WE DON'T NEED NO EDUCATION: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF PINK FLOYD'S 'ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL'

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ABSTRACT

This study is a stylistic analysis of Pink Floyd's song lyrics *Another Brick in the Wall* (parts 1 and 2) and the interlude between them *The Happiest Days of Our Lives*. The aim was to explore various stylistic devices used in the verses to convey the main theme of the lyrics at different levels of language (phonetics/phonology, lexico-grammar, and semantics), and to see how all these stylistic features interact to make the lyrics mean what they do. The study covers different aspects of style including rhythm and rhyme patterns at the level of sounding, tense selection and transitivity structure at the level of wording and grammar, and the use of metaphor and irony at the level of meaning. The analysis shows that the verses make use of a variety of stylistic techniques to communicate the main theme of the lyrics, which is centred around the sense of isolation and abandonment, and to fit into the musical rhythm and feeling connected to it.

Keywords: stylistics, song lyrics, Pink Floyd, The Wall, functional approach, cognitive metaphor.

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1. Introduction

Stylistics, in simplest terms, is defined as the linguistic study of style; that is to say, 'the study of language as used in literary texts, with the aim of relating it to its artistic functions' (Leech and Short, 2007: 13), or putting it in Widdowson's words, 'the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation' (1975: 3). In today's use of it, the term has come to designate 'any analytic study of literature which uses the concepts and techniques of modern linguistics' (Childs and Fowler, 2006: 229).

Stylistics generally aims at explaining the relation between language and artistic function (Leech and Short, 2007: 11); and, as Leech and Short argue, 'the motivating questions are not so much *what* as *why* and *how*. From the linguist's angle, it is '*Why* does the author here choose this form of expression?' (ibid.).

Stylistics has developed in several ways, and what has come to be known as modern stylistics today, is largely built on two interrelated movements in linguistics, that of Russian Formalism and Prague School Structuralism (Simpson, 2004: 50), with the work of key figures such as Mukarovsky and Jakobson making powerful contributions to literary theory (Childs and Fowler, 2006: 127); and today, 'many of the central ideas of these two schools of linguistics find their reflexes in contemporary stylistics...' (Simpson, ibid.).

Generally, it is literature which is considered the preferred object of study in stylistics. However, this traditional connection between stylistics and literature should not be taken to mean that creativity and innovation in language use is exclusive to literary writing. As Simpson asserts, 'many forms of discourse (advertising, journalism, popular music – even casual conversation) often display a high degree of stylistic dexterity, such that it would be wrong to view dexterity in language use as exclusive to canonical literature' (2004: 3). Accordingly, it can be argued that song lyrics, along with other more conventional forms of literature, such as poetry, short stories, and novels, make good objects of study in stylistic analyses, since they usually employ many of the same stylistic devices used elsewhere in other forms of literature.

Although the linguistic and stylistic analysis of song lyrics is a rather newer area of research relative to the other (more traditional) forms of literature, sporadic studies

of this type can still be found in the literature, each taking different approaches to analysing the lyrics. Among the examples is a linguistic analysis of the Beatles' lyrics (Petrie et al., 2008), which, taking a psychological point of view, addresses how the various members of the Beatles as songwriters changed in their writing styles over time, and also the overlap in lyrical styles from one songwriter to the next. Other examples to mention include a stylistic analysis of the lyrics to Genesis's album *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (Magistra, 2011), which aims at discovering the poetic devices used in the song lyrics in question; or another study analysing Linkin Park's song lyrics *What I've Done* (Martin Alegre, 2010); and yet another one analysing R.E.M.'s song *Nightswimming* (Schulze, 2009), to name but a few cases. However, the fact about many of such stylistic studies concerned with musical lyrics is that they mostly lack a rigid linguistic framework within which the analysis is conducted, that is, a linguistic framework comparable to the ones adopted in stylistic analyses of more conventional forms of literature (poetry, short stories, novels, etc.) found elsewhere in the literature.

The present study is a stylistic analysis of the lyrics to Pink Floyd's mega-hits *Another Brick in the Wall* (parts 1 and 2), and the interlude between them *The Happiest Days of Our Lives*. The aim was to discover the various stylistic features of the lyrics at different levels of language – phonetics/phonology, lexico-grammar and semantics –, and to see how all these features interact to get the main theme of the lyrics across and to make the lyrics mean what they do.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study draws largely on the Systemic-Functional Linguistics developed by Michael Halliday; a theory of language centred on the notion of language function. According to David Crystal, 'function' is defined as 'the relationship between a linguistic form and other parts of the linguistic pattern or system in which it is used' (Crystal, 2008: 201), and 'the terms functional analysis and functional linguistics have been used to characterise theories which treat the notion of function as central' (ibid.). So, while functional linguistics accounts for the syntactic structure of language, it places primary importance on the function of language.

A central notion in functional linguistics is 'stratification' or the layered structure of language, built on the general idea that 'a language is a complex semiotic system,

having various levels, or strata' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 24). According to Halliday, 'language is organised into four strata – semantics, lexico-grammar, phonology, and phonetics', and 'these four strata are grouped into two stratal planes, the content plane and the expression plane.' (ibid.: 26). Along the same line, the lyrics in this study are analysed in different strata (or layers) of language.

Also, at the level of semantics, we have adopted a Cognitive Linguistic approach to metaphor. The Conceptual Metaphor theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) posits that metaphors operate at the level of cognition, allowing us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another. Hence, metaphors link two conceptual domains, the 'source' domain and the 'target' domain. Source domains tend to be relatively concrete areas of experience and target domains to be more abstract (Lee, 2001: 6).

Metaphor is considered one of the important features of language in cognitive linguistics; and it is in fact their view of metaphor that differentiates cognitive linguists most from other theories of language (Lee, 2001: 6). According to this view, much of our understanding of everyday experience is structured in terms of metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Taylor, 1995: 133).

3. A Brief Background

Pink Floyd were a British rock band formed in the mid-1960s by a group of college students in London. The original line-up consisted of Roger Waters, Syd Barrett, Nick Mason and Richard Wright. Apart from being a pioneer in the genre of progressive rock music, the band is best known and remembered for their use of conceptual and philosophical lyrics, with each of their albums typically being focused around a specific theme.

The Wall is Pink Floyd's eleventh studio album (and their most famous worldwide), released in 1979. The album was fronted by Waters, Mason, Wright, and Gilmour (who had already replaced Barrett), with Waters being the main mastermind behind the album's music and lyrics. *The Wall* is the life story of a boy (named Pink!) who has lost his father in World War II and continues to face obstacles throughout his life, with abuse from his school teachers, an overprotective mother, the breakdown of his marriage; and

all these contribute to his eventual self-imposed isolation from society, depicted metaphorically by a wall being formed between him and the world around. The character is said to be modelled after Water's and Barrett's own lives (Schaffner, 1991; Scarfe, 2010).

4. The Lyrics

The song lyrics analysed in this study include the interrelated titles *Another Brick in the Wall* (parts 1 and 2) and the interlude between them *The Happiest Days of Our Lives*, which jointly form tracks 3 through 5 of the album *The Wall*. For the ease of analysis and to facilitate subsequent referencing to the verses, the full lyrics are given here, numbered in the order of their appearance within the album, with each line of the main body of the lyrics also labelled by small letters.

(1)   **'Another Brick in the Wall (Part I)'**
[Roger Waters]
(a) Daddy's flown across the ocean
(b) Leaving just a memory
(c) A snapshot in the family album
(d) Daddy, what else did you leave for me?
(e) Daddy, what d'ya leave behind for me?
(f) All in all it was just a brick in the wall
(g) All in all it was all just bricks in the wall

(2)   **'The Happiest Days of Our Lives'**
[Background voice shouting]
"You! Yes, you! Stand still laddie!"
[Roger Waters]
(a) When we grew up and went to school
(b) There were certain teachers who
(c) Would hurt the children anyway they could
(d) By pouring their derision upon anything we did
(e) Exposing every weakness
(f) However carefully hidden by the kids
(g) But in the town, it was well known

     (h) When they got home at night

     (i) Their fat and psychopathic wives

     (j) Would thrash them within inches of their lives

(3)   **'Another Brick in the Wall (Part II)'**

[Roger Waters, David Gilmour]

(a) We don't need no education

(b) We don't need no thought control

(c) No dark sarcasm in the classroom

(d) Teachers leave them kids alone

(e) Hey! Teacher! Leave them kids alone!

(f) All in all it's just another brick in the wall

(g) All in all you're just another brick in the wall

[School children chanting]

(h) We don't need no education

(i) We don't need no thought control

(j) No dark sarcasm in the classroom

(k) Teachers leave them kids alone

(l) Hey! Teacher! Leave those kids alone!

(m) All in all you're just another brick in the wall

(n) All in all you're just another brick in the wall

[Background voice shouting]

"Wrong, do it again! Wrong, do it again!"

"If you don't eat your meat, you can't have any pudding!
  How can you have any pudding if you don't eat your meat?!"

"You! Yes, you behind the bikesheds! Stand still laddie!"

(Pink Floyd, 1979: EMI Records, UK)

It can be inferred from the lyrics that the general theme of the songs (and actually the whole album) is centred on the notions of abandonment and isolation. *Another Brick in the Wall (part 1)* is a monologue by the little child addressed to his deceased father who has been killed in battle in World War II. *The Happiest Days of Our Lives* serving as an intro to *Another Brick in the Wall (part 2)*, marks a next stage in the child's life, that of growing up and going to school, and describes some facts about the school system from the character's point of view; and finally *Another Brick in the Wall (part*

2) expresses the feelings of school children towards school and education system. It needs to be added here that, musically, both parts of *Another Brick in the Wall* are built on the same melodic pattern, and differ only in the background rhythm and arrangement of the songs. Together with another track of the same name present in the rest of the album, i.e. *Another Brick in the Wall (part 3)*, they form a trilogy of the same title with the same underlying melody.

5. Layers of Analysis

To make the analysis more organised and principled, the lyrics are looked at in three sections parallel to different layers of language; while at the same time keeping in mind the fact that these layers are interconnected and depend upon one another; and as Simpson puts it, '...style comes from the totality of interrelated elements of language rather than from individual features in isolation' (2004: 66). Following a functional linguistic framework, these levels of language include phonetics and phonology, lexico-grammar, and semantics.
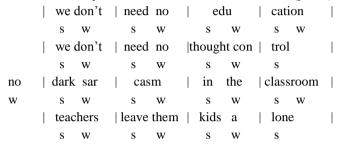
5.1. Phonetics and Phonology

5.1.1. Metre and rhythm

Beginning with the rhythmic pattern of the verses, the lyrics follow a trochaic metre, as illustrated below using the first four lines of each part in turn. As would be expected, the letter 's' below stands for a strong (stressed) syllable/beat and 'w' stands for a weak (unstressed) one. Of course, it needs to be emphasised here that 'the distinction between strong and weak syllables is relative, and not absolute' (Simpson, 2004: 17).

(4)   Trochaic metrical pattern in 'Another Brick in the Wall (part 1)'

	daddy's	flown a	cross the	ocean	
	s w	s w	s w	s w	
	leaving	just a	memo	ry	
	s w	s w	s w	s	
a	snapshot	in the	family	album	
w	s w	s w	s w	s w	

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        |  daddy   | what else | did  you | leave for | me
           s    w     s    w      s    w     s    w      s
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(5)   Trochaic metrical pattern in 'Another Brick in the Wall (part 2)'

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        | we don't | need no |   edu    | cation  |
           s    w     s    w    s    w     s    w
        | we don't | need no |thought con| trol   |
           s    w     s    w    s    w      s
   no   | dark sar |   casm   | in   the |classroom|
    w      s    w     s    w     s    w     s    w
        | teachers |leave them| kids   a |  lone   |
           s    w     s    w     s    w      s
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The beginning words in the third line of each sequence, that is, 'a' in (4) and 'no' in (5), are offbeat. A term borrowed from music language, an offbeat is defined as an unstressed beat/syllable that does not fall on the main beats of a musical (or lyrical) passage. In these lines, the offbeat syllables 'a' and 'no' are placed right before the main beat of the line, as illustrated below using the musical notation of the line 'No dark sarcasm in the classroom':

(6)

It goes without saying that, as can be seen, metrical boundaries do not necessarily coincide with word boundaries; and this is a very common feature found in the structure of poems and lyrics. This mismatch between sounding and wording is very well exemplified in the word 'across' in the opening line of *Another Brick in the Wall (part 1)* shown in (4). Another example would be in the title itself, as the word 'another' in the lines (3f, 3g) is split off in rhythm: 'All in all you're just a…nother brick in the wall'.

5.1.2. Patterns of sound

Although the lyrics of this genre of music are primarily concept-driven, and playing with sounds is usually of secondary importance relative to the intended meaning to be conveyed, sound patterns in the form of rhyming, alliteration, and assonance can still be found in different places in the lyrics.

Beginning with the rhyme patterns, the lyrics do not display much exact rhyming, not at least at the end position of the lines. However, examples of internal rhyming both within and between lines, as well as partial (also known as 'approximate') rhyming are not hard to identify; as exemplified below with the ending lines of *The Happiest Days of Our Lives*:

(7)   But in the ***town***, it was well ***known***   (2g)
         When they ***got*** home at ***night***   (2h)
         Their ***fat*** and psycho***path***ic ***wives***   (2i)
         Would thrash them within inches of their ***lives***   (2j)

As seen above, this extract displays cases of internal rhyming (town, known), approximate rhyming (got, night), and also exact rhyming at the end of lines (wives, lives). Also, in the hook phrases of the two parts 'All in all...', a perfect internal rhyming is in place, as illustrated below with the hook lines from *Another Brick in the Wall (part 1)* (1f, 1g):

(8)   ***All*** in ***all*** it was just a brick in the ***wall***   (1f)
         All in ***all*** it was ***all*** just bricks in the ***wall***   (1g)

What is noticeable in the lines above, is also a case of exact repetition, both at the word level (repetition of 'all') and the clause level (repetition of the whole line). The repetition here, and also in the hook lines of *Another Brick in the Wall (part 2)* (3f, 3g), serves to highlight the message and to intensify this feeling of isolation resulted from the wall that is being formed between the character and the world around him. Generally, repetition carries the meaning of intensification (Hasan, 1989: 5); and as Hasan argues, it is 'a device for constructing a meaning that is itself independent of the specific meanings of each of the repeated units' (ibid.).

The rhyming words in (8) also display a special kind of rhyme called 'alliteration'. Alliteration is 'a type of rhyme scheme which is based on similarities between consonants' (Simpson, 2004: 16). In the examples below, some cases of alliteration with different consonants are illustrated, the first of which is the same hook line in (8):

(9)	/l/	A*ll* in a*ll* it was a*ll* just bricks in the wa*ll*	(1g)
	/w/	*Wh*en *w*e grew up and *w*ent to school	(2a)
	/n/	We do*n*'t *n*eed *n*o educatio*n*	(3a)
		We do*n*'t *n*eed *n*o thought co*n*trol	(3b)

And, finally, it comes to 'assonance' which refers to repeated vowel sounds in words placed near each other. A few examples of this stylistic device used in the lyrics are given below:

(10)	/i, ɪ/	Dadd*y*, what d'you l*ea*ve b*e*hind for m*e*?	(1e)
	/u/	When we gr*e*w up and went t*o* sch*oo*l	(2a)
	/ɛ, ə/	Th*e*r*e* w*e*r*e* c*e*rtain teach*e*rs who	(2b)

5.2. Lexico-Grammar

5.2.1. Patterns of transitivity and tense selection

Transitivity structures in a language express representational meaning: 'what the clause is about, which is typically some process, with associated participants and circumstances' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014: 361). In simpler words, the transitivity structure of a clause is concerned with 'who does what to whom/what, where, when, how, and why' (Hasan, 1989: 36). In the transitivity model developed by Halliday, six types of processes are identified: Material, Mental, Behavioural, Verbal, Relational and Existential; although the divisions between them tend to be more provisional than absolute (Simpson, 2004).

All the processes (verb groups) in the lyrics are identified in the following tables; they are classified according to the tense and the respective line in which they appear.

Table 1. Selection of tenses and processes in 'Another Brick in the Wall (part 1)'

Line	Past	Present	Non-finite	Process
1a	has flown			Material
1b			leaving	Material
1d	did … leave			Material
1e	did … leave			Material
1f	was			Relational
1g	was			Relational

Table 2. Selection of tenses and processes in 'The Happiest Days of Our Lives'

Line	Past	Present	Non-finite	Process
2a	grew up			Material
	went			Material
2b	were			Existential
2c	would hurt			Material
	could (hurt)			Material
2d			pouring	Material
	did			Material
2e			exposing	Material
2f			hidden	Material
2g	was			Relational
2h	got			Material
2j	would thrash			Material

Table 3. Selection of tenses and processes in 'Another Brick in the Wall (part 2)'

Line	Past	Present	Non-finite	Process
3a		don't need		Mental
3b		don't need		Mental
3d		leave		Material
3e		leave		Material
3f		is		Relational
3g		are		Relational

As can be seen, out of a total of 24 processes in all the three parts of the lyrics, 16 are material processes, that is, processes of 'doing' in the real sense of it. Considering

the story-like fashion of the lyrics as a narration of happenings, the profusion of these material processes in the text is not surprising. However, what is interesting is the fact that in none of these material processes is the main character the Actor participant by himself. The Actor roles of material verbs in the lyrics are given below and, as shown, only in four processes the character grouped with other children are the Actor of the actions; and out of these four processes, two are considered non-intentional – growing up and going to school – since they happen quite naturally in every person's life. This reveals that there is not much doing on behalf of Pink (our main character), and that he is characterised as being rather passive to what happens to him and what life brings about. It is only in *Another Brick in the Wall (part 2)* that he, when grouped with other children, takes a somewhat more active position, but even then, only at the level of mind and feelings 'We don't need...', not a real sense of doing.

(11)   Actor participant roles in material processes
        daddy: 4x
        teacher(s): 7x
        teachers' wives: 1x
        we (Pink together with other school children): 4x

Looking at the tense selection of the clauses shown in the above tables, and bearing in mind the fact that a non-finite tense acquires its temporal reference by its relation to the tense selection of the finite verbal group of the clause to which it is related (Hasan, 1989: 34), it can be seen that all the tenses in the first two parts (tables 1 and 2) are in the past. While, on the other hand, the tense selection totally changes into present time in *Another Brick in the Wall (part 2)* (shown in table 3). In no part of the lyrics is the future tense used. No reference to what lies ahead, and this contributes to a blurred picture of the future, so much that it is not certain what it will be like. The use of the past tense in the first two parts accounts for the narrative-like progression of the song lyrics as a story-telling sequence which is temporally ordered, as the past tense is usually the default tense used for narration.

5.2.2. Point of view

Point of view, or the perspective through which a story is told, is an important stylistic dimension in any type of narrative text. In the analysed lyrics, the story is told

in the first person and from the viewpoint of a participating character-narrator (Pink, the main character), rather than a third person omniscient narrator.

One interesting point about the three parts of the lyrics is that in *Another Brick in the Wall (part 1)* the narrator is first person singular, and the story is told from the viewpoint of the main character himself, represented by using the pronoun 'me' in the first part (as in 1d and 1e); whereas, in the next two parts, i.e. *The Happiest Days of Our Lives* and *Another Brick in the Wall (part 2)*, the narrator changes to first person plural, represented by the use of plural pronouns 'we' and 'our' as in the opening lines 'When we grew up...' or 'We don't need...'. By this change from singular narrator to plural, Waters seems to be generalising this feeling of hatred towards school, and to show that the problems related to educational system and abuse from teachers applied to many school children of the time, and not only to the main character.

The fact that the story is told from the viewpoint of a character-narrator who, naturally enough, is not omniscient, is well emphasised by the use of clauses like 'But in the town, it was well known', as if the narrator is distancing himself away from making absolute judgements about the things he has not experienced or felt by himself. In other words, as the narrator himself is a character in the story, his perspective is limited in space and time to what he sees and experiences in his life, and his perceptions do not go beyond that limit.

5.3. Semantics

5.3.1. The use of metaphors

As already mentioned, the main theme of the lyrics is centred on the feeling of abandonment and isolation from society, and this isolation is well depicted by a metaphoric wall. This mapping between the two domains can be captured by the conceptual metaphor: ISOLATION IS A WALL. As represented in the selected lines below, the barriers in the character's life each constitute a brick in this ever-growing wall of isolation.

(12)   All in all it was just a brick in the wall   (1f) [it: daddy's departure]
      All in all it was all just bricks in the wall   (1g) [it: daddy's departure]

All in all it's just another brick in the wall   (3f) [it: teachers' mistreatment]
All in all you're just another brick in the wall   (3g) [you: teachers]

Another conceptual metaphor used in the lyrics is the DEATH IS A JOURNEY metaphor, represented in the beginning line 'Daddy's flown across the ocean', in which 'flying across the ocean' is used as the source domain to depict death metaphorically.

5.3.2. The use of irony

The use of double negation in the opening lines of *Another Brick in the Wall (part 2)*, i.e. 'We don't need no education; We don't need no thought control', has contributed to a sense of irony. By using these ungrammatical double negatives, it seems as if Waters is acknowledging the fact that we (children) do need education (at least as far as our grammar is concerned!), while at the same time criticising the society and the educational system of the time. The negative forms 'don't' and 'no' used in the same line cancel each other ironically, saying that education (in one way or another) is necessary. At first glance, the audience listening to the song may merely catch the message 'We don't need education', however at a closer examination the listener can tell that education is essential in the society; in other words, for humanity. Of course, one reason for using double negative in these clauses can be attributed to the metre and timing of the line, as it would not sound equally rhythmical to say 'We don't need any...'. Nevertheless, one could still argue that there would be other ways to make the line fit the rhythm of the verse without the need to use double negative. Further support for this argument of intentional use of ironic double negative comes from other cases of grammatical deviation found in the verses. For example, the lines (3d) and (3e) saying '...leave them kids alone', if not totally ungrammatical, are not a standard form of English and are only acceptable in non-standard speech.

Of course, these grammatical deviations are not uncommon in the world music, and they usually occur in different ways and for different purposes, by both native and non-native lyricists. About double negatives, other examples are not hard to find in English-speaking music; to mention only a few cases, *No Woman, No Cry* by Bob Marley (1976) includes double negative in the line '...don't shed no tears', or *I Can't Get No Satisfaction* by The Rolling Stones (1965) which exploits double negative in the title. Other kinds of grammatical deviations are also found in musical lyrics, some concerned

with subject-verb agreement; as in *Love Don't Live Here Anymore* by Madonna (1984) – and also a same title by Modern Talking (1985) – which shows deviation in subject-verb agreement in the title, or *Jimmy* by Boney M (1981) in the line 'It don't matter how long, how far', to name but a few examples.

Getting back to the discussion of irony, the title of the interlude *The Happiest Days of Our Lives* is another case of irony in its own right, as the content does not seem to be describing the happiest days of any person's life!

6. Conclusion

All in all, the main theme of *Another Brick in the Wall* revolves around a feeling of isolation and abandonment, and it uses different stylistic features at different levels of language to convey the main message and feeling of the verses. Yet, it does so very elaborately, as no individual clause in the lyrics expresses the character as saying 'I'm left alone', 'I feel isolated', or any other such direct encodings; and nevertheless, these meanings are well conveyed.

The main character, Pink, feeling abandoned and overwhelmed by life's troubles, begins to build a mental wall between himself and the world around, and every obstacle that he encounters in his life, adds yet another brick to this ever-growing wall of isolation.

The lyrics exploit a variety of stylistic devices to communicate the main message; and this study covered some of the techniques used in the verses in this regard. Of course, it needs to be noted here that the path taken in this study is only one possible perspective through which the lyrics could have been analysed, and different readings of style as used in these lyrics, at least regarding some subsections of this paper, could be equally (or more) valid.

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