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JOHN KEATS'S "LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI": A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of stylistic analysis is many-fold. The main purpose of this paper is to identify stylistic markers, to study how the stylistic devices used help to achieve the communicative purpose of Keats's "La belle Dame sans Merci", and to identify the functional style the poem is representative of. This paper aims at analyzing the text of the poem "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" by John Keats on four different levels of stylistics: grammatical, graphological, phonological and morphological level. The purpose of this study is to explore the literal and hidden meanings and to enhance the understanding of the poem.

Keywords: Stylistics, style, Graphological level, Grammatical level, Phonological level, Morphological level.



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Introduction

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is one of the most beautiful poems of John Keats. John Keats (1795-1821) is one of the most famous and prominent English Poets of nineteenth century. He belongs to the second generation of the Romantic poets who contributed heavily to the humanity. Keats has been hailed as the archetype of the Romantic poet as he lived and died in true Romantic style. He tried to experience everything and he suffered for his art and died so young. He celebrated love, beauty and freedom in his poems.

Important Features of Keats' Poetry

John Keats, the Romantic poet, is generally known as a poet of beauty. For him the principle of beauty has a spiritual existence. Keats saw and visualized beauty through his five senses and celebrated it in his poems. Keats's poetry is sensuous and rich in language, lavish in detail and free flowing and sensually luscious in imagery. For Keats truth is beauty; his themes are love, death and beauty in art and nature. He takes sensuous delight in all focus of beauty. His Poetry is replete with sweet audio and visual, Images. He is also called

Hellenist because he loves Greek Culture and Literature, and therefore he continues to spread Greek culture through poetry.

Research Questions

- 1- How to explore the poem at graphological level?
- 2- How to explore the poem at grammatical level?
- 3- How to assess the poem at phonological level ?
- 4- How to analyze the poem at morphological level?
- 5- How to evaluate the language devices that has been integrated in the poem?

Objectives

1. To investigate the poem at graphological level.
2. To investigate the poem at grammatical level.
3. To investigate the poem at Morphological level.
4. To examine the poem at Phonological level.
5. To evaluate how language devises has been integrated in the poem.

A Brief Introduction to Stylistic sand Style

Stylistics

Broadly speaking stylistics takes a close look at the text and analyzes its significant language forms for the sake of interpretation. It is a branch of applied linguistics that concerned with the study and interpretation of text from a linguistics perspective. The linguistic analysis of literary language is known as stylistics. Stylistics analysis provides a commentary which is objective and scientific based on a concrete quantifiable data and application in a systematic way. It uses specialized technical terms and concepts which drive from the science of linguistics. According to Short (1996) stylistics can look like either linguistics or literary criticism, depending upon where we are looking at it. Bradford (1997) says that stylistics is “an elusive and slippery topic every contribution to the vast multifaceted discipline of literary studies will involve an engagement with style”. Verdonk (2002) defines stylistics as “the analysis of distinctive expression in language and the description of its purpose and effect”.

Style

The understanding of the term style influences the characteristics given to stylistics as one of several linguistic disciplines. Style is related to the personality of the person. Style reflects the thoughts of person's mind. It describes the way of person's speaking and writing. Leech and Short (1981, p. 10) is of the view that the word —style has an uncontroversial meaning. It is a way in which language is being used in a given context for a given purpose. Style also was described as an aspect of language that deals with choices of diction, phrases, sentences and linguistic materials that are consistent and harmonious with the subject matter(Lawal: 1997).J. Middleton Murray defines style as a quality of language which communicates precisely emotions or thoughts, or a system of emotions or thoughts, peculiar to the author. He adds that style in an absolute sense is the complete function of the personal and the universal. (P.V.L. NarasimhaRao: 2011).

Level of Stylistics Analysis

The following are the levels of stylistics, we analyze the text according to these level .

1. **Phonetic Level:** It is an examination of sounds; we study the characteristics and possible function of sounds in phonetic level.
2. **Phonological Level:** It is the study of the sound patterns of a given language; the formal rules of pronunciation, the rhyming scheme and utterance of the word in the sentence..
3. **Graphological Level:** It is the analogous study of a language’s writing system. It deals with the systematic formation, structure and punctuation in the sentence.
4. **Grammatical Level:** in this level both the syntactic and morphological levels are discussed. The main aim of this level is to study and analyze the words, internal structure of sentences and their formation.
5. **The Lexico-syntax level:** It is the study of the way in which individual words and idioms tend to pattern in different linguistic context; on the semantics level in terms of stylistics.

This paper aims to analyze the text of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" by John Keats on four different levels of stylistics: graphological, grammatical, phonological and morphological level.

Introduction to the poem: "La Belle dame sans Merci" is a famous ballad about a knight who looks pale and loitering. The knight meets a beautiful, mysterious woman in the meads. He falls in love with her, so he makes bracelets and a garland of flowers for her. She seduces him into riding away with her to a magical place, leaving the reality of this world behind. She lulls the knight to induce him to sleep and he dreams of dead kings and knights, her other previous victims, who warn him with terrible words: "La Belle Dame Sans Merci hath thee in thrall" , then he wakes up from the dream alone and abandoned. The poem ends uncertainly with the Knight returning to his world of reality where he is tormented by the memory of the beautiful lady without pity.

Themes: Keats's poem revolves around a seductive and treacherous woman who tempts men and leaves them with their dreams unfulfilled and their lives left in ruins. Thematically, Keats's poem succeeds as a ballad because it is a melancholy lament over the impermanence of a life experience; in this case, beauty. And, it deals with love, women and femininity, the supernatural, abandonment and death. Death could be symbolized by the beautiful lady who shows no mercy while the knight could well be Keats himself. This ballad symbolizes Keats's life and conflicts. Keats's love for his neighbor Fanny Brawne, and his awareness of impending death are written like code into the predicament of a dying medieval knight, the poem's principal character. The more we consider the knight's story, the more we uncover parallels with Keats's life. The knight's predicament in the poem is Keats's drama transformed and played out in allegorical fashion. Keats's knight is lost, abandoned, and already living a posthumous existence, which is how the poet himself would eventually refer to the last months of his life just two years later. The tone of the poem is somber and sorrowful. Keats maintains it with such adjectives as *woebegone*, *sighed*, *gloom*, and *alone*. In addition, he sets the poem in late autumn so that nature—the withering sedge, the cold, and the absence of birdsong—reflects the mood of the knight.

The Title's implications

The title of the poem "La Belle Dame sans Merci" is in French and means "the beautiful lady without mercy". The title is an allusion to an earlier literary work, in this case; "La Belle dame sans Merci" by Alain Chartier. The poem has many of the same elements as a medieval romance (knights, fair ladies, fairies, dream sequences...), so by titling the poem with a line from a famous romance, Keats calls up all those associations right from the beginning. It is also possible that the poem is based on the ballad of 'True Thomas', also known as 'Thomas the Rhymer', which tells how a man was enchanted by the queen of Elfland and lured to her home, where he had to serve her for seven years. If Keats did indeed base his poem on the 'True Thomas' ballad, he takes up that story after the seven years are over and the spell is no longer binding. Also Edmund Spenser's "The Fairie Queene" had an influence on Keats's poem.

What is a ballad?

A ballad is a poetic story which tells a story and often used in songs because of its rhyme.

Types of Ballad:

There are three main types of the ballads- the traditional ballad, the broadside ballad and the literary ballad.

Traditional ballad is folk art, and older in origin than the other two. The authors of the traditional ballad are unknown, since they were preserved and transmitted orally.

The broadside ballad was printed on a sheet of paper known as broadside.

The Literary ballad is the most recent of the three. It is written by educated poets in imitation of the form and style of the popular ballad.

Characteristics of the ballad

- It is a short story in verse and dwells upon only one episode of the story.
- It touches upon a specific subject which bears universal significance.
- Use of colloquial language.
- It has an abrupt and unexpected opening and ending.
- No use of extra details about the surroundings, atmosphere or environment (setting).

- It contains dialogue.
- It contains refrain.
- It has a specific ballad stanza which consists of four lines with ABCB rhyme scheme.
- Use of supernaturalism.
- The themes are tragic.
- It is simple in structure, style and diction.

La Belle Dame Sans Merci as a typical literary ballad

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is known and remembered for its unmatched eloquent expression and sublimity. Keats wrote this poem in 1819, but it wasn't published until 1820. The version that was published includes a lot of changes recommended by his friend and fellow poet, Leigh Hunt. This study focuses on the published version. "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" was written towards the end of Keats's life, after his brother Tom died, but before he found out that he was dying of the same disease. The poem is a folk ballad, which is an old-fashioned poetic form, and is broken into twelve quatrains. Keats's quatrain is in alternating iambic tetrameter and trimeter lines, the fourth line in each stanza of Keats' poem is short in order to make the stanza seem a self-contained unit, and to give the ballad a deliberate and slow movement, and this way pleases the reader's ear. Each of those quatrains rhymes according to an ABCB pattern. "La Belle Dame Sans Merci is a ballad that tells a story. Every ballad is a short story in verse, which dwells upon only on one particular episode of the story. There is absolutely only one episode of the story in a ballad and the poet needs to complete the story within the limits of small number of stanzas. John Keats's ballad "La Belle Dame sans Merci" is an excellent example in this regard where also he sets the events in a remote time and location. Ballads normally use simple language that would appeal to less educated people, like farmers and laborers. Ballads were primarily an oral form – people would memorize them and pass them on to their friends and family by memory, rather than from a book. Poets like Keats tried to mimic this style in their written works. Another crucial distinctive feature of a ballad is its universal appeal. Every single ballad touches upon a distinct subject, which bears universal importance. It's not simply limited to his personality or his country, rather; it deals with the whole humanity. John Keats's ballad "La Belle Dame sans Merci" convinces the readers that most of the women are faithless and deceptive. Another prevailing and dominant feature in this poem is the use of colloquial language instead of bombastic and flowery language in the ballad. Another feature which is a basic one of a ballad is using dialogue which is evident in Keats's ballad "La Belle Dame sans Merci", which is a complete dialogue between the speaker and the knight. Also, there is no refrain as in a traditional ballad as the only repeated lines are the last lines of the first and last stanzas: "And no birds sing." The repetition of these two lines, with minor variations, as the concluding lines of the poem emphasizes the fate of the unfortunate knight and neatly encloses the poem in a frame by bringing it back to its beginning.

John Keats's ballad "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is about the story of a knight who suffers under the spell of a mysterious lady. The language of the poem is a colloquial one. Keats seems to suggest that the fate of his knight could happen to any of us, at any time. The unnamed speaker of the poem comes across a knight alone, ill-looking, confused and apparently dying in a remote place somewhere. The setting of the ballad appears to be in a bleak wintry landscape. A dialogue occurs between both the poet and the knight where it reveals that the knight met a beautiful a lady, who is a fairy lady, in a field and she seemed to love him. He started hanging out with her, making flower garlands for her, letting her ride on his horse, and generally flirting like knights do. He took her up on his steed, and as they rode together she sang to him a faery's song. She gave him roots, honey, and manna. Finally, she invited him back to her fairy cave. In the cave she wept and sighed before lulling him to sleep and he had a nightmare about all the knights and kings and princes that the woman had previously seduced – they were all dead. And then he woke on a hillside, and now finds himself in a liminal, sickly state: another victim of this fairy woman.

Stylistic analysis of the poem

Graphological Level:

- There is no division of stanzas.
- The poem is written as a whole.

- It is a ballad.
- There is usual capitalization.
- We can see the use of punctuation in the poem.

"La Belle Dame sans Merci" is a ballad that has twelve well-knit and tightly woven stanzas. The poem is rich in imaginary and music. It contains usual punctuation. Capitalization is normal and the poet used it in the beginning of the lines and only inside the following line:

They cried - 'La Belle Dame sans Merci

Hath thee in thrall!' (39-40)

Grammatical Level

- **Question Mark**

The poet also makes use of rhetorical questions in the first two lines of the first stanza when he says:

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,

Alone and palely loitering?

The sedge is wither'd from the lake,

And no birds sing. (1-4)

He repeats the rhetorical question in the second stanza:

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,

So haggard and so woe-begone? (5-6)

Here we notice that the fifth line echoes the first one because the knight did not answer the first question so the speaker repeated the question

- **Hyphen**

The poet used the hyphen in this poem five times to show contrast, to form a compound, to lend emphasis and to make examples and explanation as in the following lines:

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,

So haggard and so **woe-begone?** (5-6) (compound)

I met a lady in the meads,

Full beautiful - **a faery's child;** (example)

And sure in language strange she **said-**

'I love thee true.' (13-16) (explanation)

And there we slumber'd on the moss,

And there I **dream'd - Ah! woe betide!** (33-4) (contrast)

Pale warriors, **death-pale** were they all; (38-40) (compound)

They **cried - 'La Belle Dame sans Merci**

Hath thee in thrall! (emphasis)

- **Exclamation Mark**

Keats used the exclamation mark twice in the poem as follow:

And there I dream'd - Ah! woe betide! (33)

In the previous line the poet used an archaic exclamation in order to express extreme suffering and sadness which reflects Keats's way of writing. The second exclamation mark is used when Keats says to show strong feeling:

They cried - 'La Belle Dame sans Merci

Hath thee in thrall! (39-40)

- **Semi-colon**

The semi-colon is one of those weird bits of punctuation whose purpose is a bit obscure. Sometimes the poets used semi-colon as a cautionary pause. In fact it signifies a distinct separation with the following thoughts or lines. In Keats's poem semicolons are used to connect two independent clauses which are related somehow. They work like a soft period, separating the thoughts but keeping the flow of the first sentence. The poet used the semi-colon six times in stanza 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10 in an adequate manner to connect his ideas smoothly.

• **Quotation mark**

Quotation marks are used for direct dialogue. Sometimes, it works around a single word to emphasize the questionable legitimacy of that word or thought in a given line. Keats used the quotation mark in his poem twice. He used it in the seventh stanza :

**And sure in language strange she said -
'I love thee true.'**

And in the tenth stanza:

**They cried - 'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!'**

• **The Period**

Keats used the period eleven times in the poem. Each stanza except one ends with a period to show the effect of separating thoughts that are meant to be digested one at a time.

• **The Comma**

Keats used the comma twenty times at the end of the lines. When a comma is used at the end of a line, it should be due to the fact that the reader is not meant to directly continue on to the following line. In essence, the comma provides a very brief pause so that the reader will check their speed and not proceed too quickly. In relation to sentence construction, Keats followed the same structure in writing the third, fourth, fifth and sixth stanzas:

Stanza/ line	subject	verb	article	object	preposition			
1								
Stanza 3,	I	see	a	lily	on	thy	brow	,
Stanza 4	I	met	a	lady	in	the	meads	,
Stanza 5	I	Set her			on	my	Pacing steed	,
Stanza 6	I	made	a	garland	for	her	head	,

There is another parallel structure in the seventh and eighth stanzas:

stanza	subject	verb	Pronoun	object	preposition	adjective	noun
S7 line 1	She	found	me	roots	of	relish	sweet
S 8 line 1	She	took	me		to	Her elfin	grot

In the seventh and eighth stanzas, both the second and third lines in each one start with the conjunction 'and'.

The following lines illustrate the idea:

She found me roots of relish sweet,

And honey wild, and manna dew;

And sure in language strange she said -

'I love thee true.' (Stanza 7)

She took me to her elfin grot,

And there she gazed, and sighed deep,

And there I shut her wild wild eyes

So kiss'd to sleep. (Stanza 8)

Phonological Level

Phonology, a branch of linguistics, is concerned with system of sounds in language. It fulfills the communicative functions of language by organizing the material and vocal noises arranged into sound pattern. So we can say that the study of formal organization of languages is referred to as phonology. Phonology studies two types of devices e.g. sound devices and literary devices .

Sound devices, also known as musical devices, are resources which the poets use to make the poetry a special form of art. Poets through the use of sound devices create auditory imagery for their readers in which include alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, onomatopoeia, repetition cacophony many more. Sound devices which are used in “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” are as follow:

alliteration	consonance	assonance	repetition	Rhyme scheme	
<p><u>w</u>hat, <u>w</u>retched, <u>w</u>ight <u>F</u>ull- <u>f</u>aery <u>H</u>er- <u>h</u>air <u>h</u>er- <u>h</u>ead <u>s</u>idelong - <u>s</u>ing <u>s</u>ure- <u>s</u>he <u>s</u>trange - <u>s</u>aid <u>w</u>ere- <u>w</u>ild made - moan <u>r</u>oots - <u>r</u>elish <u>A</u>nd - <u>a</u>sleep <u>d</u>ream - <u>d</u>reamt <u>t</u>hee - <u>t</u>hrall <u>s</u>aw - <u>s</u>tarved <u>p</u>ale - <u>p</u>rinces <u>W</u>ith - <u>w</u>arning - <u>w</u>ide</p>	<p>A<u>l</u>one – <u>p</u>alely haggard – <u>b</u>egone <u>a</u>ll, <u>b</u>elle, <u>t</u>hrall <u>T</u>hey, <u>H</u>ath, <u>t</u>hee, <u>t</u>hrall <u>s</u>quirrel- <u>g</u>ranary <u>l</u>ady – <u>m</u>eads garland- <u>h</u>ead <u>H</u>er- <u>h</u>air <u>F</u>oot-<u>l</u>ight <u>b</u>racelets – <u>f</u>ragrant bracelets – <u>f</u>ragrant <u>n</u>othing-<u>l</u>ong <u>s</u>idelong – <u>b</u>end- <u>s</u>ing <u>r</u>oots-<u>s</u>weet <u>a</u>nd-<u>w</u>ild <u>l</u>anguage-<u>s</u>trange <u>w</u>ild-<u>w</u>ild lullèd – <u>a</u>sleep <u>d</u>reamed – <u>b</u>etide <u>l</u>atest-<u>d</u>reamt <u>c</u>old-<u>s</u>ide <u>k</u>ings-<u>p</u>rinces <u>H</u>orrid-<u>w</u>arning – <u>g</u>apèd- <u>w</u>ide <u>S</u>edge- <u>w</u>ithered</p>	<p><u>F</u>ull -<u>b</u>eautiful Her-her She-me And-and She-she Me-sweet Wild- wild wild – eyes pale-pale this-is why-I</p>	<p>Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,, (1st line) Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight, (4th line) <u>S</u>o haggard and <u>s</u>o woe-begone? (5th line) <u>H</u>er hair <u>w</u>as long, <u>h</u>er foot <u>w</u>as light, (line 15) <u>S</u>he looked at me as <u>s</u>he did love, (line 19) <u>A</u>nd <u>t</u>here <u>s</u>he wept and sighed full sore, <u>A</u>nd <u>t</u>here <u>I</u> shut her <u>w</u>ild <u>w</u>ild eyes (line 30-31) <u>A</u>nd <u>t</u>here <u>s</u>he lullèd me asleep, <u>A</u>nd <u>t</u>here <u>I</u> dreamed—Ah! woe betide!— I saw <u>p</u>ale kings and princes too, <u>P</u>ale warriors, death-<u>p</u>ale were they all; (line 37- 38) <u>A</u>lone and <u>p</u>alely <u>l</u>oitering (Line 2) <u>A</u>lone and <u>p</u>alely <u>l</u>oitering(line 42)</p>	<p>End Rhyme scheme ABCB</p>	<p>Internal rhyme The word "palely" also creates an <u>i</u>nternal <u>r</u>hyme with the words "ail thee" from line 1.</p>

The steady rhythm of the words "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" creates an underlying beat, and the rhyme scheme and all the alliterations make layers of sound that work like harmony in music. Even the repetition between the first and last stanza adds to the feeling that it's a song, and not a poem. The meter applied in “La Belle Dame sans Merci” is a rather straightforward iambic tetrameter, combined with a masculine end rhyme that gives the poem a defined tempo. A standard schematic is used in the quatrains concerning which lines rhyme, more specifically ABCB.

"La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is considered as a master-class in sound patterning. It is one of the more musical of Keats' poems where he used repetition in several lines in his ballad to emphasize his ideas and to increase musicality, to highlight key ideas and contribute to create a mysterious atmosphere. In terms of structure there are elements of a cyclical narrative in the poem with the repetition of the lines. There are repetitions of some lines (ll. 1-2, 5-6, 46, 47, 48) where there is the use of refrain. The first line of stanzas 1 and 2 is identical; the second lines of the same stanzas differ only slightly; in the first stanza, the question focuses on the Knight's physical condition when he describes the knight as "alone and palely loitering", whereas in the second stanza the attention is on his physical and emotional state. Such repetition makes the poem so melodious. Keats also used consonance several times to draw attention to the knight's state and to create musical effect. He repeated a number of words: paleness (denoting sickness and love-sickness) is mentioned five times; the word "wild" is used in connection with the lady's eyes three times (lines 16 and 31). The same phrase opens and closes the poem: the knight is "palely loitering,/ Though the sedge has withered from the Lake/ And no birds sing," recalling the opening and closing scenes of a play.

Consonant Cluster

Consonant cluster refers to a sequence of two or more consonant. Consonant clusters may occur at the beginning of a word (initial cluster), within a word (medial cluster) or at the end of a word (final cluster). These three types of consonant clusters are frequently used in the poem "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" which are as follows:

Initial consonant cluster	Medial consonant cluster	Final consonant cluster
From	Sedge	Arms
Squirrel	Haggard	And
Granary	Squirrel	Birds
Brow	Harvest	Moist
bracelets	Anguish	Cheeks
fragrant	Garland	Fading
steed	Fragrant	Fast
strange	Strange	Meads
grot	Elfin	Bend
dreamed	Kisses	Sing
dream	Princes	Pacing
dreamt	Warriors	Nothing
princes	Starved	Long
cried	Horrid	Sidelong
thrall	warning	Song
starved		Full
gloom		Wild
		Dreamt
		Hill
		Kings
		warriors
		lips
		warning
		sojourn
		loitering

Schemes and troops in the poem

Schemes and troupes are figure of speech used to create a particular style of writing.

Scheme: Schemes are figures of speech that deal with letters, word order, syntax and sounds rather than meaning of the word.

Tropes: A Trope is a figure of speech that has a different meaning from its literal meaning.

Schemes in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci":

Anaphora: It is a scheme. It means the repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences.

And honey wild, and manna dew;

And sure in language strange she said – (26-7)

And there she gazed, and sighed deep,

And there I shut her wild wild eyes (30-31)

And there we slumber'd on the moss,

And there I dream'd - Ah! woe betide! (33-4)

Tropes

Imagery: The **imagery** of the poem is remarkable. Keats used the flower imagery. Keats's flowers can be kind of tricky, but never fear. He mentions lilies which are often associated with death in Western culture, so the "lily" on the knight's forehead doesn't bode well for him:

I see a lily on thy brow, (line 9)

Lilies are pale white, so a slightly less morbid reading of this line would be that the knight isn't dying, but is just sickly pale. The poet also uses roses which are linked with love and passion, but in this poem the rose is fading:

And on thy cheeks a fading rose (line 11)

Keats emphasizes the power of his love to the fairy lady by using another image of flowers in the following lines:

I made a garland for her head,

And bracelets too, and fragrant zone; (21-22)

Where the knight makes a flower garland and bracelets for the fairy lady. He decks her out in flowers. This act reflects that the knight is in love with the lady. A "fragrant zone" is another string of flowers that the knight offers the fairy lady. These images reinforces the meaning that the poet wants to convey to the reader that the knight was in blind love with the lady. In the following lines, the poet strikes us when he uses nightmarish imagery of starved lips, horrid and gaped wide.

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,

With horrid warning gaped wide,

And I awoke, and found me here

On the cold hill side. (41-44)

Metaphors

The poet also uses metaphors to convey his ideas. In the following lines:

The squirrel's granary is full,

And the harvest's done. (7-8)

"Granary" is a metaphor for the squirrel's hiding places that personifies the squirrel by associating it with characteristics and activities usually reserved for humans. Another metaphor is the flower metaphor in the following line:

I see a lily on thy brow, (9)

Keats used the flower metaphor here to point out the "lily" whiteness of the knight's face. It compares the knight's paleness to the hue of a lily. The lily flower is associated with death and therefore contributes to the deathly feel of the poem. Another metaphor is when Keats describes the rose as fading from the knight's cheek in the following lines:

And on thy cheek a fading rose (11)

Keats compares the color of the knights' cheek to the color of a rose.

Connotations

Keats uses a good number of sexual connotations in expressions as horse, honey and manna dew to reveal his human feelings. In the following lines, there is sexual connotation:

I set her on my pacing steed,
 And nothing else saw all day long;
 For sidelong would she bend, and sing
 A faery's song. (21-24)
 She found me roots of relish sweet,
 And honey wild, and manna dew;
 Shelook'd at me as she did love,
 and made sweet moan" (25-8)

when Keats used manna, it is a connotation of heavenly food. "Manna" is the food that the Jewish scriptures say that the Israelites ate when they were wandering around the desert after Moses freed them from slavery in Egypt. It's supposed to be food from heaven, so this word makes the fairy lady seem supernatural, if not actually divine. Alternatively, the association could be with the slavery from which the Israelites had just been freed. After all, the knight does become enslaved to the beautiful fairy lady.

allusion

The allusion becomes even more potent when it's associated with the "honey wild" that the fairy lady fed the knight. Keats also says:

I saw pale kings and princes too,
 Pale warriors, death-pale were they all: (41-2)

This procession of "pale" men could be an allusion to the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse that gets described in the Book of Revelation in the Christian bible. The fourth horseman is Death, and he rides on a pale horse. Also the repetition of "pale" reinforces the subtext of tubercular illness. In the next stanza we see the victims' "starved lips" and hear their only words, "La Belle Dame sans Merci / Thee hath in thrall!" The thrall of love is clearly equated with the thrall of illness.

Rhetorical questions

In the first two stanza, one notices parallel structure in writing the questions and even the sentence that follows each question:

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
 Alone and palely loitering?
 The sedge is wither'd from the lake,
 And no birds sing. (1-4)
 Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
 So haggard and so woe-begone?
 The squirrel's granary is full,
 And the harvest's done. (5-6)

Morphological Level

Study of word formation and its structure is known as morphology .It involves "word derivation" in which words form from the words ,"word inflections" in which grammatical category of a word changes within syntactic category of the word and details about smallest unit morpheme. Various morphemes used in the given poem is listed below:

Free	Bound	Root	Suffix
What, Can , Ail,	Arms	Arms	Arms
Thee, Knight, At	Palely	Palely	Palely
Alone, and , The,	Loitering	Loitering	Loitering
Sedge, Has, From	Wither'd	Wither'd	Wither'd
Lake, No, Sing, So	Birds	Birds	birds
Woe, squirrel,	Fading	Fading	fading
granary, full,	Meads	Meads	meads
harvest, see, lily,	Beautiful	Beautiful	beautiful
thy, brow, with,	Eyes	Eyes	eyes

<p>Anguish, moist, Fever, dew, on, rose, fast, too, I, Met, lady, the, faery, child, her, hair, long, foot, light, were, wild, made, garland, for, head, bracelet, too, fragrant, zone, at, me, as, she, did, love, sweet, moan, set, my, steed, else, all, day, long, sideways, would, bend, faery, song , me, of, relish, honey, wild, dew, sure, language, strange, said, thee, true, took, elfin, grot, there, gazed, fill, , shut, four, asleep, woe, betide, dream, ever, cold, side, saw, pale, death, were, they, hath, thee, in, thrall, their, the, gloom, with, horrid, awoke, here, this, is, why, sojourn, here, though.</p>	<p>Look<u>ed</u> sideways<u>s</u> Pac<u>ing</u> Root<u>s</u> Sigh'<u>d</u> Lull<u>ed</u> Dream'<u>d</u> Late<u>st</u> Hill'<u>s</u> Kings<u>s</u> Princes<u>s</u> Warrior<u>s</u> Cried<u>d</u> Starv<u>ed</u> Lips Warn<u>ing</u> Gap<u>ed</u></p>	<p>Look<u>ed</u> sideways<u>s</u> Pac<u>ing</u> Root<u>s</u> Sigh'<u>d</u> Lull<u>ed</u> Dream'<u>d</u> Late<u>st</u> Hill'<u>s</u> Kings<u>s</u> Princes<u>s</u> Warrior<u>s</u> Cried<u>d</u> Starv<u>ed</u> Lips Warn<u>ing</u> Gap<u>ed</u></p>	<p>look<u>ed</u> sideways<u>s</u> pac<u>ing</u> Root<u>s</u> Sigh'<u>d</u> Lull<u>ed</u> Dream'<u>d</u> Late<u>st</u> Hill'<u>s</u> Kings<u>s</u> Princes<u>s</u> Warrior<u>s</u> Cried<u>d</u> Starv<u>ed</u> Lips Warn<u>ing</u> Gap<u>ed</u></p>
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Word Formational Process

Word class to which inflection applies	Inflectional category	Affix used
Noun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers • possessiveness 	-s as in kings, princes, lips, kisses, roots, eyes, birds 's as in hill's.
Verb	First person Third person	See, met, made. Is, look'd (past tense)
Indefinite aspect	First form of verb	See
Past aspect	Past simple	Look'd, met, were, found

Word Derivational Process

Word class to which derivation applies	Derivational category	Affix used
adjective	-ed, -ing	Starved, loitering, fading

adverb	-ly	palely
noun	loitering	

Parts of speech

noun	pronoun	verb	adverb	adjective	preposition	conjunction	article	interjection
Knight	Thee	Can	Palely	alone	From	So	The	Ah
arms	What	Ail	Fast	Haggard	On	And	a	
Loitering	I	Is	Too	Woe-	With	As		
Sedge	Thy	Wither'd	Else	begone	In	though		
Lake	Her	Sing	ever	Full	At			
No	my	Is done		Fading	Of			
Birds	she	See		Full	to			
Squirrel	me	Met		Beautiful				
Granary	there	Was		Long				
Harvest	hath	Were		Light				
Lily	their	Set		Wild				
Brow	here	Saw		Pacing				
anguish	this	would		Sweet				
moist	why	lean		Wild				
fever		sing		Dew				
dew		made		Sure				
cheek		look'd		Strange				
rose		did		True				
lady		love		Fill				
meads		found		Asleep				
faery		said		Latest				
child		took		Cold				
hair		gazed		Pale				
foot		sigh'd		Death-				
eyes		shut		pale				
steed		slumber'd		Starved				
nothing		dream'd		horrid				
all		betide						
day		cried						
long		gaped						
sideways		awoke						
song		found						
garland		sojourn						
head								
bracelets								
fragrant								
zone								
moan								
roots								
relish								
honey								
manna								
language								
elfin								

grot								
deep								
eyes								
woe								
dream								
hill								
moss								
side								
kings								
princes								
warriors								
thrall								
lips								
gloom								
warning								
sedge								

John Keats's ballad "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is about the story of a knight who suffers under the spell of a mysterious lady. As it can be inferred from the previous analysis, one notices that the language of the poem is a colloquial one. Keats did not use ambiguous, highly formed words.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the paper there has been an attempt to characterize the nature of Keats's poem and to indicate an approach to its understanding which allows access to the significance of the poem. The reason for choosing Keats's poem is to make clear that stylistic analysis can be distinguish the poet from the others. Stylistics can tell us how to know the constituent parts of a literary text and enable us to document their operations, but in doing so it must be based on the terminology and methodology of other disciplines which focus upon language in the real world. These disciplines may include linguistics, sociolinguistics, semiotics, and other disciplines which involve the context and pragmatic purpose of communication. The researcher comes to the conclusion, that through stylistic tools of foregrounding and its types, one can reach to the right interpretation of the poem, even if there is no prior knowledge about the literary work. Not forgetting that words are the keys of the door which leads directly to the meaning and interpretation of any genre of literary works. In this way, from a humble researcher's point of view, stylistics gives us in one way the opportunity to enjoy the creativity of English literature, especially English poetry.

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Appendix

I

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

II

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

III

I see a lily on thy brow,
With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

IV

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful - a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

V

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long;
For sideways would she lean, and sing
A faery's song.

VI

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

VII

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew;
And sure in language strange she said -
'I love thee true.'

VIII

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gazed, and sighed deep,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
So kiss'd to sleep.

IX

And there we slumber'd on the moss,
And there I dream'd - Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill side.

X

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;

They cried - 'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!'

XI

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill side.

XII

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.
