

Phonetic Parallelism in the Poetry of Ibn Abdun of Al-Andalus

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Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of **parallelism** as one of the most prominent stylistic and rhythmic features in the poetry of the Andalusian poet Ibn ‘Abdūn. The researcher begins by defining the concept of parallelism linguistically and terminologically, drawing on Arabic dictionaries such as *Lisān al-‘Arab*. He also reviews modern definitions of the phenomenon, most notably those of Muḥammad Miftāḥ and ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Shaykh, who emphasize that parallelism is based on structural repetition encompassing phonetic, syntactic, and semantic elements, thereby granting the text coherence and a distinctive rhythm.

The researcher adopts an applied analytical approach, focusing primarily on the phonetic (rhythmic) and semantic levels, with references to the syntactic level, and examines multiple examples from Ibn ‘Abdūn's poetry. The study demonstrates that parallelism appears in two main forms: **horizontal** (between the two hemistiches of a single verse) and **vertical** (between two or more verses), and may be **total** or **partial**.

The study also traces the use of parallelism in various contexts, such as description (e.g., spring), praise, and elegy (e.g., the elegy for Al-Mutawakkil), where the researcher observes that the poet employs recurring partial phonetic parallelism (e.g., "Where is the majesty that...", "Where is the pride that..."),

"Where is the fidelity that...") to create an internal music arising from the similarity of phonetic articulation, thereby lending the text an aesthetic resonance that pleases the listener.

The study concludes that the phenomenon of parallelism in Ibn 'Abdūn's poetry was not merely a verbal embellishment, but rather constituted a **structural and rhythmic mechanism** that contributed to textual coherence, broke rhythmic monotony, and generated internal musical variety. Moreover, the phenomenon of phonetic parallelism varied between complete horizontal, partial horizontal, and complete vertical, making it a distinctive feature of his poetry.

Keywords:Phonetic parallelism, Ibn Abdun, Poetry, Al-Andalus

Introduction

The phenomenon of parallelism is considered one of the most prominent stylistic and rhetorical phenomena that has preoccupied both ancient and modern scholars alike, due to the phonic harmony, syntactic cohesion, and semantic integration it produces, which contributes to the organic construction of the poetic text, bestowing upon it an rhythmic and internal musical beauty that increases its power and impact. While this phenomenon received attention in ancient rhetorical studies within the framework of what is known as "al-muwāzanah" (balancing) and "al-muqābalah" (contrasting/antithesis), modern critical scholarship — particularly through Roman Jakobson and the Russian Formalist school — has reconsidered it as an essential structural principle upon which the linguistic system of literature is based; indeed, it constitutes one of the fundamental criteria of poeticity.

The Andalusian poet Ibn 'Abdūn (died after 527 AH / 1133 CE) presents a rich and worthy model for study in this field. He is a poet of limited output in terms of the quantity of his poetry, yet his poetry is distinguished by a remarkable stylistic density and a clear employment of the mechanisms of repetition and parallelism at multiple levels: phonic, syntactic, and semantic. In his poems — especially his elegies and panegyrics — we perceive an extraordinary attention to the rhythm of the letter and the word, a meticulous construction of the sentence, and a precise symmetry between lines and hemistiches, which imparts to his texts a quality of firm composition and places the recipient before a poetic fabric governed by the principle of parallelism as the main axis that organizes the relationships of linguistic units with one another.

Proceeding from these givens, this study attempts to approach the phenomenon of parallelism in the poetry of Ibn ‘Abdūn of Andalusia through the following central problematique:

***How did the phenomenon of parallelism manifest itself in the poetry of Ibn ‘Abdūn of Andalusia, and what are the artistic contexts in which he employed this phenomenon? And how did phonic parallelism contribute to the construction of the poetic text and the production of meaning and rhythm in his poetry? ***

The concepts of the term 'parallelism' have varied, yet they ultimately converge around a consensual meaning that removes ambiguity from this literary phenomenon. To gain a precise understanding of the term, we will first attempt to provide a general overview under the lens of certain Arabic dictionaries.

In *Lisān al-‘Arab* by Ibn Manẓūr, it is stated: 'Waziya: the thing waziyyazā — it came together and contracted. Al-muwāzāh: correspondence and facing (Ibn Manzur Volume 15, p. 391).

Whereas in *Mu‘jam al-Lughah al-‘Arabiyyah al-Mu‘āṣirah* (Dictionary of Contemporary Arabic Language) by Aḥmad Mukhtār ‘Umar, it is stated more clearly, reflecting the meaning of the term in accordance with the requirements of the study at hand, as follows:

Wazā : tawāzā (to be parallel) — yatawāzā, tawāzan, tawāziyan — it is mutawāzin (parallel).

Tawāzā al-shay’ān (the two things were parallel to each other):

Each paralleled the other; they corresponded, faced each other, moved opposite each other such that they do not meet if extended.

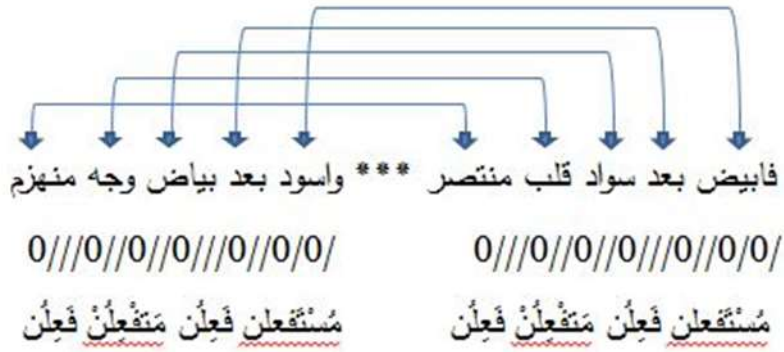
They equaled each other.

Wāzā al-shay’ (to parallel something):

It equaled it, balanced it; one parallels the other.

Tawāzāshib'h (a quasi-parallelism)(Omar, 2008, pp. 2434, 2435):

It corresponded, was analogous.



The vision concerning the term 'parallelism' has begun to become somewhat clearer through shedding light on it in certain dictionaries — especially Mu‘jam al-Lughah al-‘Arabiyyah al-Mu‘āṣirah, which returns the term to its original cradle in the world of mathematics, albeit without explicit reference to this fact, expressing it instead as: 'They move opposite each other such that they do not meet if extended'(Omar, 2008, p. 2435) — by which he means two parallel straight lines that are impossible to meet as long as they remain parallel. To lift the veil further from this phenomenon, we will address it in its terminological aspect, where MuḥammadMiftāḥ defines it as follows: 'Similarity that is a structural repetition in a single verse line or in a group of verse lines — it is the temporal succession resulting from the succession of an identical or similar linguistic chain, encompassing phonetic, syntactic, and semantic elements as well as forms of writing and the exploitation of space; it usually presumes that both sides are equal in importance.' (Miftāḥ, 1996, p. 97) Likewise, ‘Abd al-WāḥidḤasan al-Shaykh defines it as: 'Consisting of the similarity or equivalence of forms or meanings in lines whose words are identical, or phrases based on artistic pairing, connected to one another — thus termed identical, equivalent, or parallel, whether in poetry or prose.' (al-Shaykh, 1999, p. 7) From this statement, we deduce that the phenomenon of parallelism is fundamentally based on the identity or similarity occurring within the linguistic chain, whether complete or partial. This identity or similarity can be phonic, relating to meter and rhythm (al-Hayb, 2007, p. 141), such as: ..."

"It is observed that there is a complete phonic (sound) correspondence between the two hemistiches of the verse line, through the stress resulting from the equivalence in the points of articulation of the letters and the prosodic symbols (tafīlāt); such that the metrical feet occur as equal both in their base form and in any alterations they have undergone by way of minor prosodic changes (zihāfāt) and major defects (‘ilal), resulting in a phonic harmony and a monotonous rhythm that renders them identical notes.

It may also be syntactic, pertaining to the sentence and the order of its elements — verb, subject, object — or to the nominal sentence (subject and predicate), such as: ..."



It is observed from the example that there is a syntactic and grammatical correspondence between the two hemistiches of the verse line. The linguistic chain in the first hemistich (verb + adverb + genitive complement + subject + genitive complement) is identical to that in the second hemistich (verb + adverb + genitive complement + subject + genitive complement), thereby forming a total syntactic correspondence termed 'syntactic parallelism'.

Or parallelism may be semantic, becoming evident through meaning — whether synonymy or antonymy — such as:

fa-byaddaba‘ dasawādiqalbinmuntasirun
 wa-swaddaba‘ dabayāḍiwajhinmuhzamun

(So he turned white after the blackness of a victorious heart, and he turned black after the whiteness of a defeated face)

The one who contemplates the meaning of these two verse lines will find that there is a complete contrast (antithesis) between the two hemistiches, in that every word in the first hemistich has a word that opposes it by way of antonymy in the second hemistich. The following table will illustrate the picture more clearly: ..."

Word (First Hemistich)	Its Opposite (Second Hemistich)
ibyadda (turned white)	iswadda (turned black)
sawād (blackness)	bayāḍ (whiteness)

Word (First Hemistich)	Its Opposite (Second Hemistich)
qalb (heart — inner self)	wajh (face — outer appearance)
muntasir (victorious)	muhzam (defeated)

Among the familiar forms of parallelism, it occurs horizontally and contrastively between the two hemistiches within a single verse line (the first hemistich and the second hemistich), as in the previous example, or it occurs vertically between two or more verse lines, which we will see in later examples.

It is worth noting that all three types — phonic, syntactic, and semantic — may coexist in a single model, as illustrated in the previous example. It should also be pointed out that this choice of a unified model was intended to focus the mind on the phenomenon and to present it in a single template that serves as a standard image, easily fixed in the mind.

From the foregoing, we will attempt to examine this artistic phenomenon in the poetry of Ibn ‘Abdūn of Andalusia, observing it at the level of sound and meaning, but not syntax — as we will address the latter at the syntactic level later.

Among the examples of parallelism in the poetry of Ibn ‘Abdūn, we cite his saying (al-Tannir, 1988, p. 188):



faba ḡuhā mina l-makhāfijāmidun

waba ḡuhā mina l-ḡayā'idhā'ibu

(Some of them are frozen from fear, and some of them are melting from shyness)

The verse is in the rajaz meter, and al-khabn (the omission of the second silent letter) has occurred. As shown in the form and through the symbols and metrical feet, the extent of the complete phonic-rhythmic correspondence between the two hemistiches is clearly evident. This is due to the homogeneous fabric produced by the metrical feet, which contributed to the cohesion of the poetic text and bestowed upon it a beauty in its musicality — expressed by Roman Jakobson in his statement: 'At the level of the organization and arrangement of the compositions of sounds and embroidered structures, this pattern endows verses linked by parallelism with a clear harmony and great diversity at the same time.'

This model constitutes complete horizontal parallelism, in that each of the two hemistiches has the same form and meter without any alteration resulting from minor prosodic changes (zihāfāt) or major defects ('ilal)."

Elsewhere, we encounter this phenomenon in the poet's saying (al-Tannir, 1988, p. 107):



wabā' ufaqultufi l-ghabrā' iburj

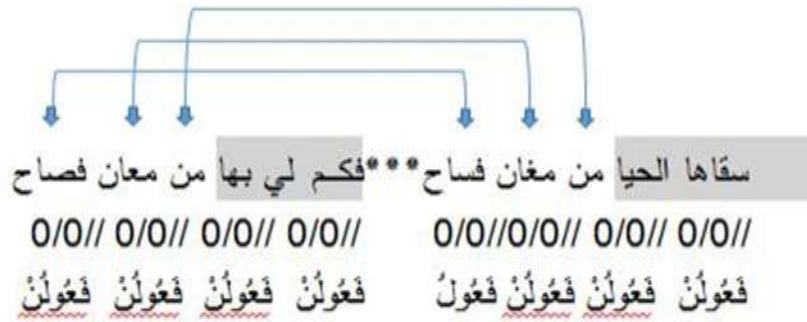
wa-thāru faqultufi l-khadrā' ighāb

(And the pestilence came, so I said in the dust: a tower; and the vengeance rose, so I said in the greenery: a forest)

This model differs from the previous one in that it constitutes a partial horizontal parallelism. This is because the form of the last word in the first hemistich (burjun) differs from the form of the rhyme

(ghābun), which resulted in a break in the monotony and harmony of the sound in the listener's ear, thus somewhat spoiling the rhythmic composition that had nearly taken hold of the listener's hearing.

Also among examples of partial horizontal parallelism is the poet's saying (al-Tannir, 1988, p. 118):



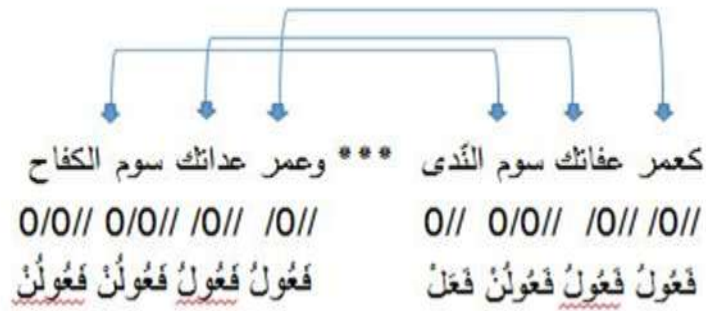
saqāhā l-ḥayā min maghānafasāḥ

fakamlībihā min maʿānafasāḥ

(The rain watered it from spacious ruins; how many eloquent meanings do I have there)

Partial horizontal parallelism appears in a new form. We observe a complete phonic harmony between the phonic structure min maghānafisāḥ (from spacious ruins) — which constitutes the syntactic structure (preposition + genitive object + adjective) in the first hemistich — and the phonic structure min maʿānafisāḥ (of eloquent meanings) — which constitutes the same syntactic structure (preposition + genitive object + adjective) in the second hemistich, in addition to the complete correspondence in form that produces the same musical resonance, reinforced by the phenomenon of al-taṣrīʿ (end-rhyme between hemistiches) in the verse.

And his saying (al-Tannir, 1988, p. 119):



ka'amri'afatikasawma l-nadā

wa'amri'adātikasawma l-kifāḥ

(By the life of your pardon, the generosity of giving; and by the life of your enemies, the generosity of combat)

In this model of partial phonic parallelism, we also observe a break at the level of the last two metrical feet of the two hemistiches, creating a disturbance in the monotony present in the first three metrical feet of the first and second hemistiches — expressed by the poet's phrase (ka'amri'afatikasawma) = (wa'amri'adātikasawma) — which derives its musical resonance from the harmony and correspondence of the metrical feet between the two sides of the verse.

And his saying(al-Tannir, 1988, p. 135):



fayūriduhāzīmā'unwa-hiya mā'un

wa-yuṣdiruhāriwā'unwa-hiya nārun

(So thirst brings them to it while it is water, and satiety sends them away from it while it is fire)

From the metrical feet of the verse, we observe a complete phonic correspondence that produces a musical resonance between the first hemistich and the second hemistich. This resonance arises from the symmetry in the form of the two hemistiches, despite their semantic opposition.

And his saying(al-Tannir, 1988, p. 147):



warawwa‘atkullama’ mūninwa-mu’taminin
 wa-aslamatkullamanṣūrīnwa-muntaṣīrin

(It terrified every secure and trusted one, and betrayed every victorious and triumphant one)

The verse is in the basīṭ meter, with its metrical feet (mustaf‘ilunfā‘ilunmustaf‘ilunfā‘ilun) in each hemistich. However, we note metrical licenses occurring in the first and last foot of each hemistich, producing a phonic correspondence that contributed to the emergence of a musical tone pleasing to the listener's ear — this is termed 'phonic parallelism.'

And his saying(al-Tannir, 1988, p. 144):



faba‘ḍunāqā’ ilunmāightālahuaḥad
 waba‘ḍunāsākitun lam yu’ta min ḥaṣar

(So some of us are saying, 'No one has waylaid him,' and some of us are silent, not constrained by narrowness)

From the two hemistiches, we observe a phonic harmony between the phrase faba‘ḍunāqā’ ilun in the first hemistich and the phrase waba‘ḍunāsākitun in the second hemistich, which results from the correspondence between the two phrases in terms of form on one hand, and in terms of morphological pattern regarding the active participle on the other — producing a partial musicality in the structure of the verse, manifested as partial phonic parallelism.

And his saying(al-Tannir, 1988, p. 149.150):

أين الجلالُ الذي غضت مهابتَهُ *** قلوبُنَا وعيون الأنجم الزهر
 ↓ ↓ ↓
 أين الإباءُ الذي أرسوا قواعده *** على دعائم من عزٍّ ومن ظفر
 ↓ ↓ ↓
 أين الوفاءُ الذي أصفوا شرائعه *** فلم يردُّ أحدٌ منها على كدر

 0/// 0//0/0/ 0//0/ 0//0/0/
 مُسْتَفْعِلُنْ فَاجِلُنْ مُسْتَفْعِلُنْ فَعِلُنْ

Ayna l-jalālualladhīghaḍḍatmahābatuhu

Qulūbunāwa-‘uyūnu l-anjami l-zuhri

Ayna l-ibā’ualladhīarsawqawā‘idahu

‘Alāda‘ā’ima min ‘izzinwa-min ḡafari

Ayna l-wafā’ualladhīaṣṣawsharā’i‘ahu

Falamyaridahadunminhā‘alākadari

(Where is the majesty whose awe subdued our hearts and the eyes of the radiant stars? Where is the pride that established its foundations upon pillars of might and victory? Where is the fidelity that purified its legal codes, so that no one came upon it with trouble?)

Partial phonic parallelism manifests in its most beautiful form in these three verses through the correspondence of the following interrogative formulations: (Ayna l-jalālualladhī?), (Ayna l-ibā'ualladhī?), and (Ayna l-wafā'ualladhī?), which appear at the beginning of the verses, granting the passage a phonic architecture that delights the listener due to the homogeneity resulting from the similarity and frequent correspondence of the points of articulation of sounds. In this, the poet asks in search of those qualities he has lost in his elegy for al-Mutawakkil — as they no longer exist — so he consoles himself with these harmonious verses, hoping that they might find a path to forgetfulness.

And his saying(al-Tannir, 1988, p. 153):

وَالْأَرْضُ فِي حُلَلٍ قَدْ كَادَ يُحْرِقُهَا *** تَوَقَّدُ النُّورِ لَوْلَا مَاؤُهَا الْجَارِي
 وَالطَّيْرُ فِي وَرَقِ الْأَشْجَارِ شَادِيَةٌ *** كَأَنَّهِنَّ قِيَانٌ خَلْفَ أَسْتَارِ

↑ ↑ ↑

Wa-l-arḍufihūlalinqadkādayuhriqūhā

Tawaqqudu l-nūrilawlāmā`uhā l-jārī

Wa-l-ṭayrufīwaraqī l-ashjārishādiyātunKa-annahunnaqiyānunkhalfaastārī

(The earth, in garments that the blaze of light would nearly burn were it not for its flowing water; and the birds, among the leaves of the trees, singing as if they were maidens behind veils).

Through these two verses, Ibn ‘Abdūn describes the captivating beauty of spring as manifested in the enchanting nature of Andalusia. He depicts the earth adorned in its finest garments, enhanced by the beauty and elegance of flowing water. In addition to the sound of the murmuring water and the singing birds with their sweetest melodies in this magnificent scene, another sound emerges as a result of the phonic harmony between the phrase wa-l-arḍufihūlalin in the first hemistich of the first verse and the phrase wa-l-ṭayrufīwaraqī in the first hemistich of the second verse, producing a partial phonic parallelism that further increases the scene's splendor and beauty.

And his saying(al-Tannir, 1988, p. 157):



Hal ‘ammarū l-ufqa bi-l-ārāmiwa-l-‘afari

Am kaḥḥalū l-shuhuba bi-l-taftīriwa-l-ḥawari

(Did they populate the horizon with wild camels and dust, or did they kohl the meteors with languor and intense whiteness of the eye?)

This verse is the opening line of a poem in which Ibn ‘Abdūn praises al-Mutawakkil, inquiring about the splendid preparations for his reception — the horizon populated with banners, and the white meteors kohled so that they appear like a beautiful, wide-eyed woman, their blackness intensified by kohl in addition to the radiant whiteness of the meteors. Ibn ‘Abdūn chose this verse with taṣrī‘ (end-rhyme between the two hemistiches: al-‘afari, al-ḥawari) as a deliberate move to capture attention and direct gazes toward the reception of his patron with all faculties. Not content with that alone, he makes the entire verse resonate with joy and play melodies — through the harmony occurring among the phrases, which he selected carefully and distributed skillfully to ultimately form this splendid horizontal parallelism.

And his saying :(al-Tannir, 1988, p. 162)



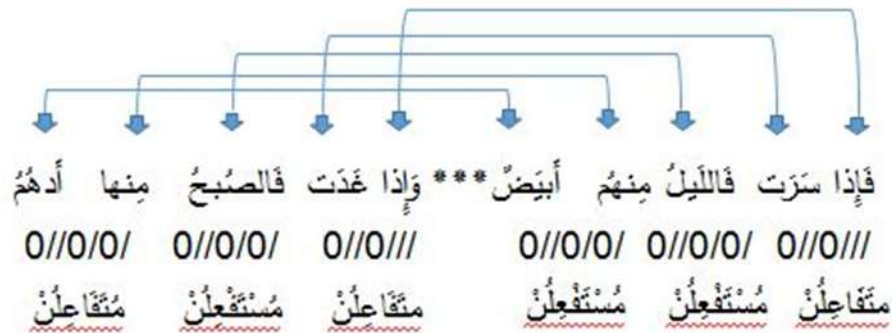
Fa-māittaba 'ūdālīlanfījtinābī

Wa-lāsalakūsabīlanfīṣṭinā'ī

(So they did not follow a guide in avoiding me, nor did they take a path in favoring me)

From the diagram, the complete phonic correspondence between the first hemistich and the second hemistich is clearly evident, producing a musical resonance resulting from the opposition of the words forming the two hemistiches. We observe a nearly complete morphological symmetry that bestows upon the verse a musicality and monotony ultimately leading to a phonic architecture that we term 'horizontal phonic parallelism.'

And his saying:



Fa-idhāsarāt fa-l-layluminhumabyaḍu

Wa-idhāghadat fa-l-ṣubḥuminhāadhamu

(So when they traveled at night, the night from them is white; and when they went early in the morning, the morning from them is black)

In addition to the opposition of the two hemistiches constituting the phenomenon of 'antithesis' (muqābalah), which is considered a rhetorical embellishment, Ibn ʿAbdūn was able to clothe the verse with another artistic garment that increased its elegance and beauty — namely, the phonic parallelism arising from the correspondence between the two hemistiches. Were it not for the break in sound resulting from the difference between the two phrases (minhum, minhā), we would call it complete horizontal parallelism.

And his saying (al-Tannir, 1988, p. 182):

كَلَّمَا حَكَّمُوا اللّٰهِي بِالنَّدَى فِي الِ *** مَالِ نَادَى مَالِي وَلِلتَّحْكِيمِ
 مِثْلَمَا حَكَّمُوا اللّٰهِي بِالنَّدَى فِي الِ *** أَخَذِ بِالِاخْتِيَارِ فِي الْمَحْكُومِ
 0/0//0/ 0//0// 0/0//0/
 فَاعَلَّئُنْ مَفَاعَلُنْ فَاعَلَّئُنْ

Kullamāḥakkamū l-luhā bi-l-nadāfī l-

-mālinādāmālīwa-li-l-taḥkīmi

Mithlamāḥakkamū l-luhā bi-l-nadāfī l-

-akhdhi bi-l-ikhtiyārifī l-maḥkūmi

(Whenever they made the intellects judge concerning wealth by generosity, my wealth cried out, 'What do I have to do with being judged?' Just as they made the intellects judge concerning taking by choice in the matter of the judged.)

Ibn ʿAbdūn returns once again to complete vertical phonic parallelism through the phonic architecture resulting from the parallelism of most of the words in the first hemistiches of the two verses. We find that the phrase (ḥakkamū l-luhā bi-l-nadāfī l-) corresponds completely in form, sound, and content with the phrase in the first hemistich of the second verse (ḥakkamū l-luhā bi-l-nadāfī l-), making it vertical phonic parallelism.

And his saying (al-Tannir, 1988, p. 192):



Wa-ayqaḏta min qadrīwa-mākānanā'imā

Wa-ab'adta min dhikrīwa-mākānadāniyā

(And you awakened my destiny when it was sleeping, and you distanced my memory when it was near)

In this verse, we observe a phonic harmony between the two hemistiches, where the first hemistich and the second hemistich harmonize in a homogeneous phonic symmetry, thereby forming horizontal phonic parallelism.

Conclusion:

Parallelism is similarity based on structural correspondence within a single verse line or within a group of verse lines. It is of three types: phonic parallelism, syntactic parallelism, and semantic parallelism. As for its forms, it may be parallelism through synonymy or parallelism through antonymy.

The phenomenon of repetition, in its various forms, produced a kind of internal musicality in Ibn 'Abdūn's poetry, contributing to the creation of a far-reaching musical resonance that made the verses of the poem a single note played on the same string.

Phonic and morphological parallelism varied in Ibn 'Abdūn'sdīwān, and its forms multiplied. We find it sometimes as complete horizontal parallelism, other times as partial or incomplete parallelism, while we find it vertically between two or more verses on many occasions. Moreover, we sometimes find it complete and other times partial or incomplete — which suggests that this phenomenon constituted a prominent feature in the poetry of Ibn 'Abdūn."

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