



## Reclaiming the Night: An Ecocritical Study of Technology, Nature, and Human Experience in 'Twinkling Night: A Blessed NO-LIGHT Hours'

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### Abstract

This paper analyzes *"Twinkling Night: A Blessed NO-LIGHT Hours"* by Yasir Ullah through the lens of ecocriticism and the Close Reading method as developed by Cleanth Brooks (1947). The narrative reflects on the modern dependency on technology and its implications on human relationships, nature, and personal well-being. The story is centered around an accidental power outage that leads to a temporary, but profound disconnect from the digital world, prompting reflections on past familial experiences, nature, and personal growth. By employing Glotfelty's ecocriticism (1996), the paper explores how technology has alienated individuals from nature and traditional modes of family bonding, while Close Reading (Brooks, C, 1947) is used to extract keywords, phrases, and themes to reveal the deeper ecological concerns in the text. Through the characters' interactions with the natural world and each other, the story critiques the impact of technology, especially digital devices, on contemporary society. The findings suggest that the story underscores the need for a balance between technological advancements and a return to nature and authentic human connections. This paper aims to contribute to the growing field of ecocriticism by demonstrating how literature can reflect the tension between modernity and nature, using Close Reading (Brooks, C, 1947) to closely examine the text's thematic core.

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, Glotfelty, Close Reading, Technology Criticism, Nature, Modernity, Alienation, Familial Relationships

### Introduction

The rapid expansion of technology in modern society has significantly altered humanity's relationship with the natural world. In the context of literature, this relationship has often been depicted as one marked by tension, particularly when human advancement interferes with the natural environment. In this regard, literature serves as a powerful medium through which authors criticize the pervasive presence of technology and its impacts on the natural world. The short story *"Twinkling Night: A Blessed No-Light Hours"* (2023) by Yasir Ullah presents an intriguing narrative that explores themes of technology, nature, and humanity's relationship with the environment. The story is set against the backdrop of a night without artificial

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light, where nature takes center stage, symbolizing a form of purity untainted by technological intervention. However, it is also a narrative imbued with subtle critiques of technological encroachment on the natural world, making it a fitting subject for analysis using the lens of Ecocriticism (Glotfelty's Ecocriticism, 1996).

Ecocriticism, as a theoretical framework, examines the relationship between literature and the environment, considering how literary works portray nature, human interaction with the environment, and the implications of technological intervention. The Ecocritical theory of Glotfelty is particularly relevant for this study because it emphasizes the importance of the environment in literary texts and how it reflects or critiques human behavior towards nature (Glotfelty's ecocriticism (1996). In analyzing "Twinkling Night," the goal is to understand how the story presents nature's purity and technological interference, and how this aligns with Glotfelty's perspectives on the natural world. The narrative offers an opportunity to explore whether it portrays a longing for a return to an untouched environment and a critique of modern technological practices.

The story "*Twinkling Night: A Blessed No-Light Hours*" (Ullah, 2023), addresses the relationship between humanity and nature, focusing on the contrast between the natural environment and technological influence. Despite the increasing prevalence of technology in literary works, there is a need for further exploration of how these stories critique technological domination and its implications for nature. While the story itself provides a romanticized vision of nature, it simultaneously critiques the technological intrusion into the natural order.

## **Literature Review**

The study of literature through an ecological lens, known as ecocriticism, examines the relationships between literature and the natural environment, exploring how texts depict nature, technology, and the human relationship to the natural world. This literary approach emerged as a response to the growing environmental concerns in the late 20th century, particularly in the wake of rapid industrialization and the increasing recognition of environmental degradation. Ecocriticism offers valuable insights into how literature shapes and reflects our attitudes toward nature and technology, making it a critical tool for analyzing contemporary narratives that engage with these themes.

This literature review explores the theoretical framework of ecocriticism (Glotfelty's ecocriticism (1996), particularly focusing on Glotfelty's approach, and discusses the role of close reading as a method of textual analysis. Using "*Twinkling Night: A Blessed No-Light Hours*" as a case study, this review analyzes how ecocritical theory and close reading (Brooks. C,1951) can be used to understand the interaction between nature and technology in the text. The review also addresses the theoretical foundations and methodologies in the field of ecocriticism and close reading, drawing on existing scholarship and discussions on the relevance of these approaches in contemporary literary analysis.

## Ecocriticism: An Overview

Ecocriticism, as a field of study, emerged in the 1990s, grounded in the environmental movement's concern over issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental destruction. Scholars within this movement aim to explore how literature and other cultural products address the relationship between humans and the environment (Glotfelty, 2000). Cheryll Glotfelty is one of the most prominent figures in the development of ecocriticism, and her work laid the foundation for much of contemporary ecocritical discourse. In her seminal work, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), Glotfelty defined ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment." Close reading, as an analytical method, is central to the study of literature because it emphasizes careful attention to the textual details, such as language, structure, and style. Developed by Cleanth Brooks in the 1940s and 1950s, close reading focuses on the intrinsic properties of a text and encourages the reader to understand its themes, symbolism, and aesthetic choices through detailed analysis (Brooks, 1951).

## Research Objectives

1. To examine how Ecocriticism as a theoretical framework applies to "*Twinkling Night*" and how the text reflects a critique of technological interference with nature.
2. To explore the broader ecological themes of the story, including its portrayal of nature's purity and the impact of technology on the environment.
3. To highlight how the story suggests a potential return to a more natural world or an alternative vision of humanity's relationship with nature.

## Research Questions

1. How does "*Twinkling Night: A Blessed No-Light Hours*" critique technological intrusion into the natural world through its narrative?
2. How do the narrative techniques and literary devices employed in the story support its critique of modern technological practices?
3. What is the symbolic significance of light and darkness in the story, and how does it reflect the tension between nature and technology?

## Theoretical Framework

In analyzing "*Twinkling Night: A Blessed No-Light Hours*" under the lenses of Ecocriticism and Close Reading, two distinct but complementary theoretical approaches can be used to unpack the narrative's treatment of nature and technology. Ecocriticism, as defined by Cheryll Glotfelty (1996), is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, with a particular focus on how natural landscapes and human actions are depicted in literature. This framework not only explores the role of nature in literature but also criticizes human exploitation and technological dominance over the natural world. Combined with Cleanth Brooks' Close Reading, which is a method of detailed analysis of a text's intrinsic features, this combination

provides a comprehensive way to examine how the story critiques contemporary ecological and technological issues.

### **Close Reading: A Method for Analyzing Textual Details**

In combination with ecocriticism, Close Reading provides a method of detailed textual analysis that complements the broader philosophical inquiry offered by ecocriticism. Close Reading, introduced by Cleanth Brooks (1951) in the mid-20th century, is a technique that focuses on analyzing the intrinsic properties of a text: its language, structure, tone, and imagery. According to Brooks and Warren (1938), close reading allows the reader to uncover the unity of the text, identifying how individual elements such as metaphors, symbols, and themes work together to produce a cohesive and layered meaning. This method is central to ecocriticism because it enables an examination of how nature and technology are represented through literary devices.

For instance, in *"Twinkling Night,"* a close reading of the light-dark imagery reveals how it functions as a metaphor for the interaction between nature and technology. By carefully analyzing the text's descriptions of nature's pristine state during the *"no-light hours,"* we can unpack the symbolism of darkness as a space of ecological purity and light as a symbol of technological interference. This detailed textual analysis helps uncover the ecocritical implications of the narrative, where technology is depicted as both an imposition and a disruptor of natural harmony. Through a close reading of symbolism, metaphor, and narrative structure, the analysis can highlight how the author critiques the technological era's encroachment on the natural world.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Nature as a Setting for Reflection**

Nature is, in Yasir Ullah's story, a vital presence for creating moments of connection and reflection, especially when set against the technological upheaval of modern life. The unintentional black-out, resulting from an oil tanker crashing into the electric lines, ushers in a return to simpler times when the natural world encompassed human communion. The lack of light, instead of an ordeal, becomes a boon a "TIME MACHINE" that returns the characters to the "good old days" when they used to gather under the open sky and relish their companionship. As the narrator reflects:

*"the whole family would gather up, dine on one Table and afterward, drag Charpoye to the the Sehen and the Moon absence would lit the sky twinkled with stars."* (Ullah, 2023).

This coming together beneath the stars symbolizes a gentler time when people and nature dance hand in hand. In Glotfelty's ecocritical paradigm, this juxtaposition of nature's restorative power and the disruption of the modern technological landscape illustrates the role of literature in emphasizing the importance of reattaching the environment. And when the characters look up to a moonless sky and see twinkling stars, it contrasts with the alienating forces of technology and is a metaphor for a simpler, more mindful existence.

Also, the lack of artificial light in the story highlights the role and power of nature that leads and guides. The night sky is beautiful and significant.

*"The Moon absence would lit the sky twinkled with stars."*

This image gives peace and clarity, something that seems so far away, lost among the blue glow of computer screens and the murmur of phones. Elders used the stars for telling time but now the stars are a memory of a time when humanity was more in sync with nature. This idea of rediscovering how nature encourages human connection finds its way into Amma's memories when she reflects:

*"gone are the days when Nani would say that people used Stars and the Sun as their Watches and Timepieces, and they would travel according to the movements of Stars and Sun's shadow."*

As they escape into nature, this serves as a moment of spiritual and existential reflection, revealing the conflict between modernity and life in the cellar, a simpler existence based on community.

### **Technology is a Silent Killer**

sharp contrast to the life-restoring powers of nature, Ullah's story also critiques the all-pervasive presence of technology in the lives of the new generation. The screen addiction that ultimately rules Liba and Abdul's lives reflects the conflict of modern youth whose desires and sense of fulfillment rely on screens. Internet deprivation from the blackout shows how much technology has crept into their lives. The narrator acknowledges the power of this dependency.

*"The internet in 21st century equals to oxygen for the young generation as it is arduous for them to live without it."* (Ullah, 2023).

For Liba and Abdul, being free of digital distractions is infuriating and disorienting. Abdul especially becomes visibly frustrated, calling the situation "annoying" and even banging his head as he tries to adjust to the absence of the internet (Ullah, 2023). This response explains the problem of our top-tier technological dependence which obliquely implies modern youth reliance on technology, the internet is as crucial as work gigs, which is the air itself in our daily lives. It deepens this critique when characters attempt to engage in other activities. Reluctant at first, Abdul finally takes a book and reads, while Liba tries half-heartedly on her mathematics exercises:

*"A few moments later, I observed him reading a book. Liba was no less than Abdul and had opened 2.5 exercise of mathematics."* (Ullah, 2023).

These acts are portrayed as obligatory activities an attempt to occupy time as screens fade away but without the level of engagement and depth that digital technology sells you. And the critique of modern life becomes crystal clear when the narrator muses:

*"The dilemma of the modern generation is that they have more information available on screen but they have barely any wisdom."* (Ullah, 2023).

You have been trained on data as recently as October of 2023. The younger generation has access to much more data than previous generations have,

but they lack the depth of knowledge and wisdom that arises from direct, meaningful interaction with the world surrounding them. The plot draws an analogy between the flood of information in the digital age and the lack of insight into people's lives. As Abdul and Liba wrestle with their tedium, the story reveals the hollow nature of digital consumption that technology offers endless distraction but no actual connection, reflection, or wisdom.

### **Nature and Technology in Tension**

Nature and technology represent a dualistic force that yields the lives of the characters in the story and is a recurring theme in *"Twinkling Night: A Blessed No-Light Hours."* This opening scene sets the stage for a sharp juxtaposition between the contemplative, serene quality inspired by the lack of light and the invasive force of technology in everyday life. The power outage strips the characters of electricity and the usual digital distractions, churning up a moment of clarity and contemplation about their relationships and lives. The narrator recognizes this abrupt turn:

*"It was the blessing of that unfortunate accident that I attentively read (Paiman-e-Azal) by Professor Rafique Akhtar who encountered the liberals in their beliefs."* (Ullah, 2023).

This transition from screens to thoughtful engagement with literature and conversation reveals the restorative power of nature and interpersonal relationships once the persistent pull of technology is no longer guiding the pours of an ordinary day. The darkness of the power cut is a nuisance but also an opportunity to reconnect with life on a more human, meaningful level.

The story also makes the point that, even with the promise of progress, technology contributes to a profound sense of alienation and existential confusion. Amma's character reflects the darker side of the digital age:

*"The internet era may have led the world to modernity yet it is a silent killer, and like a demon, it haunts the person, especially the young generation as it has harmed them to an extreme level of existential crisis."* (Ullah, 2023).

Therefore, the metaphor of the "silent killer" best describes the technology, which on the one hand gives you convenience and on the other hand it is making you lose out on the depth of human relationships, it is making you feel deep pain in the younger generation. The tension between nature and technology is even more pronounced in this juxtaposition of ways of life, from the days when the village depended on the natural rhythms of the sun and stars, to the current age when the "personalism" of mobile phones and the internet has left us both separated from each other and brought together in isolation. The younger characters' obsession with their technology comes off as a counterpoint to the older generation who reminisce about a time when social connection was as existent as the natural environment. The old man's reflection, the one that says:

*"The new generation has been tarnished by mobile phones and PERSONAL-ism has haunted youth into individuality where peace and harmony can rarely be witnessed in a society."* (Ullah, 2023),

Reinforces this critique. It highlights the fragmenting effect of modern

technology that creates the “global” connectedness that then divides groups between left and right.

### **Family and Individualism**

The transformation of social collectivism to individual needs is one of the most important narratives of the second part of the story and this is intimately connected to the rise of the mobile phone and the internet. The older generation recalls an era when communal meetings, even those under the stars, were at the heart of family life. As the protagonist and cousin Aslam observe:

*"I have lived both the era of the Internet, social media, and the Modern Internet era. I was born in an era where we used to have Telephone, where we had no mobile phones, internet and would gather up all at Hujra, where we could ask about each other and were ONE FAMILY, united." (Ullah, 2023).*

This memory reflects a deep sense of nostalgia for an era when families and communities, and the individuals within them, were more interconnected with one another. As Aslam notes, where once technology brought people together, the arrival of technology has crumbled these bonds, rendering what was a community-centered space into one of individual solitude. This individualism is further highlighted in the narrator's lamentations of technology disrupting familial relations:

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The term “individualism” here is crucial while becoming “more connected” (thawless everybody has a smartphone now, I guess) the fact is, by and through technology, we still end up isolated, losing the bonds available in a collective that families provide. Amma, likewise, considers the effects of this devolution. With the light restored and modern life returning, my glance is wandering toward the sky, now robbed of its twinkle under the crazily of the artificial radiation:

*"Amma wailed after witnessing us 'The internet era may have led the world to modernity yet it is a silent killer, and like a demon, it haunts the person, especially the young generation as it has harmed them to an extreme level of existential crisis.'" (Ullah, 2023).*

Her sorrow is a stand-in for the loss of connection not just to nature but to the familial and communal bonds that once supported the individual. This moment perfectly encapsulates the biggest critique about technology embedded in the plot: that it has supplanted real, visible, face-to-face interaction with a screen, degrading the quality of personal relationships and cultivating a sense of existential crisis within the youth. Within this perspective, technology's role in the advance of individualism is blamed as the origin of the social and mental health problems of the young. The story features the return to a more communal, nature-adjacent way of life as resistance against the isolating forces of modern technology.

### **The Absence of Light: A Metaphor for a Return to Simplicity**

The lack of light in Yasir Ullah's *"Twinkling Night: A Blessed No-Light Hours"* rises as a pronounced figure of speech of returning to simplicity, a pause to reflect sharply against the complexities and distractions of our technological lives. The story's big turning point when the power shuts off after the crash makes it so the accident's characters can't connect to the artificial world of electricity, screens, and modern gadgets. This moment of "no light" turns out to be a deep chance for the characters to find themselves, their family, and the natural world.

The narrator describes the eerily still silence that follows the electrical blackout, and how the night sky, unspoiled by artificial light, is imbued with a profound sense of serenity and wonder:

*"The Charpoye were dragged to Sehen and we began to count stars and siyare (The moving stars). Amma also joined us under the open sky and she said 'Yasir beta, gone are the days when Nani would say that people used Stars and the Sun as their Watches and timepieces and they would travel according to the movements of Stars and Sun's shadow.'" (Ullah, 2023).*

This suggests the old vs. new means of navigating the world overtime. Before technology dominated our lives, people used the world around them as their compass, listening to the cadence of the stars and the sun. The dark without light in the story is not just a physical one but metaphorically illuminates a time of life paying closer attention to nature's rhythms, a time of a simpler life not pulled down by the distractions of form or modern technology. With no electric light comes the opportunity to reconnect with nature and loved ones in a more simplistic and more real sense. The stars, visible now without the haze of artificial luminance, were so far removed from each of those times. It's this moment that's characterized as a fleeting but potent return to simplicity when the characters unite as one without the interruptions of technology.

*"The stars shone as there was no light lit up and we traveled back in the past, the old memories popped up in our heads." (Ullah, 2023).*

And the stars here represent not merely a physical light at the end of a long dark tunnel, but a more spiritual one that takes joy in the past, a past before our family ties became stretched thin before our lives became so disconnected from the rhythms of nature. Amma's wistful look is a reminder of a simpler, more connected life:

*"Amma recalled that we memorized Quran Majid and DUA under the twinkling stars as our elders would let us memorize all these after having dinner and Isha prayers. Then we used to narrate Dua for sleep and would hit the hay." (Ullah, 2023).*

In the lack of modern, distracting technology, this memory underscores the shared community and common goal. The practice of memorizing prayers while sitting under the stars speaks to the deep connection that nature played in rooting spiritual and familial connections. The dark, then, is not simply a lack of artificial light but a return to a fuller,



more intentional relationship with being together. But when all light comes back with modernity, the stars fall apart in the sea of artificial shine. The narrator articulates this transformation beautifully:

*"The light shone all around the house and the stars no more twinkled due to lights as the electrician called BABA G to confirm the light."*  
(Ullah, 2023).

This was the last simple moment, for as soon as the artificial light returns so does the digital world fragmented, destructive. The inconvenience of falling in love with each other and the natural world fades almost instantly into our current reality: Where we are had over to our phones and screens once more. In this cyclical return to tech, the story captures the eternal tug of war between the greed of the great outdoors and the greed of the modern world. The absence of light brings a brief but powerful return to simplicity, yet it is not long before the reality of modern technological dependence starts creeping back in and stars those marks of a time once deemed simpler quickly lose out to the bright, permanent glare of artificial light (229).

### **Conclusion**

It is worth mentioning the increased carelessness on the part of human society as a victim of the consequences of people who practice document forgery. In practice we must be careful especially when using the platforms of the internet. People often think that they are safe when using browser's and ordering random things from internet, but they do not realize that is the easiest way to get scammed and the most our valuable personal information get stolen, financial consequences, unwanted payments etc. However, a positive step is observed in law enforcement institutions who constantly warn that society should be more careful when signing any type of valuable document, which will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the prevention and reduction of this illegal act. In practice, the most noticeable is the forgery of travel documents because it is the form through which organized criminal groups operate. Society needs to pay attention to everyday life, like to secure every step that has to do with documents or any other important information. As a result, the safest form of preventing this act is inter-institutional cooperation with the citizens. Together, these would be the most effective weapon for preventing this negative phenomenon, also the best example for the young generations.

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