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Repetition in Literary Theory

Contemporary literary and linguistic studies have yielded a wide range of theoretical understandings of repetition and its versatility as a rhetorical resource, and also yielded various systems of classifying its forms and, to a much lesser extent, its functions. This chapter will summarize these studies, most of which have not yet been cited by biblical scholars, and will demonstrate their potential usefulness to biblical studies by applying them, where possible, to examples drawn from 1 Samuel.

3.1 Seeing Repetition

Repetition has long been recognized as an important and versatile literary technique. In 1577 Henry Peacham¹ described figures of speech involving types of repetition:

- anadiplosis, beginning a sentence, line, or clause with the concluding word(s), or any prominent word(s) of the preceding one;
- epizeuxis, the vehement or emphatic repetition of a word, such as “My head, my head” (2 Kgs 4:19)—*Zeuxis* means yoking;

1. Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, quoted in Johnstone, *Arabic*, 73. I have been unable to find a copy of Peacham. Definitions are from *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* except where otherwise stated.

- diaphora, the repetition of a word for naming then for description, e.g., “Boys will be boys”;
- epanalepsis, the repetition of a word or clause following intervening matter;
- paromoeon, “the beginning of two or more words in a sentence with the same letter.”²

Other sixteenth-century writers added:

- pleonasm, the use of more words in a sentence than are necessary to express the meaning;
- redundancy of expression (either as a fault of style, or as a figure purposely used for special force or clearness);³
- hendiadys, an expression in which one idea is expressed in two different ways;
- accumulation, the piling up of expressions;
- synonymic dittology, which is “twofold or double reading or interpretation.”⁴
- paragmenon, the repetition of lexical roots in English, for example: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise.”⁵

3.2 Inter-disciplinary Approaches to Repetition

Repetition has recently been considered from many angles in inter-disciplinary studies. Barbara Johnstone⁶ lists these approaches as: “interactional sociolinguistic, epistemic rhetoric, ethnography of communication, functionalist poetics and reader response theory.”⁷

2. Simpson and Weiner, *Oxford Dictionary*, vol. XI, *ow-poisant*, 249.

3. *Ibid.*, vol. XI, 1043.

4. *Ibid.*, vol. IV, *creel-duzepene*, 881.

5. Johnstone, *Arabic*, 73.

6. Johnstone, “Introduction,” xi.

7. Johnstone, *Repetition*, xi.

3.2.1 The Mother of Learning

Marilyn Merritt⁸ considers the mnemonic and didactic properties of repetition in classrooms in developing countries. Repetition effects include maintaining or drawing attention to one idea, allowing the necessary “cognitive processing time to understand new information and/or time to understand some nonverbal action.”⁹ Yet too much processing time allows idleness and boredom. If exact repetition is boring, the tactic of reformulation can be a “middle ground” which offers at least some of the stimulus of the new.”¹⁰

Merritt connects learning and cognition with repetition, especially elaboration, which is repetition with more detail. Her theory is that familiar items “require less processing time as part of more complex messages,” and so “familiar items can function much like concrete items in building the foundation for comprehending abstract messages” and increasing cognitive accessibility. She also describes imitation as a didactic form of repetition, where the student learns by watching then copying.

Merritt notes that repetition “facilitates rhythm and group synchrony,” for example in classrooms.¹¹

Overall, Merritt concludes that repetition is creative.¹²

3.2.2 Production of Efficient Communication

Sociolinguist Deborah Tannen¹³ analyses how repetition aids conversation by allowing “a speaker to set up a paradigm and slot in new information” into an existing frame, or covering gaps and silences to give a speaker time to think what to say next.¹⁴ It also allows the hearer time to process, aiding “comprehension by providing semantically less dense discourse.”¹⁵ And repetition can have interactional benefits, including

8. Merritt, “Repetition,” 23–36.

9. Ibid., 29–32.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 28.

12. Ibid., 34.

13. Tannen, *Talking Voices*. Tannen’s popular 1990 book, *You Just Don’t Understand*, was on the New York Times bestseller list for almost four years and translated into some twenty-nine languages.

14. Tannen, *Talking Voices*, 48–49.

15. Ibid., 49–50.

“getting or keeping the floor, showing listenership, providing back-channel response, stalling, gearing up to answer or speak, humor and play, savoring and showing appreciation of a good line or a good joke, persuasion, . . . linking one speaker’s ideas to another’s, ratifying another’s contributions (including another’s ratification), and including in an interaction a person who did not hear a previous discourse.”¹⁶

Tannen distinguishes between “synchronic repetition: the recurrence of words and collocations of words in the same discourse” and “diachronic repetition: the recurrence . . . of words in discourse which occurs at a later time.”¹⁷

In spoken discourses—a medium which, like biblical narrative, is essentially verbal rather than visual—Tannen posits that imagery works as a form of “visual repetition.”¹⁸ Imagery is commonly referred to as word pictures, and one could extend Tannen’s idea to see verbal imagery as virtual pictures.

Tannen also argues that repetitions compose structure, and that patterns of repetitions are what make structure visible.¹⁹

3.2.3 Canonical Forms

Tannen recognizes “prepatternning,” also known as “formulaicity” or “idiomaticity,” the notion that language is not freely composed but based on memory of previous usage²⁰ such as “formulaic expressions, phraseological units, idiomatic expressions, set expressions,”²¹ clichés, concluding that “all language is a repetition of previous language, and all expressions are relatively fixed in form.”²² Yet she argues that “some instances of language seem more fixed than others,” and suggests several continua of fixity, including form, context, and whether expressions are ephemeral or timeless.²³

16. Ibid., 51.

17. Ibid., 2. She refines this by arguing the recurrence is never actually recurrence but only apparent recurrence.

18. Ibid., 2.

19. Ibid., 36.

20. Ibid., 37.

21. Fillmore, 1985, “Frames,” 222–54; cited in Tannen, *Talking Voices*, 38.

22. Tannen, *Talking Voices*, 44.

23. Ibid., 47. See also Tannen, “Repetition,” 215–43.

Merritt draws similar conclusions about “canonical forms” or typical styles of interaction. For example, a retail encounter will usually begin with an offer of service (“Can I help you?”). She observes that “[o]nce canonical forms are established, deviations from the norm can be recognized” and the variations become significant.²⁴ This is analogous to biblical “type scenes,”²⁵ a theory which will be shown to inform analysis of an extended example in section 6.3.3 below.

3.3 Analyzing Types of Repetition

Barbara Johnstone²⁶ has contributed a number of useful distinctions. While these do not suggest mechanical correspondence between a given form and its function or functions, they do suggest linkages between forms of repetition and their rhetorical effects.

3.3.1 Formal or Semantic?

Formal repetition repeats forms or patterns while semantic repetition repeats words and intonations.

An example of both semantic and formal repetition is the twice-repeated ditty about Saul and David slaying Philistines. Hearing Israelite women singing this triggers Saul’s suspicion of David (1 Sam 18:7–8). Later the ditty raises dangerous suspicion of David in another king, the Philistine Achish (21:11–12).²⁷ Yet Achish’s servants quote not only the words (semantic repetition) but the poetic form and the context of singing in dances (formal repetition). A third time the full text, form, and context are quoted by certain Philistine warlords who object to David’s presence in their pre-battle parade (29:5). In the first two occurrences, the song brings danger for David, and so in the third occurrence the reader expects danger again, but the twist is that David is sent home from battle against Israel, and saved from the bind he has got into by

24. Merritt, “Repetition,” 27.

25. Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 97.

26. This first chapter, Barbara Johnstone et al, “Repetition in Discourse: A Dialogue,” was written by Johnstone from the tape-recorded discussions of colleagues on the matter, but reference is given only to Johnstone in subsequent notes.

27. Savran, *Telling*, 111, says the Philistine quoting “recontextualizes a song of praise and victory into a warning about its hero.”

defecting to Achish. Without the warlords' objection, David would have had three options: one, to fight for Achish against Israel, which would have ended his chances of kingship; two, to withdraw from the battle, which would likely have had him killed by the Philistines; or three, to change sides during the battle,²⁸ a possibility feared by the Philistines (29:4) but in reality extremely risky. So the third use of the dangerous ditty surprisingly sends David to safety.

An example of formal repetition is the triple-repeat of the plot of David being tempted to kill an enemy (in 1 Sam 24, Saul; 25, Nabal; 26, Saul).

3.3.2 Immediate or Displaced?

Johnstone argues that immediate repetition tends to build the existing effect, producing intensification or generalization by plurality, whereas displaced repetition seems to be about "textual cohesion."²⁹ Of course, these are relative terms, involving some subjectivity.

An example of immediate repetition begins with the narrator saying that Samuel is old (!qz 8:1), and then the elders (!aṣṣyḥ ymḥz) repeat that he is old (!qz 8:4–5). Yet this immediate repetition is part of a larger pattern of repetition displaced across the book. Eli, who is very old (dam !qḥ 2:22), is threatened with the repeated punishment of having no old man (!qḥ) in his house (2:31, repeated in 32). Eventually Eli dies, described as an old man (!qḥ 4:18), but the last old man in his line. In that context, the fact that Samuel endured to old age (12:2) is a testimony to his worth. And the En-Dor woman's description of an old man (!qḥ vya) leads Saul to perceive Samuel (28:14). Jesse is also incidentally called old (17:12), which may invite respect and does not appear to be part of this repetitive structure.

3.3.3 Exact or Non-exact?

Aside from the obvious, exact repetition can also include cases where deictic terms are changed (for example, from second person to third person). The other extreme could be a paraphrase where every word is changed to one with similar semantic range, producing a non-exact

28. Yael Shemesh argues strongly that David never intended to betray Israel. Shemesh, "David," 73–90.

29. In Johnstone, *Discourse*, 14.

repetition where the ideas and even the semantic level would remain the same.

In Hebrew narrative, repetitions ranges between exact and inexact, producing a wide range of possible meanings. One common example of inexact repetition is the parallelistic rephrasing so common even in prose. For example, in Samuel's speech:

- (a) If with all your hearts you are returning to Yahweh your God,
- (b) put away all the foreign gods from among you and the
Ashtoreths
- (a') And commit your hearts to Yahweh,
- (b') and serve him only (7:3)

The following line at first reading seems like an almost exact repetition:

And the children of Israel (b) put away the Baals and the Ash-
toreths, and (b') served Yahweh only." (7:4)

Yet it repeats selectively, and only the outward behaviors (b, b') are reported, which leaves questions about their hearts. It seems the people produce another legalistic response, as in Exodus 19:8.

Inexact repetition also occurs when we are told Eli's sons did not know Yahweh (2:12) while Samuel did not yet know Yahweh (3:7). One word raises major contrast in characterization and plot foreshadowing.

3.3.4 Degrees of Freedom

Johnstone describes a range of repetitions in terms of the expectations of social context: some must be exact because they are part of formal ritual; others are habits or ways to identify with a community; others are part of a game with many options; the freest of all are spontaneous.³⁰

One could apply this theory to biblical narrative in terms of the expectations of various contexts and type scenes, and what is expected to be said. One could also argue that the literary equivalent of social context is genre, so that in a written text the idea of degrees of freedom would be analogous to conformity to the expectations and formal rules that apply to various genres.

The idea also pertains to characterization. Biblical narrative plays with notions of personal freedom. Saul is shown as a character free to obey or disobey God (15:19, 22). At times he is given a wide scope in

30. Ibid., 15.

the methods by which he can work with God's overall aims: for example, his calling to defeat Philistines (9:16) leaves him free to work out the details. At other times, his actions and his words are tightly prescribed by prophetic instructions (1 Sam 10:1–9), and unquestioning obedience is required. As Alter has noted, this tension between foreknowledge and free human choice, between "God's will, His providential guidance, and human freedom, the refractory nature of man,"³¹ is part of the presentation of an omnipotent Sovereign who also leaves space for human freedom.

3.3.5 Self-repetition or Other Repetition?

"Whether speakers are repeating themselves or others makes a difference in conversation," observes Johnstone. She also considers how to apply this distinction to written texts. "It might correspond to the difference between 'monologic' versus 'dialogic' text." She gives the examples of a Shakespearean sonnet referencing a commonplace book (which is other-repetition) or Shakespeare's own work (self-repetition). Yet she admits this is "more vague for written texts."³² This is analogous to the Samuel narrative quoting Deuteronomy or quoting its own earlier passages.

At one stage David self-repeats, re-asking questions of different people and receiving the same answers (17:26, 30). Then others repeat his words to the king (17:31). These examples are told rather than shown in the narrative: that is, they are reported in summary form rather than as direct speech. The effect seems to be that David is seen to raise awareness of his presence and potential by self-repetition until finally the message builds sufficient momentum for others to repeat it to Saul.

Further examples of other-repetition would be the citing of treasonous words against the new king (11:12), and Samuel's repetition of the people's words about prayer with his own addition about teaching (12:19; cf. 23).

31. Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 33.

32. Johnstone, *Discourse*, 15.

3.3.6 Culture

“There is a range of tolerance for repetition in every culture, and the upper limits differ.” Johnstone points out that Modern English writing textbooks “proscribe redundancy and repetition, and Roget’s Thesaurus is a resource for avoiding repetition.”³³ Yet this is a new phenomenon. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century academics prized repetition, and repetition is “used much more often by Arabic speakers . . . and viewed more positively.”³⁴ Tannen explores the “high-involvement” conversation style of Jewish New Yorkers while Athabaskan Indians relatively value silences within interactions.³⁵ She finds repetition more common among Greeks, some Americans, adolescents, Swedes and participants in Black worship.³⁶

Why do some societies tolerate or even enjoy repetition? Johnstone theorizes that an unstable social context may be one factor. If the society is changing rapidly, information-sharing must be kept simple, flowing within usual predictable channels, and checked with feedback. Another factor may be a “group ethic for conformity.” Anthropologist Joel Scherzer³⁷ found Kuna Indians used repetition, especially audio repetition in spoken or sung discourse, extensively in interaction and social organization. (The concept of audio repetition will inform the exegesis in section 6.3.1.) Within cultures, too, more formal situations may call for more repetition.

Historical factors are also active. For example, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic cultures prize the number three, as seen today in many jokes and folk tales in which the third occurrence is humorous or striking. (Alter has noted the thrice-occurring event as a common folktale pattern in biblical narrative.³⁸) Johnstone claims that some Native American cultures prized four.³⁹

33. Ibid., 16.

34. Ibid., 11.

35. Tannen, *Talking Voices*, 79.

36. Ibid., 78–80.

37. Scherzer, “Kuna Discourse,” in Johnstone, *Discourse*, 37–52.

38. Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 96.

39. Johnstone, *Discourse*, 16.

Katherine Kelly⁴⁰ shows that Western postmodern culture uses forms of repetition variously referred to as “interartistic quotation, mimicry, and appropriation” or “trans-contextualization, literary recycling, hypertextuality, and intertextuality.” This fashion involves “repeating (with difference) the languages, images, motifs, and/or genre markers of particular (and usually well-known) prior works.” This has been interpreted as parody or satire, an attitude or convention inherited from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century plays—an imitation, but with irony and often an inversion of meaning and frequently comic intentions.⁴¹ This concept would be very familiar to any viewer of *The Simpsons*, whose hyper-irony⁴² laughs at other texts and at itself. Yet parody can offer backhanded respect to the prior text and may approach homage.⁴³ Noted in film studies, this respectful allusion or visual quotation is a well-known postmodern tactic. And so a quotation may be “mockingly comic or movingly elegiac.”⁴⁴

Repetition can also disrupt. Some schools of postmodern novel-writing, interested in experimenting with “systematic deconstruction of the conventions of the novel,” can use repetition to manipulate discourse possibilities and “make language mean differently”⁴⁵ and to “produce too much redundancy, hence imbalance in the discourse structure.” Yet repetition is still predominantly a “cohesive force” which can “take the place of plot and of causal and logical links, which normally have that function.”⁴⁶

Consideration of culture is one useful corrective to the tendency to read according to one’s own “cultural bias.”⁴⁷ The ancient Hebrew culture(s) which produced the Bible enjoyed repetition on many levels, as we will see.

40. Kelly, “Staging Repetition,” 55–67.

41. Ibid., 55–56.

42. Matheson, “The Simpsons.”

43. Kelly, “Staging Repetition,” 55.

44. Ibid., 56.

45. Sherzer, “Effects of Repetition,” 68.

46. Sherzer, “Transcription,” 79.

47. Johnstone, *Discourse*, 3.

3.3.7 Language

Some languages lend themselves to repetition. Barbara Johnstone⁴⁸ explores the rhetoric of parallelism, paraphrase, and morphological repetition in Arabic, which uses cognate accusatives (as does Hebrew). “Arabic speakers are very much aware of the system, and use it in punning and creating aphorisms.”⁴⁹ Johnstone argues that lexical couplets, root repetitions, and pattern repetitions are almost part of the language, and therefore not figures of speech in the same way as repetition on the level of clause and discourse.⁵⁰

Johnstone compares Western rhetoric, in which figures of speech are considered merely stylistic rather than substantive, and rhetoric is clearly distinguished from argumentation or logical structure.⁵¹ Arabic argumentation, by contrast, is often paraphrastic, starting with a general statement of the main thesis and then elaborating upon it in various passes through paraphrase or reverse paraphrase. “Arabic arguments do not work the way we [Westerners] would expect them to . . . Perhaps the very wording of a thesis can, at least in part, be its substantiation.”⁵² She argues that paraphrase works by developing “presence,” in which certain ideas are experienced by the audience, and that “the creation of presence has rhetorical force,” because to “make something present in discourse is to make it valuable and important.”⁵³ “Persuasion is as a result as much, or more, of the sheer number of times an idea is stated and the balanced, elaborate ways in which it is stated than a result of syllogistic or enthymematic ‘logical’ organization. The discourse is highly paratactic and polysyndetic: ideas flow horizontally into one another.”⁵⁴ One could compare the paratactic arrangement of much Hebrew narrative. Western argument tends to favor an argumentative style called *proof*, whereas in Arabic argument some things merely need to be

48. Johnstone, *Arabic*.

49. *Ibid.*, 71.

50. *Ibid.*, 72–73.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*, 91.

53. *Ibid.*, 92.

54. *Ibid.*, 108. Enthymeme: “1. *Logic*. A syllogism in which one premise is not explicitly stated. 2. *Rhet*. An argument based on merely probable grounds.” (Brown, *Shorter Oxford*.)

shown (a kind of argument called *presentation*). Johnstone claims, “the primary mode of persuasion in the Old Testament . . . is through assertion of authority, confirmed by miracle, rather than through “logical argument” (proof).”⁵⁵

Other means of argumentation using presentation as the dominant mode include allegory, which was strong in Jewish and Christian preaching, and anecdote, which is powerful in Middle Eastern cultures. Presentation is particularly dominant “in hierarchical societies, where truths are not matters for individual decision,” and Arabic history offers authority figures in the written Quran, and in the religio-political authority of the caliphs.⁵⁶ Even the use of Arabic, the language Arabs believe God used to give the Quran, is itself read as probative.⁵⁷ Also, a beautiful phrase seems to have truth itself. Modernizing movements in the Arab world have noted a need for a new, simpler language, and different rhetorical techniques more suited to critical thinking.⁵⁸

Johnstone claims some repetitions are conscious choices because it is possible to write without lexical couplets, but others are “not so free” because parallelism and paratactic structures are “preferred by the grammar of Arabic” and sometimes the only choice grammar allows.⁵⁹

In contrast to the contemporary Western tradition, where repetition is present but “far less obtrusive,”⁶⁰ repetition in the Hebrew language is in “the very structure of the language, which with its system of triliteral [or triconsonantal] roots makes the etymological nucleus of both verbs and nouns . . . constantly transparent,” and in Hebrew idioms, “which tolerate a much higher degree of repetition than is common in Western languages.”⁶¹ Shimon Bar-Efrat notes that Hebrew repeats its verbal roots for emphasis.⁶² Hebrew, like Arabic, uses noun-verb repeats of its triliteral roots as *Leitwörter*, as Alter has explored. While some translators attempt to preserve this, Alter laments that

55. Johnstone, *Arabic*, 116. George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*.

56. Johnstone, *Arabic*, 117.

57. *Ibid.*, 118.

58. *Ibid.*, 119.

59. *Ibid.*, 110.

60. *Ibid.*, 88.

61. *Ibid.*, 92.

62. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 230.

many modern translators try to find a range of synonyms rather than somehow render the *Leitwort*.⁶³

3.3.8 Genre: Play or Proposition?

Johnstone contrasts the “language-equals-play school of thought,” which recognizes that different kinds of meaning can be created by the artistic/aesthetic use of the repetitive parallels of ritual, with the “flattened-discourse-propositional” school of thought, which emphasizes the logical/deductive side; it is based on linear propositional axiomatics and expects reading to be transparent.⁶⁴

She then groups texts as literary (corresponding to language as play) and non-literary (flattened propositional). Of course, one could question the rather arbitrary nature of this grouping, and whether the idea of a non-literary literary text is oxymoronic, but the dimensions are broadly useful. Some texts (and the principle applies in arts other than writing) mark themselves as more artistic, and condition reader expectations.

The genre of biblical narrative uses both these approaches. Modernist academic study may tend at times to flatten it into dry propositional text, and gifted teachers in synagogue and church have at times better appreciated how well these texts play with language, a playfulness which produces not just entertainment but memorable, involving theology. Some have intuitively recognized a text which is both playful and propositional, and appeals aesthetically and intellectually.

Genre can also be a useful marker of whether repetitions are random or significant. Susan Ehrlich⁶⁵ argues that “random repetition,” caused by small performance errors, is more likely in casual discourse and less likely in “in most genres of written, planned discourse,”⁶⁶ where any repeats are likely to be deliberate, remembered, and significant. (Planned genres can include spoken language.) For Hebrew narrative, even if authorship theories see preceding oral traditions behind the written text, one can expect those oral traditions to be carefully re-

63. Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 92–93.

64. Johnstone, *Discourse*, 17.

65. Ehrlich, “Repetition,” 86–97. She uses Norrick, “Functions of Repetition,” 245–64, who lists a “taxonomy” of functions of same-speaker and second-speaker repetitions.

66. Ehrlich, “Repetition,” 88.

heard over time. And final form studies assume that the written text is planned, suggesting most repetition would be intentional.

3.3.9 MODALITY

Johnstone observes that if a phrase is given a new twist of meaning by being repeated in new contexts, this can cause a reader to go back and review the way they first understood the phrase.

For example, consider the two stories that show the origins of the saying, “Is Saul among the prophets?” The first (1 Sam 10:11, 12 (2x)) expresses the surprise of the observers but is without irony: the new king is under the influence of Yahweh’s charism. Then Yahweh’s Spirit leaves Saul, replaced by an evil spirit (18:10), and he prophesies again, though *√abn* here must surely mean to rave in a frenzy. The Hithpael and Niphal uses of the verb have overlapping semantic ranges,⁶⁷ but some difference can be observed: the Niphal primarily means prophesying “under influence of divine spirit,” possibly in an ecstatic state, giving Yahweh’s word, though it can also include false prophets; the Hithpael includes prophesying “under influence of divine spirit,” especially “in the ecstatic state, with music, in frenzy; excited to violence,” and can be synonymous with *[šm* “mad.” While the Hithpael can include prophecy “apart from the ecstatic state” when used with certain prepositions (*l*; *l* [; *ʔ* -*√B*) it also describes “heathen prophets of Baal in ecstatic state” and “false prophets.”⁶⁸ Aside from dictionary denotations, usage in Samuel seems to differentiate these meanings. The Niphal form is applied to Samuel’s genuine prophets (19:20). With one exception, the Hithpael is always applied to Saul and his messengers (10:5, 6, 10, 13; 18:10; 19:20, 21 (2x), 23, 24), which can include genuine prophecy but also casts a shade more doubt. The contrast is most obvious in 19:20, when Samuel’s prophets are described in the Niphal and Saul’s men in the Hithpael (half of this contrastive pair is repeated twice in 19:21). The one exception is the Niphal participle (10:11) when Saul is observed by others. Yet this instance does not speak for the narrator but describes the viewpoint of the observers: Saul appears to them to be a genuine prophet. This grammatical exception, then, may be attributable to focalization. Later, Saul becomes a *aybi*

67. Esler, “The Madness of Saul,” 227, finds it “often difficult . . . to establish a semantic distinction.”

68. BDB, 612.

of a different kind. The second use of the saying (19:20–24) is after Saul disrobes, when the prophetic charism proves to him a distraction from pursuing David as he is detained in all-night “prophetic frenzy.”⁶⁹ Hence this is likely an ironic, satirical usage.⁷⁰ “Samuel, in effect, hurls inspiration and ecstasy on Saul and his men, leading them, in the words of the NRSV, to ‘fall into a frenzy’ (1 Sam 19:20, 21, 23–34).”⁷¹ Between the two events, the reader has seen the rebellious Saul prophetically rejected. When we hear the saying the last time, we begin to understand it means “Saul is a mere ecstatic, a possessed, out-of-control man, overwhelmed and overpowered by the prophetic aura.”⁷² Is Saul among the prophets? Not as before.

3.3.10 Power

Johnstone contrasts how powerful people use repetition, for example in propaganda, with how the weak use it to seek acceptable ways to say unacceptable things, or to try to seize some power, for example by chanting before battle or during football games. Repetition can be a play for control, as used by teachers in unruly classes, or by children in games wanting attention. One hears power-seeking repetition in the speech to the scared Philistines, which repeats the idea of *-yhill* [ə/ from the narrator’s report of their thoughts, repeats the “Woe to us!,” and repeats the “Be men.” This jingoistic rhetoric rouses the Philistines to successful action (4:7–9). David’s power is shown in the narration of his men’s word-for-word obedience to his command, putting on their swords even before David has time to put on his (25:13). Here the member of enactment closely and exactly follows the member of report.

Johnstone’s classificatory considerations have shown themselves to be useful in analyzing various examples of repetition from 1 Samuel. However, a more finely gradated taxonomy would be useful in studying various types of repetition. And other literary theorists have suggested classifications and taxonomies with other features, as we shall now explore.

69. Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 89.

70. See further Long, “Literary Artistry,” 39.

71. Mobley, “Glimpses,” 86.

72. *Ibid.*