would be weakness. It is, of course, possible, though hardly probable, that this effect is actually due to a conscious effort on Shakespeare's part. There is no real means of differentiating between conscious and unconscious effects in a work of art. Nor can the one claim to be an essentially higher form of art than the other. But the imaginative effort involved by a conscious differentiation of such separate characters' manner of speaking, carried out with such an eye to the minutest and subtlest details; would be too huge for any human mind, even Shakespeare's, to support. When used for more complex characters, characters demanding a variety of emotional interplay, the effort involved would almost inevitably betray itself in a labored and heavy style. A purely, or preponderantly,

intellectual attitude on the part of an author towards his characters does not necessary exclude a great deal of very subtle and convincing character-drawing, but mostly, as for instance in the novels of Meredith, it results in a certain fundamental sameness that seems to underlie all the characters, in spite of the more obvious differences. With Shakespeare the marvel is how each character has a language of his own, how the varying moods and emotions out of which the characters are built are brought out and underlined in the rhythms and melodies of their speeches. And this differentiation is seen to go down to the smallest and subtlest details, that surely neither writer nor reader notice consciously, though it is ultimately on the sum of such details that the total effect depends.

Repetition of commands often aligns with the tragic flaws of characters. Repeated imperatives can highlight the tension between a character's agency and the inescapable forces of fate. Characters descending into madness or consumed by obsession frequently repeat commands, reflecting their fractured mental states.

REFERENCES

Aleksandrovna B. M. Exclamatory Repetitions in Shakespeare's Tragedy "Hamlet" //Евразийский научный журнал. – 2017. – №. 12. – С. 129-131.

Balyasnikova M. A. Variation of a word sign and its meaning //ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science, 10 (114). – 2022. – С. 7-13.

Bates C. Shakespeare and the Rhetoric of Desire. - Cambridge University Press, 1992. -250 p.

Bradley A. C. Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, 2nd ed. – London : Macmillan and Co., 1937.- 524 p.

Brown J. R. A.C. Bradley on Shakespeare's Tragedies. A Concise Edition and Reassessment. – Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.- 176 p.

Chistyakova K. Verbal Repetitions in John Webster's Tragedies //Conference Proceedings: Fostering Your Research Spirit. – 2024. – С. 202-204.

Kermode F. Shakespeare's Language.- Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000. -324 p.

Lanham R.A. A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms.- University of California Press, 2012. -205 p.

Marina B. Asyndeton in the dramas of Shakespeare //Bridge to science: research works. – 2019. – С. 101-103.

Patterson A. Shakespeare and the Authority of Language.// Renaissance Drama, vol. 19, 1988. - P. 1–28.

Stoll E. E. Art and Artifice in Shakespeare. A Study in Dramatic Contrast and Illusion. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. - 196 p.

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare. - Ed. W.J. Kraig. – Oxford University Press, 1954. – 2000 p.

Бондаренко Г. В. Распределение повторов в связном тексте как основа для обнаружения суперсинтаксических единиц. – Науч.-технич. информация. Сер. 2, 1975, №. 12. - С. 20-31.

Каменская О. Л. Об одном методе обнаружения семантических повторов при описании структуры связного текста. В сб.: Проблемы синтаксич.семантики. - М., 1976, (МГПИИЯ).- С. 129-130.

Рохлин А. С. Повторы как средство связи частей сложного синтаксического единства. - Науч. тр. Краснод. ПИ, 1968, вып. 101.- С.123-125.