

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF WILLIAM BLAKE'S POEM "LONDON"

Mahnaz Bano

M. Phil Scholar (English Linguistics) University of Education LMC Lahore.

Kashmala Altaf

M. Phil Scholar (English Linguistics) University of Education LMC Lahore.

Dr. Jahanzeb Jahan

Lecturer, University of Education, Lahore

Abstract

This research paper will critically analyze the poem London by William Blake through the lens of Norman Fairclough's 3D model of discourse analysis. This paper analyzes the poem for its text, context, and the ideologies present within it as portrayed by Blake with subjectivity and intensity in an urban environment. This critical overview considers the ways in which language and imagery of the poem undermine the social and political reality of Georgian London, focusing on the problem of poverty, oppression, and corruption of the institutions. By applying Fairclough's model, the paper reveals how Blake's use of stark, emotive language communicates a deep sense of despair, yet also implicitly calls for social change. The work identifies the purpose of the poem in at least two ways: as a satire of the city condition and as the poet's ideological platform demanding a change in the existing mentality, system of priorities, societal values and the status quo. This paper demonstrates how Blake's seemingly simple words contain layers of meaning that challenge the reader's perception of power, inequality, and morality in the context of urban life.

Keywords: Critical discourse analysis, Fairclough, London, William Blake, ideology, social critique, 18th-century London.

Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has now developed into a central cross-disciplinary theoretical framework in terms of the interrelations between language, power and ideology internationally (Nartey & Mwinlaaru, 2019). CDA as a field of study examines how the concepts of discourse, and how they are not merely about reporting social power relations, political and social beliefs, as well as modes of dominance and oppression (Lazar, 2007). CDA emerged from the traditions of systemic functional linguistics and critical theory in the post-1980 period and thanks to scholars such as Teun A. van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak for this (Thomson, 2018).

These theorists have shaped the advancement of CDA in so far as their theories were used as basic frameworks for understanding the relations between language, mind and society (Waugh et al., 2016). Using CDA, this paper specifically employs Norman Fairclough three dimensional approach to examine William Blake's 'London' (1794) and illustrates how the poem resists the socio-political context of late eighteenth century London, through critical language, discursive practices, and ideological implications.

Origin and Development of CDA

CDA was developed as an interdisciplinary method in light of the perceived requirement of a method which could deal with both the textual and the micro/macro-social aspects of language use i.e. societal power dynamics (King, Lai, & May, 2017). Although related to linguistics, critical theory, and social sciences, CDA is best defined by the investigation of language as a social practice that maintains or challenges social inequalities (Fairclough, 2013). It pins language down as not being a neutral, formal entity, but as a cultural practice in which power relations are produced, reproduced or sometimes even negotiated. CDA on the other hand focuses on nature

and role of power in discursive practices to reveal ideologies in the social relations that determine and regulate the established linguistic norms (Mayr, 2008).

A key premise of CDA is that discourse is always ideological, or it carries and promotes sheer and dominant ideologies into the social world. The interaction between language and power therefore rises to a social, political and historical force and is not constant. CDA, therefore, is as much interested in the language use as it is interested in how language embodies and gives rise to other social phenomena and constructs broader social realities. For this reason, CDA is most valuable in works of literature, wherein it enables scholars to examine how texts, including poetry, reflect and critique societal structures (Azeez, 2024).

Van Dijk's Work on CDA

Teun A van Dijk, one of the founders of CDA, is widely acknowledged for his socio-cognitive model of discourse (Van Dijk, 2017). Van Dijk's model explicitly incorporates cognition—cognitive structures, and knowledge, into discourse. He claims that power and knowledge are closely related and that language may serve both as the means of oppression and emancipation of social dominance (McKenna, 2004). As van Dijk has shown through all his examination and discussion of news media, political rhetoric, and organizational communication practice, discourse contributes to the legitimization of ideologies that perpetuate social injustice such as racism, sexism, and classism.

For van Dijk, discourse is not just a reflection of societal beliefs but actively constructs and reinforces social hierarchies (Oktar, 2001). He views ideologies as mental frameworks that are embedded in discourse and that guide individuals' understanding of the world. In this sense, CDA provides a means of uncovering the ideological content of a text by analyzing the structures of language—such as lexical choices, sentence structure, and narrative strategies—that reinforce dominant power relations. When applied to Blake's *London*, van Dijk's framework helps illuminate how the poem critiques the classist and capitalist structures of 18th-century London through its use of oppressive imagery and symbolic language.

Wodak's Work on CDA

Ruth Wodak is associated with CDA primarily through the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) which pays much attention to historical and contextual aspects of discourse (Wodak, 2009). Drawing on Wodak's work, this approach means including a historical dimension into the analysis in order to trace how ideologies are created, sustained, and changed. For Wodak, language does not merely reflect social reality; it plays a central role in shaping that reality by embedding ideologies in social practices.

In her work, Wodak highlights the role of discourse in processes of identity construction, group membership, and the reproduction of power relations (Wodak, 2014). She emphasizes that ideologies are not static but evolve in response to changing historical and political circumstances. This view aligns with the broader objectives of CDA, which seeks to explore how power relations and ideologies are enacted through discourse in specific historical contexts. In the case of *London*, Wodak's DHA can be used to examine how Blake's critique of social injustice is informed by the historical conditions of London during the Industrial Revolution and how these conditions shaped both the poem's form and its content.

Relationship of Discourse and Ideology

As it has been witnessed, CDA is the notion that discourses contain ideologies. This relationship is important in demystifying use of power in a society since language is the key means through which ideologies are communicated and reinforced (Alaghbary, Alazzany, & Al-Nakeeb, 2015).

Discourse, thus, is not simply a transmission of text; it contains a baggage of political and social implications that informs the participant-observer the way he or she should view the world and its structures.

In the context of *London*, social message and the ideological critique inherent in the poem is expressed through words, symbols and other figures of speech by Blake. Criticizing the capitalist and hierarchy in the society that make the working class suffer in the poorest situation, Blake mixes social criticism and poetry by depicting the city, the suffering of the poor, the false spirituality of church and state, the slavery of working-class men and women. The ideological critique is not limited to overt political statements but is also embedded in the structures of the poem itself. For example, the repeated use of the word "every" in phrases like "every face," "every cry," and "every voice" emphasizes the pervasive nature of social injustice, suggesting that no one in London is untouched by the forces of oppression. This linguistic choice serves to reinforce the poem's ideological message about the ubiquity of exploitation and suffering.

Objective of the Research

The study's aim is to identify the ideology that lies within William Blake's poem, *London* Paying particular attention to Fairclough's model for research.

Research Question:

What kind of an ideology is William Blake portraying in his poem 'London'?

Literature Review

The application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Norman Fairclough's framework, to William Blake's *London* has gained significant scholarly attention in recent years, offering new insights into the poem's critique of social, political, and economic systems. This paper argues that, by applying Fairclough's framework for textual analysis aimed at three distinct levels of language as text, discursive practice, and social practice, Blake's metaphorical and imagery, and repetitive strategies comment on the structure of power relations in late 18th-century England (Fairclough, 1995; Tynan, 2009). Scholars have pointed to Blake's vivid portrayal of pain and loneliness in the city, which the author directs entirely at institutions – the church, the monarchy, and capitalism (Lucas, 2014). As a result, through CDA, the scholars have demonstrated that Blake provides symbolic critique of these institutions through his poems such as "the charter'd streets" and the "black'ning church" to express the commercialization of urban life and the roles of religious and political institutions in the perpetration of social oppression. The repeated imagery of the "mind-forg'd manacles" is also central to CDA interpretations, representing not only the physical oppression of the working poor but also the ideological control exerted by institutional discourses that convince individuals of their inability to change their social status (Lyda, 2011). Recent studies applying CDA to *London* have deepened our understanding of Blake's work by exploring the psychological and ideological aspects of oppression (Hyland, 2015), while also revealing the poem's exhortation to change as well. For instance, it has been argued that Blake employs the word 'cry' in his works to represent suffering of the subordinate sections of the society as well as to plead – for it spells out the chances of a change in social status quo (Majić, 2020). Equally, from a Faircloughian perspective the poem is not only the vehicle for negative ideology but it may also be a space where resistance to this negative ideology and the creation of a positive one can take place, in terms of justice and equality. Furthermore, contemporary studies have employed CDA to analyze *London* comparatively with the postmodern critiques of neoliberalism in the arising social injustices (Zotzmann, & O'Regan, 2016), hence the current-by-contemporary standpoint of the poem. Studies have explored the ways in which Blake's critique of

commodification and exploitation anticipates modern struggles with the erosion of public spaces and the increasing influence of capitalist ideologies in shaping societal structures (Salerno, 2012). Such recent researches prove that London continues still as a work, which focused on commenting on power relation and possibilities of resistance concerning time and age (Paddison, Philo, Routledge, & Sharp, 2002).

Research Method

Methodology

This paper aims at analyzing William Blake's 'London' using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), that looks at the text at the **linguistic level**, the **discursive practice**, and **social practice** (socio-cultural background). Thus it allows having general knowledge of the ideological characteristics indicating power and other structures discussed in the poem.

The study uses a qualitative procedure mainly due to the analysis of meaning and ideologies contained in the poem rather than quantifying data. According to Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2011), qualitative research is ideal for exploring cultural and social issues in depth. Jaison (2018) highlights the transformative potential of qualitative research in producing meaningful results. This flexibility makes it well-suited for analyzing the complex imagery and symbolism in *London*, enabling a deeper exploration of Blake's critique of social injustice and power.

The research employed a qualitative method mainly because the study involved identification of meanings and ideologies in the poem, not statistical data. Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2011) posit that the culture and social phenomena are better studied using a qualitative approach. According to Jaison (2018), flexibility is one of the benefits of qualitative research in that it has the ability to provide meaningful results in society. This flexibility makes it possible in assessing the symbolism and imagery in the social structures in London to offer a deeper understanding of Blake's perception of social inequality and power.

Three-Dimensional Model of CDA by Fairclough

The three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) proposed by Norman Fairclough divides CDA into three dimensions: CDA is a three-dimensional model which consists of Description, Interpretation and Explanation. By doing so this model creates a possibility of comparing the language, the social activities that it involves and relations of power in different contexts. The next sections focus on each of the dimensions outlined in Fairclough's model.

Text Analysis (Description)

This dimension deals with features of the text, such as vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures. For example, in studying political discourse, the researchers focus on the aspect of inclusion in language used and the specific terminology that belongs to ideologies, for example, 'democracy' and 'corruption' (Mekt et al., 2024).

Discursive Analysis (Interpretation)

Interpretation relates to the extent of interaction between the text and its creation. It still takes into account the background of the discourse being produced; the purpose, the agenda of the speaker, the response of the listener. For instance, the features of Emma Watson's speech show that her rhetoric was produced to appeal to socio-political conditions, for the purpose to promote the gender equality (Mehmood, 2023).

Social Analysis (Explanation)

This dimension connects the discourse to broader frameworks of society and power. This theory looks at how language manifests the social functions and practices, and how in turn it serves to construct ideologies. Reflecting the characteristics described above, the essence of Fairclough's model is to focus on the discourse as an instrument to construct or transform various power relations in society (Gölbaşı, 2017).

While Fairclough's model provides a robust framework for CDA, some scholars argue that it may overlook the complexities of social interactions and the influence of non-linguistic factors in discourse analysis (Catalano & Waugh, 2020).

Data Analysis

William Blake as Symbolist 28 November 1757 – 12 August 1827

William Blake is often considered a precursor to the Symbolist movement, despite predating its formal emergence in the 19th century. His work is rich in symbolic elements that explore metaphysical and spiritual ideas through vivid imagery and layered symbolism. In poems like *Songs of Innocence and Experience* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake uses symbols—such as the “tyger” in *The Tyger* and the “mind-forged manacles” in *London*—to evoke complex philosophical, religious, and social critiques, while inviting multiple interpretations. His symbols reflect a world where the spiritual and material are intertwined, representing the fluidity of meaning central to Symbolism. Blake's focus on the visionary and mystical, seeking to transcend the material world through imagination, distinguishes him from later Symbolists like Baudelaire and Rimbaud, but also lays the groundwork for their exploration of deeper, often mystical meanings beyond surface reality (Euron, 2019 & Cooper, 2016).

Selected Text

"London" is one of the most famous poems written by a truly outstanding visionary poet of Great Britain William Blake. The poem depicts a walk-through London, the city is depicted as an acutely painful, oppressive and impoverished location where the only thing the speaker can find is misery. It focuses mainly on the acoustics of the London city by which cries from both the men, women and children are featured all through the poem. The poem is in part a response to the Industrial Revolution, but more than anything is a fierce critique of humankind's failure to build a society based on love, joy, freedom, and communion with God. The poem is partly related to the Industrial Revolution; it is to a greater extent a criticism about humanity's inability to create the world of love, joy, freedom, and communion with God.

London

By William Blake

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry

Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

Text Analysis

Textual analysis at lexical level

Symbolism

In *London*, William Blake uses powerful symbolism in depicting evilness of the society and the society's institutions that maintain oppression. Most of the concepts such as the "chartered streets" and "the black'ning church" depict the oppression that the society and its institutions offer. The 'chartered streets' is used to signify the commercialization of the streets and legalization where 'black's church for foulasis' gets replaced by immediate corrupt 'blackening institution' which states that the concerned institution lacks the ability to understand the poor's suffering.

Also, Blake gives a clear distinction between innocence and experience which depicts the society having lost its purity due to the concerns of the world, business, industry, and other vices which were neglected. This juxtaposition points the social decay and the innocence of childhood is gradually destroyed because of the effects of urban life. The use of the emotional term 'cry' throughout the poem also increases the hopelessness of city's poor in this poem; thus strengthening the emotional appeal of the poem's social realism (Mickelson, 2016).

Lexical Choices

In *London*, William Blake's careful lexical choices expose the depressing aspect of urbanization in which Blake depicted the gloomy environment, and miserable community. For instance, the term "mind-forged manacles" means both the mental and the actual chains that people have to live with, and it points to the psychological and the social oppression they undergo. Blake's diction intensifies the sense of entrapment and dehumanization, particularly as these "manacles" are portrayed as self-imposed, suggesting that societal conditioning plays a crucial role in maintaining control over the population.

Furthermore, repeated use of 'every' in the poem draws the musical poundage of hopelessness; suffering goes on so ceaselessly, just like the rhythmic pattern portraying poor life in the city. While Blake's *London* captures these social vices of industrialization it also holds a partial positive connotation some critics say that there is more to it than just the vice that lies in the industrial society. This duality within the poem invites readers to reflect on both the darkness of urban life and the possibility for transformation, revealing the complex nature of human experience.

Similes and Metaphors

Compared to its themes, the lexicalization of the poem 'London' by William Blake is filled with the provisions of similes and metaphors. Frequent employment of the metaphors in the poem amplifies the passion and social comment found in the poem to explain conditions that exist in the inhabitants' lives.

Similes in "London"

In London, Blake employs the use of simile to create clear immediate images that condemn the exploitative society in London. For instance, Blake uses vocabulary to make a paradox, for example the city is described as a chartered entity which gives the city more resemblance of a system that is regulated and controlled. This simile also implies the end of liberty and of constant oversight of the citizens of London. It underscores the theme of institutionalized oppression, where the streets and spaces are commodified, restricted, sanitized commodities and boundaries effectively limiting the agency of people.

Metaphors in "London"

Energy of the city and chaos of London is represented with the help of metaphors in Blake's *London* that show both the growing potential of the city and its decline. For instance, the city is personified metaphorically; the essay concentrates on its life and moral corruption (Lussier, 2011). Another brilliant imagery as "mind-forged manacles" which have to endure the mental manacles, and the statement that a man is 'free' has been postulated as a falsehood. This metaphor was pointing towards the fact that oppression is installed and people are the biggest prisoners of oppression reflecting the themes of mental and social oppression.

Lexicalization in "London"

Blake employs and lexical means Londoner's in this poem to assert the key themes of oppression, suffering, and institution. It should be noted that lexical items such as 'cry', 'charter', which are used with a great frequency within the text are indicative of the fact that the city can only exist in order to suffer physical and psychological pain. This 'cry' makes a reference to the suffering which is global throughout the poem. The use of the word "charter" is directly linked to the act of commodification and regulation of freedom. These lexical choices make narrative of dehumanizing effects of 'Urbanization' as well as 'Exploitation of the Poor'.

Furthermore, Blake's structural choices, such as the rhythmic repetition of certain phrases, fosters the intended emotional effect of the poem. Using such imagery and themes, the poem generates a rhythmic structure that visually and auditory captures the impending nature and overall hopelessness of the events. Still, it is evident that the lexical repetition which has become the poem's signature – to a certain extent, might undermine the capacity of the reader to pay attention to the imagery since the cue words appear too obvious and might encode a strong meaning which does not let the reader focus on anything else (Chen, 2022). This tension between figurative and literal language invites multiple interpretations of Blake's work, allowing for both straightforward and complex readings.

Textual analysis at phonological level

William Blake's poem "London" employs various phonological techniques that enhance its thematic depth and emotional resonance. The poem's structure is characterized by rhythmic patterns and sound devices, particularly alliteration, which contribute to its musicality and reinforce its critical commentary on societal issues.

Alliteration in "London"

Blake uses alliterations at regular intervals in order to convey the theme of haste and hopelessness of the city of London. The use of repetition in the phrases-chartered Thames and mind-forged manacles where the consonant styles used emphasize the oppressive state of the region. The repetition of the interdental sound or the 'ch' in the two-named object 'chartered' and 'Thames' heightens the imprisoned and restrained feel that both applies to the streets and the river emphasizing the control that the institutional bodies have over physical and spiritual aspects of the

city. In the same vein, “mind-forged manacles comes with an emphasis on ‘m,’ which brings out the psychological and emotional imprisonment that London has subjected to its inhabitants and complements the poem’s depressing tone.

Rhyme and Rhythm in "London"

Nevertheless, the poem has the ABAB rhyme which enables to describe the musical structure of the verse and at the same time such a structure is able to represent the monotonous Circle of people’s life in the city. The very predictable nature of the rhyme scheme speaks to the never evolving dismal state of the setting London; the poverty, suffering, and control remain ever present. This rhythm added to clear meters captures the monotonous mundane tedious life of London city folks and chords with the prevailing hopelessness and determinism of the poem (Krolikoski, 2019).

Sound Patterns in "London"

The harsh sounds of consonants and the hiss present in parts of Blake’s poetry are contained in London. The use of the ‘s’ sound in ‘sigh’, ‘soldier’ and ‘sweeper’ provokes a sneer that conveys distress in the city (Luo & Li, 2018). The usage of staccato harsh sounds in the slang ‘mind-forged manacles’, fits in with the prison and desperation and brings out the dregs of the London economy and livelihood.

Textual analysis at grammatical level

Transitivity analysis

Transitivity analysis at the grammatical level is a crucial aspect of understanding how meaning is constructed in various texts. This analysis, rooted in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), categorizes processes within language to reveal the underlying ideational meanings. In order to conduct a transitivity analysis of William Blake's *London*, we can break down some of the clauses in the poem to identify how events and processes are connected with subjects and objects. Transitivity analysis in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) reveals how different processes (material, mental, relational, etc.) express the relationships between the participants (actors, goals, etc.) within the events depicted.

Grammatical Processes in Transitivity

- **Types of Processes:** The primary process types identified include material, relational, and verbal processes. For instance, in religious discourse, material processes dominate, reflecting actions and events, while relational processes provide context and identity (Dada & Adagbonyin, 2023).
- **Frequency and Patterns:** In literary texts, such as Nadia Hashmi's "When the Moon Is Low," material processes were found to be the most frequent, indicating a focus on actions and events in the narrative.

Material Processes

- **Depiction of Actions:** The poem frequently employs material processes to depict the physical and social actions occurring in London, such as "chartered streets" and "chartered Thames," emphasizing the control and commodification of public spaces.
- **Imagery of Suffering:** The use of material processes highlights the suffering of the people, as seen in phrases that evoke images of poverty and despair.

Relational Processes

- Identity and Relationships: Relational processes in "London" establish connections between the speaker and the subjects, portraying the stark realities of life, such as the "mind-forged manacles" that symbolize mental and societal constraints.
- Contrast of Innocence and Experience: These processes also reflect the dichotomy between innocence and experience, a recurring theme in Blake's work.

In contrast, while transitivity analysis provides insight into the poem's meaning, some critics argue that focusing solely on grammatical structures may overlook the emotional depth and figurative language that enrich Blake's poetry (Novari & Gumelar, 2022)

Below are the examples of how you can analyze some of the lines from *London* using transitivity analysis.

Example Lines from *London*:

1. "I wander through each chartered street,"

- Process: Material
- Actor: I (the subject or agent performing the action)
- Goal: each chartered street (the object or goal being affected by the action)
- Transitivity: The action in this clause is a material process, where the "I" is the actor who performs the action of "wandering" through the streets.

2. "And mark in every face I meet"

- Process: Mental
- Actor: I (the subject)
- Phenomenon: every face I meet (the object of the mental process)
- Transitivity: This is a **mental process** of "marking," where the "I" perceives or notices the faces of the people they encounter, with the "faces" being the phenomenon that is experienced by the subject.

Blake's *London* is filled with transitive actions that emphasize the social and political constraints imposed upon individuals by oppressive forces. Through material, mental, and relational processes, Blake illustrates the suffering of London's citizens, conveying a powerful critique of institutional control, exploitation, and systemic suffering.

2. Discursive analysis

Blake's *London* also responds to the question about how language works to enforce certain ideologies, with special reference to ideologies of power, class, and institutions' role maintaining social control. In regard to the CDA, the poet satirically looks at how these ideologies normalize in institutional discourses including those of the church, government and monarchy.

The paper then examines the socio-political aspects of Blake's work by analyzing how this poem captures elements of socio-political context in 18th century England, indeed the manner in which the language articulates issues of power, control, and subjugation of the lower classes.

Ideology of Institutional Control

Blake speaks against the church as an institution that, at the same time, provides moral guidance and also contributes to social inequality. The term "black'ning church" is a metaphorical phrase, which is the implications of immoral church that has become part of the political and business system, failing in its duties to poor souls. This image protests the condition that the church and societal institutions both ignore the suffering of the poor in London and demonstrates how discourses of power subordinate oppressed ideologies to fit the master narrative.

In the same vein, the phrase ‘soldier’s sigh’ expresses the government’s use of the working class in wars that are more or less beneficial to the elite class. Blake again clearly paints the figure of the soldier as a driver of political and military might, which implies that the poor are harvested to battle in wars that they cannot benefit from, but to keep them in a state of poverty. This highlights the collaboration of governmental institutions in making the discriminative system operational.

Revealing the Ideology of Capitalism

The “chartered streets” and “chartered Thames” parody the manner of how capitalist society devalues and encodes urban space as well as humanity itself. The use of the word “*chartered*” implies that even natural spaces are controlled for economic profit to show to what extent that capitalist has control of the city’s resources. By such a descriptive use of ‘chartered’, Blake portrays a society where even the sectors of everyday life such as streets and rivers of this world and their laws which are answerable only to the welfare of their owners—the chartered few. This kind of critique unmasks the capitalist society, which is characterized by extended inequality of assets where bounty is accumulated and controlled by the elites while the masses languish in a city planned to work for the elite.

Psychological and Ideological Oppression

Exploitation of the Vulnerable

Blake uses the ‘chimney sweeper’s cry’, ‘soldier’s sigh’ to represent the suffering of children and the working class most especially: the chimney-sweeps are symbolized poor children work in deplorable conditions for the benefit of others, and a soldier is the humanity that has been reduced to a mere sigh for monstrous warfare that serves only the few. Such strong images illustrate the idea of how those people who are in need of any protection are offered as the tools for the state and economy and are to suffer in the concentration camps for the sake of those in power.

3. Social analysis

Despite the fact that in William Blake’s poem London social and political contexts of the poem are described, the author pays much attention to revealing oppressive social and political systems of 18th-century England and the existing power relations. It is worth to note that, unlike many contemporaries and followers who pointed to certain institutions such as: the church, the government, the monarchy, or specific oppressors such as kings and priests; he becomes broader in his scope and shows how society is organized to support oppression. His poems represent the critique of the social injustice that dominated the times in which his work was written as well as a critique of the ideologies that make such injustice possible. Analyzing the class element of social relations, this analysis primarily attends to principles of class division, subjugation and possibilities for struggle.

Class Inequality and Social Control

In the beginning of the poem, Blake has depicted a city of fully grown suffering people who seem to be in a state of permanent woe. The idea which first sets the imagination flaming is a metaphor “mind-forg’d manacles” used to depict the psychological and ideological oppression of the poor. These “manacles” are not literal handcuffs but embody oppression from the conditioning that one has internalized willingly or unwillingly. This shows, according to Blake, the poor in London accepted their suffering as permanent and inevitable way of life which is otherwise a form of social oppression. This again shows how class oppression is not just exercised by the extra-class institutions such as the church, state, as well as the economic order, but through the mechanisms of the internalized social-psychological structures of a society’s people. People come to believe in their own subjugation, which makes their oppression all the more entrenched.

In this sense, *London* critiques the social practices that normalize the suffering of the poor. The poor are not merely victims of external forces; they are also victims of a society that teaches them to accept their role in this system of inequality. The repetition of the word “charter’d,” as in “charter’d streets” and “charter’d Thames,” emphasizes the idea that even natural and public spaces are subject to ownership and control by the elite. This language reveals how capitalist ideologies permeate all aspects of life, commodifying even the basic elements of existence. Public spaces, such as the streets and the river, are not free, but are rather controlled for profit, reinforcing the idea that the rich and powerful have dominion over the public’s access to and use of these spaces.

Exploitation and Systematic Inequality

Blake’s critique extends to the exploitation of vulnerable populations, particularly through the vivid imagery of the “*chimney-sweeper’s cry*” and the “*soldier’s sigh*.” These phrases illustrate how children and the working class are exploited and dehumanized within the social system. The “chimney-sweeper” brings the notion of childhood slavery where young kids were forced to work in hazardous conditions to clean chimneys and not only were they mutilated physically or mandated, but mentally they embody the passive social gender, powerless in the economic system. In ways, “the soldier’s sigh” is a nasty and efficient reminder of how the poor who obsessively The dehumanization of the poor who are shipped to fight in new wars for new masters are not considered as individual beings with unique pains and auras, but as faceless tools that should willingly donate their lives for the sake of new wars.

These forms of exploitation are not isolated but are integral to the social and economic systems that maintain inequality. The poor are used as tools by the state, economy, and church, often for the benefit of the elite. Blake’s use of these two images highlights how the labor of marginalized groups is exploited to sustain a political and economic system that benefits a select few. Furthermore, these forms of exploitation are framed as inevitable and accepted by society, suggesting that institutional power structures are so deeply embedded in everyday life that they are almost invisible.

Resistance and Revolutionary Potential

Contrary to hopeless suffering depicted in the poem, *London* has a subliminal message of the people’s struggle for change. Using the theme of corruption and degeneration of the institutions that maintain injustice, Blake calls for doubt of the postmodern ideologies of order. Thus, by resorting to the solicitation of the audience’s vision, he calls to people’s reason dismissing the stereoscopic perception of the oppression as inevitable and inherently appropriate. Thus, Blake’s critique of *London* is not only for the poor but also with the aim to show readers that change is possible.

Although *London* does not represent a possibility of a positive social change, the poem denies institutions and abuses the efficiency of radical social change. Blake makes the reader conscious of the physical and psychological processes by which the dehumanizing hierarchy prospers, and thus makes the readers comprehend the significant systems which the powerless ought to struggle. He condemns not only the professional activities of the institution but also their fundamental principles. The language of the poem questions the capacity of the reader himself to be involved in these systems of power and at the same time – to mobilize.

Conclusion

The poem *London* by William Blake unwraps socio-political structures of oppression and the construction of an unequal society through a critical discourse analysis of Fairclough’s CDA. This

paper aimed at showcasing this by analyzing language, symbolism, and imagery used by Blake to capture the then English socio-political structures under the ruled and ruler relationship that dominates his work hence, constructing an oppression in society. In the poem, individual suffering and social isolation, the psychological subjugation of oppressed and confined marginalized poor are depicted as the effects of power relations that dehumanize.

However, Blake voiced against such systems and attempted to raise the people's questions about the social oppression as a regular occurrence and awakening people about it.

While it does not distance itself in shock-value but aims at the psychological too; Blake's London is a discontent with the power relations of the society and a call for change, a glimmer of hope in revolt. Thus, although sounding very much in the particular historical context in which it was written, Blake's London remains a timeless memorial to meaningful resistance to submit to injustice and suppression and push for change.

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