

## **Stylistic Analysis of William Blake’s Poem: “Night”**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article is stylistic analysis of Blake’s poem “Night”. For this analysis stylistics devices are used and the analysis is made under the aspects of graphological, syntactical, semantic and phonological patterns. This analysis would be helpful in understanding the basic concepts of poem that is actually a contrast between this world, in which nature is red in tooth and claw, and a “New World” in which distinctions between predator and prey cease to exist.*

**Key words:** Stylistic analysis, Blake’s poem, Night, nature, Contrast

### **1. Introduction**

The word stylistics is derived from style. Stylistics is a branch of linguistics that defines different styles and variations in Language/s. It refers to the study of level of appropriateness in the use of words or language in a sentence or writing. Widow son (1975, p:3) defines stylistics as —the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation. Style has different meanings for different people. Carter (1989, p 14) believes that style is generally depends on linguistic levels. Owing to these levels every text and writing is different from the other, hence every genre is different.

Leech (1969) says style is the way in which something is spoken, written or performed. It refers to use of words, sentence structures and speaking style. Broadly, style provides the foundation to the personality of the person. Style reflects the thoughts of person's mind. Different scholars define stylistics in different ways. According to Short and Candlin (1989, p.183) that —stylistics is a linguistic approach to the study of the literary texts. It thus embodies one essential part of the general course - philosophy; that of combining language and literary study. Stylistics is the study of the devices in languages such as rhetorical terms and syntactical devices that are taken to produce expressive or literary style. Stylistics is, therefore, a study which conjoins both literary criticisms on the one hand and linguistics on the other as its morphological structure exists.

Carter (1996: 5) argues on the relevance of stylistics for literature teaching stating that stylistic analysis helps to foster interpretative skills and to encourage reading between the lines. He further posits the advantages of stylistics stating that “stylistics provides students with a method of scrutinizing texts, ‘a way in’ to a text, opening up starting points for complete interpretation. The method is detailed and explicit, it shows how you reach or begin to reach an interpretation. From a teaching point of view, students learn to open a text not only by osmosis but explicitly and consciously. A pedagogically sensitive stylistics can give students increased confidence in reading and interpretation.”

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Regarding the expansion of industrialism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, “a shift from agrarian and the rural based occupations to predominantly urban-based industrial and service employments which resulted in radical shifts in social relations” (Hudson 1992: 4); therefore, the peasantry was destroyed as a substantial source of resistance to such economic and social movement. Due to the continuous moaning of innocent creatures across Britain’s landscapes, man was allowed to chop down massive innocent trees and destroy natural resources for the purpose of improvements: “As farmers they replaced water-efficient native perennial plants with water-wasteful annuals. They chopped down vast swathes of trees, allowing groundwater to rise and bring poisonous salt to the surface. They did not understand the unique geological, hydrological, and biological nature of the country they were emigrating to, and they did not understand that their land use changes and animal introductions would cause biological havoc” (Wilson: 5). In this way, the pastoral life gives ‘Farewell’ to its ‘green fields and happy grove’, or to its ‘joy without ceasing’ where ‘flocks’ and ‘lambs’ are sleeping in buds and blossoms. It is evident that “a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change. Some evil spell had settled on the community; mysterious maladies everywhere was a shadow of death. There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example, where had they gone? It was a spring without voices” (Marx 1964: 380). The environmental crisis throughout Britain was increased chiefly because of man’s voracious appetite for improvement. Human behavior in this decade contributes to pollution, improper use, and depletion of resources, and a continuing destruction of natural balances, which are essential to life. The following quotation is also noteworthy: “The extraordinary pleasantness of the Weadier, and the goodness of the Fruit, leads People into many Temptations. The clearness and brightness of the Sky, add new vigor to their Spirits, and perfectly remove all Splenetic and sullen Thoughts. Here they enjoy all the benefits of a warm Sun, and by their shady Groves, are protected from its Inconvenience. Here all their Senses are entertained with an endless Succession of Native Pleasures. Their Eyes are ravished with the Beauties of naked Nature” Sadness in the voice of the speaker throughout the poem takes the reader’s attention to “what begins as calming, even ‘tranquil’ turns into a granting roar” (Gifford 1999: 117), due to man’s disassociation from the natural world.

## 3. LEVELS OF STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

The levels of stylistics analysis are as following:

- 3.1 **Graphology:** —It deals with the systematic formation, structure and punctuation in the sentence.
- 3.2 **Phonology:** —phonology is the study of linguistic systems. —phonology describes the ways in which speech sounds are organized in English into a system. Phonological devices are: rhyme elements, alliteration, consonance and assonance.

**3.3 Morphology:** —Morphology refers to the mental system involved in word formation or to the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed.

**3.4 Semantic Features:** semantic deals with the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. It includes metaphor, simile, personification and other literary devices.

#### **4. ELEMENTS IN STYLISTIC ANALYSIS:**

The following elements of the levels of analysis are discussed briefly:

##### **4.1 Graphological Devices Include:**

i. **Punctuation:** Punctuation are the marks used in writing that divide sentences and phrases. It is the system of using the punctuation marks. These marks include full stop, comma, colon, semicolon, question mark, exclamation mark, apostrophe, hyphen, ellipsis, quotation marks, parentheses, brackets, etc.

ii. **Paragraphing:** Paragraph means a separate part which contains information, usually of several lines or sentences. The first sentence of a paragraph starts on a new line.

##### **4.2 Phonological devices Include:**

i. **Rhyme elements:** It consist patterns of rhymes: the stressed pattern, the rhyming scheme, which is followed in the poetry.

ii. **Alliteration:** It is the use of same letters or sounds at the beginning of words that are close together. It was used systematically in Old English poetry but in Modern English poetry is generally used for a particular effect.

iii. **Assonance:** It is the effect created when two syllables in words that are closed together have the same vowel sound but different consonants or the same consonants but different vowels.

iv. **Onomatopoeia:** It is the effect produced when the words used contain the similar sounds to the noises they describe: "murmuring of innumerable bees".

##### **4.3 Morphological devices Include:**

i. **Affixes:** It is a process of forming new words by putting morphemes before some words. It further divides into prefixes or suffixes. These are two popular types of morphological operations. Prefixes generally alter the meanings of the words and suffixes changes its part of speech.

ii. **Coinages:** It is the process of forming new words from the existing ones.

#### **5. INTRODUCTION OF THE POEM**

The poem “Night”, published in 1789 by William Blake, was written with the prospective of informing the readers about the presence of protective forces, and the inevitable evils of mankind. William Blake though a highly religious poet also possessed eccentric views. Nearly all of his poems contain some reference to god, or allude to the bible in some manner. In the

poem “Night” Blake, not-so-subtly, proposed the existence of guardian angels and demons of the night. His poem is filled with descriptive language, extended metaphor, and allusions.

## 6. METHODOLOGY

For stylistic analysis of the poem 'Night' of William Blake the semantic, phonological, graphological and morphological levels of analysis are going to form the basis of this analysis."Night":

## 7. STRUCTURE

This poem “Night” is a octave constructed in twelve quatrains; six stanza each of eight lines, composed in iambic meter. The rhyme scheme of each stanza is **ABABCCDD**. The iambic means the unstressed syllable is followed by the stressed one.

Symbols used in this analyses: Unstressed is represented by [×] and stressed is represented by [/]. Iambic pattern [× /].

The sun descending in the west,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
The evening star does shine;  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
The birds are silent in their nest,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
And I must seek for mine.  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
The moon, like a flower,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
In heaven's high bower,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
With silent delight  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
Sits and smiles on the night.  
× / | × / | × / | × /

This section uses multiple similes as night is entering and daytime is leaving The first stanza of the poem informs the reader that the day is coming to an end, and night is approaching. “The sun is descending in the west. The evening star does shine” (1). The first stanza also personifies the moon and sun, by suggesting that the sun is seeking its bed, and the moon “smiles on the night” (8). The first stanza also sets up the rest of the poems’ rhythm. “Night” is written with an AB-AB-AA-BB rhyme scheme. The organized layout of the stanzas, makes the poem flow more smoothly, and draws the audience’s attention. The rhyme scheme also allows for easier reading, and the repetition of the rhymes gives the poem an almost “sing-songy” rhythm. William Blake Poetry Analysis Uses mainly figurative language and rhyme Contents Has 6 octets Uses literary elements such as simile and metaphor throughout. Tone and speaker both change as well as the poem develops Summary Beginning of poem takes place in nature as the sun is setting and all of the animals are preparing for night

Farewell, green fields and happy groves,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
Where flocks have took delight.  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
The feet of angels bright;  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
Unseen they pour blessing,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
And joy without ceasing,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
On each bud and blossom,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
And each sleeping bosom.  
× / | × / | × / | × /

In the second stanza the sun is saying goodbye to the earth as it sets over the horizon. “Farewell green fields and happy groves” , and it is in this stanza that the guardian angels that Blake is so famous for first appear. They are described as bearers of luck and joy, whom visit all the sleeping creatures of the earth in order to protect them from harm. The “lambs” symbolize the innocent minds of children, and could even be a reference to deep sleep, when one counts sheep jumping over a fence.

They look in every thoughtless nest,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
Where birds are covered warm;  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
They visit caves of every beast,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
To keep them all from harm.  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
If they see any weeping  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
That should have been sleeping,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
They pour sleep on their head,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
And sit down by their bed.  
× / | × / | × / | × /

The third stanza is a continuation of the second. It goes into further depth on the duties of the angels. “They look in every thoughtless nest...to keep them all from harm” (17-20). Blake’s guardian angels take on the role of dutiful parents, whom sit at their children’s bedsides as they sleep. The tone of the stanza is very comforting. Words such as “warm”, “sleep”, and “bed” (17-25) convey feelings of contentment and safety, however, in the fourth stanza; the tone of the poem takes a drastic turn.

When wolves and tigers howl for prey,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
They pitying stand and weep;  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
Seeking to drive their thirst away,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
And keep them from the sheep.  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
But if they rush dreadful,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
The angels, most heedful,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
Receive each mild spirit,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
New worlds to inherit.  
× / | × / | × / | × /

Wolves and tigers are nocturnal predators. Blake uses them to symbolize the evils of mankind, perhaps murderers, thieves, and rapists. In the fourth stanza, the “wolves and tigers howl for prey” (25), and seek out the innocent sleeping sheep. Although the guardian angels are meant to protect those who are sleeping, they are powerless to stop the blood thirsty predators. Blake uses the situation to represent the desperateness of life, and while some may do their best to protect the minds of the young, at one point or another, all innocence comes to an end.

And there the lion's ruddy eyes  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
Shall flow with tears of gold,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
And pitying the tender cries,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
And walking round the fold,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
Saying, 'Wrath, by His meekness,  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
And, by His health, sickness  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
Is driven away  
× / | × / | × / | × /  
From our immortal day.  
× / | × / | × / | × /

## 8. PHONOLOGICAL DEVICES

The phonological devices like *Alliteration* and *Onomatopoeia* are used in this poem.

### 8.1 Alliteration:

Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sound.

Line 2. Star does shine

Line6. Heaven's high  
Line8. Sits and smiles  
Line15. Bud and blossom  
Line47. Shall shine

### 9. ONOMATOPOEIA

It is the effect produced when the words used contains similar sounds to the noises they describes "murmuring of innumerable bees".

Words like howl, bleating, and crying produces the natural echoing sounds.

### 10. SEMANTIC FEATURES

The semantic features of this poem lie in three rhetorical devices.

#### 10.1 Simile

It is the stated comparison between two unknown things by using the word "as" or "like". Two similes are prominent in this poem.

Line 5. **The moon like a flower,**

In this line he compares the moon to a flower using the word "like". Actually the poet's intention here to use the imagery of Moon in resemblance with the flower is to enhance the power and beauty of nature.

Line 45. **My bright mane forever Shall shine like the gold,**

**10.2 Metaphor:** it is an implied comparison between two unknown things. Metaphor is a covert comparison between things.

Line 33. And there the **lions ruddy eyes,**  
Shall flow with **tears of gold;**

**10.3 Personification:** when an inanimate or inhuman object is given the human qualities then the figure of speech used is known as personification.

Line 12. **The feet of angels bright;**

**10.4 Imagery:** Imagery is used throughout the entire poem, Blake uses this imagery to make the reader picture the night and the transition from day to night. "The sun descending in the west, The evening star does shine" Imagery AB-AB-AA-BB rhyme scheme.

**10.5 Allusion: allusion is actually a device which is used for reference.**  
**"For wash'd in lifes river".**

The river is used to represent heaven and the afterlife. The sun/Jesus states, that even in death

### 11. LEXICAL ANALYSIS

William Blake in his poem "Night" used different varieties of lexemes. Here we discuss these verities of words with their grammatical function (Part of speech) and their voice like echoing nature, terror and tenderness. Firstly these words with their part of speech are given as following.

This variety comprises of 30 Nouns, 13 Adjectives and 28 Verbs. Their description is as following.

<b>Noun</b>	<b>Adjective</b>	<b>Verb</b>
Sun	High	Bleating
West	Smiles	Descending
evening star	Green	Seek
Birds	Happy	Sits
Nest	Delight	took
Moon	Harm	moves
Flower	Silent	ceasing
Heaven	Bright	sleeping
Fields	Thoughtlessness	look
Groves	Ruddy	covered
Flock	Tender	weeping
Lamb		pour
Feet		howl
Angels		pitying
Blossom		seeking
Beast		rush
Head		receive
Bed		inherit
Wolves		flow
Tigers		walking
Prey		driven
Sheep		bore
Worlds		think
Lions		graze
Eyes		washed
Tears		shine
Gold		guard
Health		
Immortality		
Spirit		
Meekness		

## **12. WORDS PRESENTING THE NATURE**

Words like West, Sun, Evening star, birds, nest , Moon, flower, Heaven, night, green field, lambs, bud and blossom, tigers, lions and gold depicts the true sense of nature in them.

### **12.1 Words of Terror**

These words reflect the terror aspect of nature. These are wolves, prey, and wrath, dreadful and tender cries.

### **12.2 Words of Tenderness**

Words like Blessing, joy, warm, sleeping, pitying, meekness, weep and heedful are used in sense of affection and love.

## **13. ANALYSIS CONCLUSION**

Blake's "Night" marks on an awareness of environmental crisis, concerning a strong sense of possible death of nature. The first two stanzas of this poem elaborate the world in an everlasting darkness, with 'the moon like a flower', smiling 'on the night' and the birds 'silent in their nest'. In this way, Blake not only presented in the lines of his poems man's urgent need to be aware of environmental crisis in Britain is, but also marked on the presence of the speaker and readers in the poem. Therefore, one of the fundamental features of Gifford's post-pastoral principles might be related to Blake's assumption and manipulation of the reader's sense of a global environmental crisis, even by his presence as perfect imageries

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