

The Variety and Effects of Alliteration in French Proverbs

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Abstract: This article's goal is to examine alliteration in proverbs. They are inventions of the communal imagination or linguistic realities specific to a particular people's expressive linguistic area. Alliteration helps to highlight the music and rhythm of proverbs, much like other mnemotechnical techniques like rhyme or assonance. Moreover, it makes concepts with a moral importance more clear. I have discussed the alliteration's structure, particularly how the alliterant words are arranged. I have also underlined the results of employing this paremiological stylistic device.

Keywords: alliteration, proverb, effect.

In this study, we propose to analyze the alliteration and its particularities concerning the forms or the linguistic configurations in which this process appears and attracts the attention of the interlocutor, which raises the imagination of the users and their creative spirit. Carried out from a stylistic perspective and applied to a corpus of commonly used proverbs, the study of alliteration seems to us an interesting and captivating subject, if we take into consideration the variety of forms and effects that this figure of words produced at the phonic level.

Introduction

As forms of language, proverbs are modes of expression that call on observations and continuous experiences, accumulated over time, in the midst of a community, and transmitted from one generation to another, regardless of the language used. They reflect attitudes and psychological manifestations adopted by people in their relationship with the natural and social environment.

Resistant to the test of time, the proverbs have been accepted by the communities of users, which explains, moreover, their rigidity – a characteristic feature of this popular genre.

Proverbs, which evoke a real circumstance by suggesting another, figurative one, represent a modality of artistic expression. Most constructions are not only the product of the emotional state, but also of the fantasy or imagination of the creators. The interest of proverbs lies - it is true - in the overall meaning they convey. And yet, we do not insist here on the content of ideas, rich in lessons drawn from the experience of people, but rather on the stylistic resources capable of bringing to light the sound material of the paremiological units.

Alliteration

According to bibliography and specialized dictionaries, alliteration, which is based on repetition, belongs to the class of word figures (alongside paronomasia, antanaclase, assonance, derivation), which "affect sonorities, operating a lexical choice based on phonetic criteria" (Bacry, P., 1992: 15), belonging to the group of elocution figures by consonance, resulting from a "certain

conformity of meaning or ideas, a certain consonance capable of equally striking the ear and the mind” (Fontanier, P., 1977: 323), or the group of figures of diction or metaplasms (“transformation”) “which bring together at least two signifiers on the basis of sound proximity” (Laurent, N., 2001: 40) or “which concern the material and phonic form of words, signifiers” (Pougeoise, M., 2006: 212)

In a restricted sense, and it is in this direction that our work is oriented, alliteration is defined as the recurrence at close intervals of the initial consonant of a syllable in a verse, a syntagm or a simple clause.

By extension of meaning, alliteration is commonly defined as the recurrence of consonant phonemes within a group of words, speaking in this case of sonority return, but the difference between the two terms is of little interest. (Bacry, P., op. cit.: 203).

The stylistic value of proverbs increases, when the frequency of the same consonantal sound (or group of sounds) in initial position attracts the attention of the listener or reader and succeeds in highlighting their content, so that they are easily retained.

Alongside riddles and incantations, proverbs constitute a rich corpus of alliteration formulas.

1. Forms of alliteration

According to the distribution of the terms (two, three, four or more) which enter into the constitution of this process, one could distinguish various structures or formulas of alliterations (Negreanu, C., 1983: 197). Thus, the terms that begin with a consonant can be placed:

a) sequentially:

Qui a **bu**, boira ; Qui **dort**, **d**îne ; Qui **vivra**, **v**erra ; Arc **toujours** **t**endu se rompt ; À **corsaire**, corsaire et demi ; **Chaque** **ch**ose vaut son prix ; À l’impossible **nul n**’est tenu ; À **parti** **p**ris point de conseil ; Il faut **faire** **f**lèche de tout bois.

Troupeau sans chien **le loup** **l**e mange.

The more immediate the recurrence of the sound, the clearer and more energetic the effect. According to Patrick Bacry (Bacry, P., op. cit. p. 204), this energy is more or less felt, depending on the type of repeated consonant: thus an alliteration in [p] (deaf, explosive) is more marked, heavier than an alliteration in [z] (sound, constrictive):

Les **poules** **p**ondent **p**ar le bec ; À bon **p**êcheur **p**arfois échappe anguille ; **P**atience **p**asse science.

b) remotely:

Chose promise, **ch**ose due ; **G**ardez votre maison, elle vous **g**ardera ; Qui **v**ole un oeuf **v**ole un boeuf ; **C**ent ans ne **s**ont pas si longs qu’ils en ont la mine ; **C**haque oiseau **ch**ante sa propre **ch**anson ; **D**ans le lit **d**’autrui on ne peut **d**ormir à l’aise ; À **f**orce de **f**orger on devient forgeron ; Être en **p**éril n’est **p**as être **p**erdu ; **P**laisir non **p**artagé n’est **p**laisir qu’à demi ; On ne **p**eut vouloir la **p**oule et les **p**oussins ; Faites-vous **m**iel et les **m**ouches vous **m**angeront ; **C**elui qui se connaît est seul maître de soi ; La jalousie éteint l’amour comme les cendres éteignent le feu ; Pas de fumée sans feu, ni feu sans fumée.

The alliteration of the formulas mentioned is often used for playful purposes (Pougeoise, M., op. cit. p. 353). We observe that it is combined, in proverbs, with paronomasia (figure of words which consists in bringing together two paronyms – words with similar sounds), contributing to reveal subtle meanings, which reinforces by antithesis a reasoning with moral value:

Qui s’excuse s’accuse ; Qui se ressemble, s’assemble.

c) sequentially and remotely:

De **d**iable vient, à **d**iable va ; Il n'y a veneur qui ne **p**renne plaisir à corner sa **p**rise ; Il faut faire ce qu'on fait ; Qui ne **r**isque rien, n'a rien ; Autant vaut **b**ien battu que mal battu ; Bois inutile **p**eut porter fruits **p**récieux ; Tel **d**emande **d**ommage qui le **d**oit payer ; Les **f**ous font les **f**êtes et les sages en ont le plaisir ; Moins on **p**ense, **p**lus on **p**arle ; Au long aller **l**a lime mange le fer ; Les sages sont souvent les dupes des sots ; On ne **p**eut **p**as **p**eigner un diable qui n'a **p**as de cheveux.

d) remotely and sequentially:

À l'**o**ngle on connaît le **l**ion ; À **g**rand cheval, **g**rand **g**ué ; Au **p**ourceau l'ordure ne **p**ue **p**oint ; Dans les belles **p**aroles le coeur ne **p**arle **p**oint ; Il viendra **m**oudre à **m**on **m**oulin ; Les vilains s'entretuent et les **s**eigneurs **s**'embrassent ; L'**o**ccasion fait le **l**arron.

This arrangement of terms, in the context of alliteration, creates an effect of insistence on the content of a certain idea or moral reasoning. One could say that it is a stylistic intention on the part of the transmitter.

The return of sonority is stronger at the initial than inside the words and combines with the brevity of the meter, which gives considerable dynamism to the statement. Moreover, alliteration can have an even greater rhythmic and energetic value, when the recurrences strike the stressed syllables (Ibidem, p. 32):

/ / / /

Loup est toujours loup ; Selon ta **b**ourse gouverne ta **b**ouche.

To make the iterative effect more eloquent, the consonant sound is sometimes associated with an oral or nasal vowel:

À **m**enteur, **m**enteur et demi ; Qui ne se **l**asse, **l**asse l'**a**dversaire ; **C**orsaire **c**ontre **c**orsaire font rarement leurs affaires ; De **b**onne vie **b**onne fin, de **b**onne terre **b**on pépin.

Alliteration with four or five terms, also called rich alliteration, is rarer, but very expressive. It marks once again the creative force of the author, in the use of this process:

Faute de se **f**âcher une bonne **f**ois, on se **f**âche tous les jours.

Qui ne **p**eut **p**asser **p**ar la **p**orte, sorte **p**ar la **f**enêtre.

We also find the recurrence of a single consonant alternating with the repetition of a combination of consonants:

Bonnet **b**lanc ou **b**lanc **b**onnet.

Moreover, the alliteration is accompanied in this proverb by the parallelism resulting from the inversion of two terms. Its function is to give more vigor to the structure, to focus the attention of the interlocutor (reader or listener) or to be striking – aim followed, both in conversation and in writing.

In other paremiological units, alliteration is combined with repetition, which gives more musicality and expressiveness:

Qui est **p**lus **p**rès du feu, de **p**lus **p**rès se chauffe ; **N**e **s**ait **p**oint **p**ardonne**r**, qui **n**e **s**ait **p**as **p**unir.

2. Types of alliteration

Alongside rhyme, which manifests itself in several forms, alliteration is an important element in popular literary creation. It is likely to take various forms, thanks to the arrangement of the words

containing the consonant which is repeated in the initial position. By analogy with rhyme (Negreanu, C., 1983: 200), three configurations or types of alliteration will be presented below: a) flat or continuous (a a b b): Happy heart often sighs;

Il faut faire **chaque chose** en son temps ; Nous **ne** comptons les heures **que** quand elles sont perdues ; Quand on ne **peut plus** reculer, il faut **savoir sauter** ; Qui a **bien besogné** a **droit de** se reposer.

In some proverbs of the same category, we notice the association between binary and ternary alliteration, accompanied by repetition as, for example, in:

Go to bed *without* supper and you will find yourself in the morning *without* debts where the preposition *without* is repeated.

b) crossed or alternated (a b a b):

Ce que **pense** l'âne, ne **pense** l'ânier ;

Tôt **gagné**, tôt **gaspillé** ; Il est plus difficile **de** garder que **de** gagner ; Il n'importe **combien** on **sait**, mais **comment** on **sait** ; Les gourmands **font** leur **fosse** avec leurs **dents** ; L'hiver n'est jamais bâtard / S'il ne **vient** tôt, il **vient** tard ; **Loin** des yeux, **loin** du coeur ; Plus **de** ronces que **de** roses ; Qui **dit** fortune ne **dit** pas **félicité** ; Qui n'a **point** d'argent n'a **point** d'ami ; Qui **nous** doit **nous** demande ; **Rien** n'est fait, tant qu'il **reste** à faire ; **Tel** vaisseau, **tel** vin ; Cela est fait **de** main **de** maître ; Il **faut** souffrir ou **faire** souffrir.

There are proverbs of the same type where alliteration is characterized by a double crossing of the initial sonorities:

On ne **doit** pas faire **d'**un **péché** **deux** pénitences.



Chose bien dite **n'**a **ni** réplique **ni** redite.

and even by a multiple crossing (the words which take part in an alliteration contain between them words belonging to other alliterations):

Il ne faut pas **mettre** la **faucille** **dans** la **moisson** **d'**autrui.

Dieu **me** garde **de** mes amis ! Je **me** garderai **de** mes ennemis.

Ce que je dis à vous, **ma** nièce, c'est pour vous, **mon** neveu.

Ce que le **coeur** **ne** voit pas, le **coeur** **n'**y rêve pas.

L'homme **ne** fait rien **sans** le **temps**, **ni** le **temps** sans l'homme.

In the last proverbs, it should be noted that the crossed alliteration is combined with the repetition of certain terms, which imparts a certain musicality to these units: *pense, tôt, on sait, dit, point, tel, souffrir, me, de, mes, le, coeur, pas, l'homme, temps, sans.*

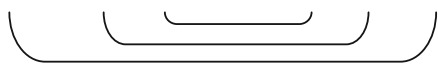
c) embraced (a b b a):

De **petit** **gage** **gros** pain.



Il faut **p**lumer la **p**oule sans la faire crier ; Un **b**alai **n**euf **n**ettoie toujours **b**ien ; La **r**once ne **p**orte **p**as de **r**aisin ; Le **m**ilieu en **t**oute chose est **t**enu le **m**eilleur ; Les **d**éfauts des **s**ots mettent les **s**ages en **d**éfaut ; Les **f**ous sont plus utiles aux **s**ages que les **s**ages aux **f**ous ; Les **r**aillieurs **s**ont **s**ouvent **r**aillés ; **M**achez-**l**ui **l**es **m**orceaux, il les avalera ; Un sot **t**rouve **t**oujours un plus sot qui l’admire ;

We sometimes find a triply embraced alliteration, as in the example:

Il  faut **m**anger **p**our **v**ivre et non **v**ivre **p**our **m**anger.

The paremiological units also offer examples of associations of two types of alliteration, called complex alliteration:

- embraced and crossed:

Pense **d**eux fois avant **d**e **p**arler, tu en **p**arleras **d**eux fois mieux.



Il ne **f**aut jamais **d**éfier un **f**ou de **f**aire **d**es sottises.

Qui **s**ait tout **s**ouffrir **s**ait tout oser.

Tous ceux qui **p**rendront l’épée **p**ériront **p**ar l’épée.

Ma **ch**air **m**’est **p**lus **p**rès que **m**a **ch**emise

Qui est **m**âître de sa soif est **m**âître de sa santé.

Qui **v**oit ses **v**eines, **v**oit ses peines.

- embraced and flat:

Une **p**lace **p**our **ch**aque **ch**ose et chaque chose à sa **p**lace.



Si tu **v**eux **v**ivre en paix, vois, écoute et **t**e **t**ais.

Les loups **p**euvent **p**erdre **l**eurs dents mais non leur naturel.

In the following example each word participates in a type of alliteration (crossed, embraced):

Secret **d**e **d**eux, secret **d**e **D**ieu, secret **d**e **t**rois, secret **d**e **t**ous.



The imagination of the community often resorts to the association of alliteration with rhyme, emphasizing the mnemonic value of the proverb, thanks to which it is easily fixed in memory:

Ce que femme **v**eut, / Dieu le **v**eut ; Si juin fait la **q**uantité, / Septembre fait la **q**ualité ; Pluie de **f**évrier vaut **f**umier ; Pas de **n**ouvelles, bonnes **n**ouvelles ; Qui aime **b**ien, châtie **b**ien ; Les mouches et les **t**aons piquent avant le mauvais **t**emps.

There are cases where alliteration associated with rhyme only affects the words of a verse:

Bigle, **b**orgne, **b**ossu, **b**oîteux, / Ne t’y fie si tu ne **v**eux.

Chat et **ch**aton / Chassent le **r**aton.

Conclusion

To conclude this brief study, we content ourselves with highlighting the following aspects:

- the proverbs constitute a corpus whose content, rich in universal truths, attitudes and psychological manifestations, invites to analyze the processes of style and highlights the lively spirit of observation and a particular creative fantasy of the users.

As forms of language, proverbs represent a modality accepted by a community to express thoughts with moral value, attitudes, aspirations, doubts belonging to the experience of a people. If we refer to G. Molinié, the proverb can be considered as a macrostructural figure, a variant of the sentence: “this formula has a general scope and applies to the particular case, by way of illustration-comment”. On the other hand, the paremiological units give the language the picturesque. We have insisted in this work on the study of alliteration, because most of the stylistic analyzes applied to proverbs concern, in general, tropes and other word figures.

- a large number of proverbs are based on the structure and effects created by alliteration.

Given the variety of forms of this process, as they have been presented and analyzed, we find that the phonological figures (metaplasm), which aim at the substance of expression, fall within the sphere of interest and concern. creators. One thus distinguishes, according to the distribution of the terms with consonantal initial, several formulas of recurrence of the sonority: in a successive way, at a distance, in a successive way and at a distance, at a distance and in a successive way.

In addition, we can notice, by analogy with rhyme, different types of alliteration (flat, crossed, embraced) which are associated with rhyme, repetition and give proverbs various effects: to capture the attention of the interlocutor, insisting on the content of a certain idea, or of a moral thought, which offers these structures the possibility of becoming fixed in the memory of the individual and of the community. When the recurrences strike the stressed syllables, the alliteration creates an iterative effect and reinforces, through its rhythmic function, the mnemonic value of the respective paremiological unit (Wolf is always wolf). Note, too, the effect of revealing subtle meanings, emphasizing by antithesis a reasoning with moral value.

- our analysis has also shown that proverbs have a simple, brief structure that contains a great wealth of thoughts, like all popular literary creations, whose characteristic is to be easily fixed in memory. We refer above all to proverbs which have a binary structure where alliteration produces a certain effect of persuasion through the feeling of verisimilitude (Reboul, O., op. cit., p. 39).

As a recurrence of consonant sounds placed at the initial of close words, the analysis of alliteration, which we applied in our work on proverbs, is not exhaustive. It can be developed by studying other aspects targeted by this process.

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