

## Stylistics Analysis of The Poem “An Old Man’s Winter Night” by Robert Frost

Johanes Rhana Saputra<sup>1\*</sup>, Fithriyah Inda Nur Abida<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

\*Correspondence: [johanesrhana@gmail.com](mailto:johanesrhana@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*Stylistics analysis gives an impartial and scientific opinion based on solid quantifiable data and methodical application. It makes use of specific technical vocabulary and notions derived from linguistics. The four layers of language aspects that can be studied stylistically are phonology, graphology, grammar, and semantics. The purpose of this research is to examine the stylistic features of Robert Frost's poem "An Old Man's Winter Night" through the lens of stylistic analysis. The structure and style of Robert Frost's writing, as well as his subjects, viewpoints, and themes are all examined in this study. Each level has been thoroughly investigated, with attention paid to the phonetic, phonological, graphitic, semantic, and grammatical aspects of language choice. This research is descriptive qualitative with content analysis approach. To attain the purpose, the data is analysed through stylistics devices. Frost employed a variety of stylistic elements to emphasize his point, including alliteration, assonance, tone modulation, denotation, connotation, metaphor, personification, symbolism, and imagery.*

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### 1. Introduction

Stylistics is an applied linguistics subject focused with the study of language styles and practices that are supposed to generate an expressive literary style. There are various degrees of stylistic analysis, and a text is examined based on these levels, which are: The study of graphs is known as graphology. The science of sound is known as phonology. Grammatical level is analysing the words and sentence structure. Semantics level is the meaning of words and sentences (Birch, 2005). Robert Frost was an American poet who specialized in realistic depictions of rural life. He was nominated four times for the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. In 1916 An Old Man’s Winter Night was released. The author describes loneliness as he goes through the desolate environment late at night in this poem. Frost uses the nature to give the readers experience to the loneliness of a man with no other people with him. According to Kaplan (2007: 42) Frost is recognized for his frequent use of coordinating conjunctions in his poems. Frost's poetry uses a variety of stylistic elements at the phonetic, phonological, graphitic, grammatical, and lexico-syntactic levels to communicate his own viewpoint. According to Abdul Bari (2014: 124) Frost's choice of words and sentences is quite simple, with great use of metaphors, antithesis, and symbolism.

Stylistics is the study and interpretation of text from a linguistics perspective. It is branch of applied linguistics concerned with the study of style in texts (Leech, 2007). According to Wales (2011: 397), style refers to a person's perceived unique way of writing or speaking. In linguistics, style refers to the features of poetry's language, such as its ability to defy grammatical rules, have a distinct sound pattern, and have a distinct graphology. Stylistics in the literary text seeks to demonstrate how language style can generate meanings, so that literary appreciation is not solely based on assumptions (Verdonk, 2002: 31). Stylistics analysis gives impartial and scientific opinion based on solid quantifiable data and methodical application. It makes use of specific technical vocabulary and notions derived from linguistics. The four layers of language aspects that can be studied stylistically are phonology, graphology, grammar, and semantics, according to Simpson (2004: 5). Grammar is the way words are coupled with others to produce phrases and sentences. Phonology is the sound

of spoken language, graphology is the pattern of writing language, and grammar is the way words are combined with others to form phrases and sentences. The meaning of words and sentences is known as semantics. In this situation, all language elements work together to create something unique. The present study analyzes Frost's poem "An Old Man's Winter Night" through the language features to reveal the meaning of the poem. Therefore, stylistics approach is used in order to find out those features and reveal the meaning of the poem.

In stylistics, especially poems, there are many different degrees of language. A poet develops his or her own style when writing poetry in order to set himself apart from other poets. The diction, word patterns, punctuation, and use of figurative language all reveal the style (Bradford, 2005: 16). Style can also be used to convey a specific idea to the reader. The use of style for a certain goal. For example, if a poet wants to convey the hidden meaning of some words or lines in a poem, which can give the poem a different meaning when compared to the explicit meaning, he or she can employ semantic elements through the use of figurative language. When stylistic aspects are used in literary works, the readers are given a specific interpretation and effect when they read the text (Verdonk, 2002: 36). Stylistics is frequently used to evaluate poetry since poetry incorporates poetic devices such as image, symbol, and figurative language in each line or stanza, which cannot be read solely from the surface. As a result, determining the writer's intent necessitates a thorough examination. Because style is linked to the writer's aesthetic and aim, stylistic devices are used to show the writer's style in the poem. In line with this, Verdonk (2002: 4) argues the text's meaning and aim might be expressed through the peculiar style of the language utilized and the distinctive expression in language. A stylistics study attempts to examine a text in terms of style by identifying the characteristics of the language employed, which are typically represented by key linguistic aspects or certain patterns of linguistic features.

The poem "An Old Man's Winter Night" is one among the lyrical poems of Frost. The story focus on an old man reaches his level of sanity where he is weary of his surrounding, being lonely with no one to talk to. The speaker (the old man) often describes his surrounding as if they are somehow communicating with him. His weariness is making him aware by his environment and what happens to him, and his unawareness is making the speaker 'slept' through the night. Looking at it line by line and sentence by sentence is a great way to get submerged in its meaning. Therefore, stylistics devices are used to analyse the poem in order to answer the following questions: 1) What are the stylistic features of Robert Frost's poem "An Old Man's Winter Night"? and 2) How do those stylistic features contribute to construct the theme of the poem?

## **2. Method**

This research is a qualitative descriptive study, namely research whose work is to present data based on the object of the research. Stylistic analysis will be used to investigate the themes utilizing various poetic devices and word items in order to comprehend the poem. The study will examine at how the poet expressed complicated ideas using simple narrative language. The examination of this data focused on four levels of language features: phonological, graphological, grammatical, and semantic levels. These language levels were examined in order to respond to the two problem formulations in this study. This study uses an analysis of the Miles and Huberman (1992: 16) model which suggests that the field of activity in qualitative data analysis is carried out interactively and continues until it is complete. The process of data analysis, among others, is done by reduction, categorization, matching, and editing.

## **3. Finding and Discussion**

This poem was written in a simple manner, which indicated with only one stanza for twenty-eight lines in total. This poem is also unrhymed because it is written in blank verse. The poet employed five feet in each line, with stressed words usually coming before unstressed words. We can now definitely determine that "An Old Man's Winter Night" is written in iambic pentameter, because to the exact rhymes' feet for each line. Each line consists of generally ten syllables, with five beats that alternate between stressed and unstressed. The comma, semicolon, dash, and full stop are among the punctuation marks used in this poetry. According to Calhoun (2015: 42) punctuation is one of the poet's non-verbal tools for poetic expression, and it also provides

meaning in the language text. In this poem, most of the punctuation marks are located at the end of the lines, as a signal for a pause or an end of a sentence.

The first line has no punctuation; however, the poet uses the word 'through' in the second line to connect lines (1) and (2). Line (3) has a period at the conclusion of the line, indicating that the event/sentence has come to an end. As a result, a whole sentence says "All out of doors peered darkly in at him through the thin frost, nearly in distinct stars, that gathers on the pane in vacant rooms" through lines (1), (2), and (3). This line conveys the entire meaning of the darkness outside the doors, which was peering in through the glass or potentially window at the speaker (the elderly guy) on a cold winter night. Line (4) and (5) are combined to form a full sentence, the old man believes the lamp he holds in his hand is the only reason he can tear his gaze away from the darkness. Line (6) are connected to line (7) but line 9 are connected to line (8). The following lines from line (10) to line (25) have similar pattern where the previous line is connected to the next line. On the contrary, line (26) and line (27) have three punctuation marks; the semicolon at the middle, then followed by an en dash, and at the end of the sentence is a comma. These lines are obviously a complete sentence when we put them together, we will get, "One aged man –one man can't fill a house, a farm, a countryside, or if he can, it's thus he does it of a winter night." This last sentence is the climax of the story from the poem, since the old man was alone in his house, the house felt empty and filled with empty rooms in the winter night. Frost frequently repeats words like 'what' and 'that,' or an entire sentence like 'in clomping.' He also employed rhythmic first words with one line as distance, such as 'Once' and 'One' in lines 28 and 30. In 'wəns' and 'wən', 'Once' and 'One' have essentially identical pronunciations. Frost used words with the same sound on two occasions, such as 'Familiar' and 'Roar,' both of which having the ending sound 'ar.'

*He consigned to the moon, such as she was*

We can tell from this line that the poetry earlier discussed a man's story, and the pronoun 'he' is utilized throughout the poem. However, the pronoun moved from 'he' to 'she' in this paragraph. We can observe that the topic is still focused on the speaker (he), but it has now shifted to the moon, which the speaker (he) addressed as "her." We may begin to observe that the words 'that' and 'what' are commonly used. This is the poem's high point, as the speaker (he) is at a lost in here, unsure of what lurks outside his dwelling, where he has been left alone. Robert Frost picture the scenery of the loneliness and the hopeless using figurative language, but the poem's highlight is the winter night. Winter, metaphorically, is cold and usually occurs towards the end of the year, resembling old age. So is night, especially when it's chilly and quiet, as it was for the elderly guy at the time. Because this poem's tone is lonely and haunted, it's understandable if the speaker (he) uses a lot of personification to express how his surroundings speak to him. The poet utilizes several objects as though they are living, but there is no explicit personification. The poet has been using personification since the opening line, when he says: all out of doors gazed darkly at him. With this personification, the readers have already been introduced to the entire tone, which is the gloom (loneliness) staring at him. Darkness is a lifeless object, and when it stares at the speaker, you know you're in for a spooky poem. The outer darkness, which has its own sounds, such as the roar, is another personification that depicts the tone. Another tonal variation that merely expresses how "loud" the night/loneliness is. 'And having scared the cellar beneath him' is a personification; the meaning is creaking sounds, but the old man depicts the cellar being scared if he moved, as if it were a human individual.

The poem is 231 words long. Only 39 of the 231 words contain more than one syllable. To put it another way, this poetry is primarily made up of monosyllabic words. Monosyllabic words serve to keep the poetry moving along, and they also make it appear simpler than it is. "An old man's winter night" is a rich poem with deeper and intricate messages, as we can see. The word "the" is used ten times throughout the poem as a referential word. 'And' is used 7 times in the poem to express the abundance of thoughts in writer's mind. Third person pronoun 'he' is repeated 9 times, which gives a subjective touch to the poem. There are 28 nouns: doors, frost, stars, pane, rooms, eyes, lamp, hand, room, barrels, cellar, night, roar, trees, branches, box, light, moon, sun, snow, roof, icicles, wall, log, stove, man, house, farm. These words are used to subtly convey the activities and items that surround the speaker. Looked, gathered, kept, giving, tilted, remembered, brought, stood, afraid,

clomping, crack, beating, sat, concerned, knowing, arising, slept, shifted, disturbed, breathing, does, fill Some action verbs, such as looked, shifted, gave, tilted, slept, fill, does, and shifted, will elicit visual images. Some verbs, such as remembering, afraid, concerned, knew, and troubled, deal with the speaker's inner feelings, making the readers feel the same way. The words thin, empty, near, familiar, common, quiet, broken, and better are used to make a significant effect on readers, highlighting the poem's themes and tones.

**a. Sound patterns.**

Sounds: The "d" and "s" sounds appear throughout the poem, with the "d" sound appearing frequently on lines like "all out of doors gazed darkly in at him" or "and having scared the cellar under him," which, when read aloud, conjures up images of something harsh and powerful. "looked darkly" appears to be a highly powerful and difficult phrase. Another sound, "s," is repeated throughout numerous words, such as "snow," "stars," or "of trees and crack of branches," and these words with the "s" sound will conjure up images of coldness and nature, which is the poem's tone.

**b. Assonance**

It is a reiteration of vowel sounds in surrounding poetry words. It is utilized to attract more attention and have a stronger impact on the readers (Bradford, 2005: 16). "o" sounds indoors, frost, almost, and on in the first sentence; I sounds in his, giving, tilted, his, in, him, remembering, it, and creaking in the second and third sentences; "e" sounds in a scared, cellar, and under in the fourth sentence; I sound in clomping, in, and it in the fifth sentence; I sound in compiling, its, familiar, things, nothing, and beating in the sixth sentence; the seventh sentence contains the letters "o" in no, concerned, and not; the eighth sentence contains the letters "u" in moon; the ninth sentence contains the letters "u" in upon and roof; the tenth sentence contains the letters "e" in shifted, disturbed, and eased; and the final sentence contains the letters I in fill, and winter. The near vowels in each line are frequently gathered in one figure of speech, and the sentences vowels are in action verbs, according to the data.

**c. Consonance**

It is the repetition of consonant sounds within the phrase or line in poetry. According to Cuddon (2013: 153) consonance is the near repeating of same consonant sounds after a vowel change. The sound "m" may be found in words like man, moon, and common, and the repeat "d" can be found in numerous past action verbs like moved, eased, and disturbed. Consonants give the poetry a more significant effect while also adding poetic mood.

**d. Alliteration**

Alliteration occurs when the consonant sounds at the beginning of words in the same line of poetry are repeated (Hashmi, 2019). Frost uses alliteration sparingly in this poem. However, there is some alliteration left they're afraid and in the cellar (line 9); then there's the daylight (line 20).

**e. Tone**

The flow of emotions is stagnant throughout the poem; lonely, cold, and bewildered. The speaker stood at the window in one of his vacant rooms in the third line, setting the tone for the poem. The poem begins in solitude, with the speakers in a state of 'conversation,' as if the darkness is staring at him. In the ninth sentence, he describes his icicles in the wall as he falls asleep, and the second tone is the chill he feels. In the fourth sentence, when he is standing and feels like a 'gun' is pointed at him, the third tone is confusion. He laments his loss as he tries to recall why he is here and how he came to be where he is.

**3.1 Morphological Analysis**

This poem used simple modest diction without any trace of slang. The language is descriptive in that it recounts how the event unfolded from the speakers' perspective. As indicated below, a table to classify parts of speech from the poem has been created:

<b>Noun</b>	<b>Pronoun</b>	<b>Action Verb</b>	<b>Adjective</b>	<b>Adverb</b>	<b>Preposition</b>	<b>Conjunction</b>
Doors	Him	Looked	Thin	All	Through	And
Frost	His	Gathers	Empty	Dakly	Out	But
Stars	Them	Kept	Near	Almost	To	So
Pane	It	Giving	Familiar	Still	At	Even
Rooms	He	Tilted	Common		Under	For
Eyes	Himself	Remembering	Quiet		With	Or
Lamp	Its	Brought	Broken			If
Hand	She	Stood	Better			
Room		Scared				
Barrels		Clomping				
Cellar		Crack				
Night		Beating				
Roar		Sat				
Trees		Concerned				
Branches		Knew				
Box		Arising				
Light		Slept				
Moon		Shifted				
Sun		Disturbed				
Snow		Breathing				
Roof		Does				
Icicles		Fill				
Wall						
Log						
Stove						
Man						
House						
Farm						

The nouns used are related to nature and human to create a connection between the two as the speaker being engulfed by the mystery of the environment among the speaker (he). Concrete nouns highlight the physical presence and natural imagery, while abstract is a symbol to signify the hinted tone (loneliness) that the speaker was feeling.

The verbs 'tilted' and 'looked' typically show activity where the speaker does not acquire bodily movement. Another thing to notice is that the verbs are frequently placed in the past and present tense, implying that the speaker is narrating his agony both in the past and now.

Pronouns refer to the speaker himself (he, his, him, and himself) and only three times the poet mentioning other entities in the poem. The various entities include beings, items around the speaker (it, themselves), and the moon, which the speaker referred to as "she."

Adjectives are used to describe nature and the speaker's feelings throughout the story. There is no contrast between each adjective, which is mostly divided between lines, and we also noticed that adjectives are used sparingly here, with adverbs being more common. However, some adjectives are used to describe unusual nouns, such as light ('silent light') or moon ('broken moon').

Adverbs and prepositions indicate location, while co-ordinate and sub-ordinate conjunctions join phrases to give the poetry coherence. In verb phrases like "looked darkly" and "still slept," an adverb is used to modify the verb and adjectives. In the meantime, the preposition is used before a noun or pronoun to indicate a connection to anything else in the line or sentence. "All out," "neath him," and "to keep" are examples of prepositions.

There are a lot of both free and bound morphemes in the poem. The most commonly used morphemes are free morphemes, which are utilized in smaller amounts than free morphemes. In plural nouns, the past form of the verb, and the distinct form of the noun, suffixes are employed. Derivational and inflectional affixes are the two types of affixes. Doors, looked, stars, eyes, tilted, rooms, barrels, scared, eased, and rooms are derivational; and doors, looked, stars, eyes, tilted, rooms, barrels, scared, eased, and rooms are inflectional.

Free	Bound	Prefix	Suffix	Two Morphemes
Him, All, Out	Doors	Nothing	Doors	Late-arising
Thin, Frost	Looked		Looked	
Pane, Empty	Darkly		Darkly	
His, back, gaze	Stars		Stars	
Him, it	Gathers		Eyes	
Him, room, age	Eyes		Tilted	
Round, loss	Rooms		Rooms	
Cellar, him	Tilted		Barrels	
Night	Barrels		Scared	
It	Scared		Outer	
Roar	Outer		Eased	
Crack, common	Familiar		Aged	

Like, box	Sounds	Familiar
Light, one, he	Trees	Rooms
He, light	Branches	
Moon, she	Nothing	
Sun, charge, snow	Cosigned	
Roof, wall, keep	Icicles	
Log, jolt	Shifted	
Him, stove	Disturbed	
Heavy, man	Eased	
Fill, house	Aged	
Farm, he	Remembering	
He, it	Creaking	
Winter, night	Scared	

We can observe from this table that bound morphemes are frequently associated with nature (stars, eyes, trees, branches, and icicles) and motion (shifted, disturbed, eased, remembering, creaking, looked, gathers, and scared). Person or pronoun (him, his, them, it, he, and himself), noun or object (pane, room, cellar, frost, box, light, moon, roof, wall, winter, sun, log, stove, man), and action or verb (pane, room, cellar, frost, box, light, moon, roof, wall, winter, sun, log, stove, man) are all free morphemes (keep, fill, charge, jolt). The poet connected the story of an elderly man who lives in a hut or a country cottage using bound and free morphemes. Because the old man is alone on a cold winter night, whatever he describes must have come from his surroundings. Frost uses the nature to give the readers experience to the loneliness of a man with no other people around him.

### **3.1 Syntax Analysis**

From the very beginning to the very end, the poem is linked yet also detached. The linking words within the lines that do not appear to connect one sentence to the next are the gaps between the lines. In this poetry, it appears that the speaker was discussing something in one sentence and then moving on to describe something else, rather than retelling his experience. There is no link between one description and the next. However, they were linked in some way because the events appeared to occur at the same moment.

The speaker, who lives in a residence, expressed what was going on at the time with a distinct, frigid sense in the poem. The speaker is sitting someplace inside his house or cabin, specifically in an empty room, when he feels as if beings beyond the thin frost and through the window were watching at him, almost as if they were preying on him. Even if the speaker did not express his fear in this first statement, the "coldness" tone from the sentence was felt instinctively. "All out of doors gazed darkly in at him through the thin frost, almost in separate stars, that gathers on the glass in empty rooms," says the author, "through the thin frost, nearly in separate stars, that gathers on the pane in empty rooms." The sentence is written in active voice and is simple but lengthy. The second line does the same thing as the first, describing the scene, but this time the speaker suggests that he couldn't return the glance because the lamp or lantern was in his hand. This sentence is made up of two lines, the second of which is related to the first line of the second sentence by the word "was." The third sentence is similar to the second statement in that it conveys the speaker's emotion. The speaker recalls why he was in his current location, his age. He is an elderly man who has lost his memory and is thought to be

senile. This sentence has the same structure as the second, with the conjunction "that" connecting the second and third lines of the sentence. The fourth has the same structure as the third, practically identical in appearance; the conjunction "and" connects the two lines into a single phrase. This line expresses and implies how the old guy feels about the cellar or basement beneath the home; he is perplexed and terrified. The old man repeats what he said in the preceding phrase in the fifth sentence, which is only one line long. There are four lines in the sixth phrase, which are related by the word "which," the preposition "of," and the conjunction "but." Because this sentence is lengthier, the language is more sophisticated than the previous ones. The old guy becomes an isolated creature that epitomizes human loneliness, which is a natural shock given that humans are designed to dwell in groups.

The seventh sentence is more about the old man's attempts to recall what "it" was. The usage of the term "it" implies that he has lost a memory or that he is unsure of what it is, and the poem does not specify what it is. "A light he was to no one but himself where now he sat, concerned with he knew what, a peaceful light, and eventually not even that," the author writes. The eighth sentence is more difficult to comprehend since the word arrangement is slightly divided by the en dash punctuation mark, which serves to explain but can also divide the reader's attention. "He consigned to the moon –such se was, so a late-arising –to the broken moon as better than the sun in any case." The old man refers to himself as alone and 'late' as the moon, broken yet better than the sun. The ninth and tenth sentences complement one another because one line is divided; half of it belongs to ninth sentence but the other half belongs to tenth sentence. The old man told the readers that before going to sleep, he tries but fails to regain control of his home. He feels as if the logs in his house are shifting or creaking while he sleeps, which makes him move but not awake; he simply takes a big breath. Last but not least, there is an abrupt shift in point of view in the last sentence. If the speaker had previously positioned themselves as the old man and what he had gone through, the point of view shifted to the speaker standing far away and watching him as the entities do. The speaker tells the story of an elderly man who couldn't liven up his house and warmed it up on a cold winter night. When we merge all of the phrases into one large paragraph, we can see that the words chosen represent coldness and quiet. The term "frost" is combined with the word "stars," implying that the cold occurs at night, and that it must be silent because it is night at the "countryside." Another example of silence is when "moon" is accompanied by "silent light," implying a night-time silence.

### **3.3 Semantics Analysis**

According to Simpson (2004:5) semantics level is the meaning of words and sentences. In this poem, the meaning refers to the story of an old man who experiences dementia. Dementia is a frequent ailment among the elderly, and the speaker was no exception. The elder man is alone and unable to understand what is going on; all he knows is why he is in the house, which is his age. Humans are social beings who require other people simply to exist and communicate, especially the elderly who require special treatment and care. However, we couldn't be certain why the older man is alone because he couldn't recall anything other than his age. Throughout the poem, He doesn't describe what he wants life to be like or why he keeps clomping the wooden flooring even though he knows it makes a lot of noise. He also doesn't claim that what he has today is a terrible thing because it's emotionless. The inside of a house is generally peaceful and comfortable, but the older man's residence is vacant and frigid, as he mentions light ice on his windowpane. The moon is his night-time companion, but their similarity is shattered, as if half of them has vanished. It could be a half-moon, but it's also possible that a piece of it went missing, much as the older man's vitals have gone missing.

The issue in the poem is that the older man's memory was failing him. He has no idea what to remember, and the most important thing is that he has no idea why he is alone. By rendering the old man mute, Frost strives to instil the readers with the same sense of isolation that the old man himself experiences. If the poem included glimpses of the old man's inner thoughts, the readers would feel a sense of kinship with him, even a degree of companionship. Yet the poem does not end on a completely hopeless note. Although the man is frightened of what he does not know, he still succeeds in "scaring" off the unknown and falling into a comforting sleep. Frost suggests that even in the depths of loneliness and isolation, a person can maintain a presence and "keep" a house. Frost's idea might be understood as a critique of the human condition as a whole, even though he focuses



primarily on the old man. The old man's behaviour in the house is not ideal or necessarily human, and he is still bound to die and live-in endless loneliness, but his house remains his because of his tenacious grip on it and his refusal to abandon himself completely.

#### 4. Conclusion

The poem is written in iambic pentameter, with eleven different rhymes and twenty-eight lines crammed into a single stanza. Because there are only one stanza, the analysis began by arranging lines into sentences. The sounds "d" and "s" are frequently repeated in the poem, which is unusual. The sequence of tones remains stagnant throughout the poem; lonely, chilly, and confused, which defines the elderly man's feelings throughout the poem. There is nothing to talk about in the poem other than the old man himself (he), the environment around him (it) and a little bit of the moon (she). In the poem, there are more free morphemes than bound morphemes. The metaphor in this poem is a winter night. Winter is chilly and usually occurs at the end of the year, evoking the idea of old age. The cold (represents persistent fear; the sense of tremble), quiet light (the old man himself; the soul of the elder man) and falling asleep are only a few of the symbolisms used (the death) "An Old Man's Winter Night" is a poem where an old man reaches his level of sanity where he is weary of his surrounding, being lonely with no one to talk to. The speaker (the old man) often describes his surrounding as if they are somehow communicating with him, in connotation. His weariness is making him aware by his environment and what happens to him, and his unawareness is making the speaker 'slept' through the night.

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