

VAN DIJK'S CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI: A STUDY OF KEATS'S LYRICAL BALLAD

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, as suggested by Teun A. van Dijk) to examine the ballad La Belle Dame sans Merci by John Keats and to understand how discourse structures create cognitive narratives and cultural schemata. There is a combination of macrostructure (cyclical enchantment, abandonment, and desolation themes), microstructure (lexico-grammatical units of decay, dream, and wound), and superstructure (dialogue framing, refrains, and sequence of narrativeness). These layers demonstrate that the knight's testimony is an affect-oriented discourse that tempts readers to extrapolate about cultural schemes of gender, desire, and otherness. The interdiscursive analysis has placed the poem in the context of medieval romance, folk ballad, and femme fatale, demonstrating how intertextual clues can provide background knowledge that readers apply in interpreting agency and culpability. Results support and develop close-reading, feminist, and focalization-based explanations by establishing systematic correlations between visible textual transfers and ideological conclusions, while maintaining poetic indeterminacy. The study has some methodological contributions, including modifying van Dijk's CDA to apply it to lyrical poetry, making interdiscursivity and cluster of metaphor as the central principles, as well as incorporating microstructure metrics, and proposing the directions of conducting comparative corpus analysis and reception-history studies to understand the generality of identified patterns of gendered agency.

Keywords: *La Belle Dame sans Merci, John Keats, Critical Discourse Analysis, Van Dijk, Mental Models, Microstructure, Macrostructure, Gender and Agency, Inter-textuality, Romanticism, Poetic Discourse*

INTRODUCTION

John Keats (1795-1821) was one of the major poets of the English Romantic movement, with a sensuous imagination and an obsessive concern with raptures of beauty, change, and death. These anxieties are summarised in his ballad La Belle Dame sans Merci (first published 1819), in which a knight-at-arms finds himself in an abandoned and ruined state when he encounters a mysterious, fairylike figure, who charms him, feeds him on love and offerings, and their affair, and then leaves him to his ruin and doom. The many interpretive options provided by the poem's

sparse balladic structure, antique diction, and extensive use of sensory elements create a dreamlike mood that invites a multiplicity of interpretations, including folkloric readings and feminist and psychoanalytic criticism. *La Belle Dame sans Merci* is a dramatic dialogue bracketed by the knight's questioning by an interlocutor and by the disjointed, incomplete testimony of the knight himself; its refrains, stanzaic regularity, and elliptical narrative both predict the indeterminacy of narrative authority and the unreliability of point of view. Not only are the motifs of the poem developed as seduction, enchantment, dreaming, and the reversion towards sterility and silence literary symbols, but these motifs can also appear as discursive ones, constructed to perform the identities of the knight and the lady, marginalise the readers, and invoke cultural schemata of gender, desire, and otherness. In this research, the poem is a vivid example of the application of the discourse-analytical framework of Teun A. van Dijk to textual structures related to cognitive representations and socio-cultural contexts (van Dijk, 1998). The model of discourse analysis developed by Teun A. van Dijk provides a multidimensional framework for interpreting literary texts based on language, cognition, society, and power-interaction issues. The use of this model in the poem "*La Belle Dame sans Merci*" by John Keats reveals the poem's depth of meaning and its underlying ideological implications. The account Keats gives of a knight's aggrandisement by a strange fairy woman offers a rich context for exploring the role of discourse in shaping identity, perception, and broader social and cultural apprehension. This introduction summarises the main analytical elements of Van Dijk: the structure of text, cognitive representation, and socio-political context, and shows how each one of them helps in the illumination of the thematic and rhetorical complexity of the poem.

Textual Structure (Macrostructure and Microstructure): The Van Dijk model of CDA begins with textual analysis of the macrostructure. The macrostructure of *La Belle Dame sans Merci* revolves around the themes of mortal attraction and self-disintegration. The cyclical nature of the story of seduction and abandonment is supported by the poem's balladic form, with its repetitive stanzas and haunting refrain. On the microstructural level, Van Dijk's model focuses on syntax, lexis, and cohesion to show how Keats's language, characterised by archaic language, sensory images, and modal verbs, creates a dreamlike, unreliable narrative. The confusion of enchantment is reflected in the knight's disjointed speech and the poem's elliptical shifts, which imply that the discourse is shaped by trauma and loss (van Dijk, 2000).

Cognitive Representation (Mental Models and Ideologies): Van Dijk's model lays stress on the part that mental models, subjective images of events and characters, play in the course of discourse construction. The knight's narrative of the fairy woman is subjective, seen through the lens of his own life, in which she can be both godlike and evil. This twofoldness is indicative of the idealisation of female beauty during the Romantic era and the guarding of female independence during the patriarchal era. The mental model of the knight is not objective but an ideological fact that shows the discourse entrenches gendered assumptions. The focalization that Keats employs in the story, introduced through the eyes of the knight, encourages readers to wonder about the validity of his narration and how the language allows him to create rather than merely record (van Dijk, 2008).

Superstructure: The superstructure is the organization of texts (e.g., headlines, leads, thematic sequencing). . In poetic discourse, superstructure manifests through elements like title framing, narrative progression, repetition, and symbolic sequencing. "*La Belle Dame sans Merci*", the ballad form, cyclical structure, and abrupt shifts in tone guide the reader's emotional response and subtly reinforce ideological themes, such as gendered power dynamics, romantic fatalism,

and the mystification of feminine agency. By analyzing how poetic superstructures frame experience and guide interpretation, the study reveals how discourse structure itself can legitimize dominant ideologies, often naturalizing cultural myths and emotional archetypes through aesthetic form (van Dijk, 2008).

Socio-Cultural and Power Context (Context Models and Social Cognition): The third dimension, as defined by Van Dijk (2001), places discourse within the larger social and historical context. *La Belle Dame sans Merci* is a Romantic text that echoes specific anxieties of the time about the destabilising forces of desire, rationality, and the place of women in society. The otherness of the fairy woman character is alluring and threatening, as it defies the principles of order and control of the Enlightenment. The notion of social cognition, as described by Van Dijk (communal knowledge and opinions), can explain the appeal of the poem's discourse through cultural notions of the *femme fatale* and the fallen knight. In this way, the poem becomes a site of collision between personal psychology and ideology.

Interdiscursive and Intertextual Relations: The Van Dijk (2001) model also invites us to consider interdiscursivity, which is the way in which other discourses are echoed and remodelled by a text. *La Belle Dame sans Merci* draws on folklore, mediaeval romance, and references to the Bible, making it part of a web of cultural stories. This intertextuality adds further meaning to the poem and situates it within a history of warning fables about love and illusion. Through such interdiscursive connections, we can discover how Keats's poem reproduces and challenges the dominant discourses of gender, power, and the supernatural.

Rationale for utilising the Van Dijk framework.

The model proposed by Van Dijk basically links microtextual decisions (lexis, syntax, cohesion), macrostructural meanings (themes, global topics), and mental models (cognitive schemata of readers and characters), and contextualises texts in larger social and ideological settings. This triadic prism when used to analyse the ballad by Keats enables a scholar to demonstrate in what ways the structure of the language used to create definite mental images and social meanings, how the language of the poem constructs the subjectivity of the knight, transmits gendered ideologies and reflects broader anxieties of the Romantic era regarding reason, imagination, and demarcating human and supernatural existence (van Dijk, 2001).

Research objectives

Some of the objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To examine the macro and microstructure of the poem *Le Belle Dams sans Meci*' by John Keat according to the categories of Van Dijk.
- ii. To analyze cognitive representations presented in the poem *Le Belle Dams sans Meci*' by John Keat.
- iii. To determine the superstructure of the poem '*Le Belle Dams sans Meci*' by John Keat.
- iv. To analyze the socio-cultural and ideological context *Le Belle Dams sans Meci*' by John Keat.
- v. To examine interdiscursive and intertextual resonances to construct meaning of the poem '*Le Belle Dams sans Meci*' by John Keat.

Literature Review

Teun A. van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) establishes a tripartite analytic frame—macrostructure, microstructure, and mental models that links lexico-grammatical features to cognitive representation and socio-ideological effects; this framework foregrounds how discourse encodes and reproduces power relations through patterned linguistic choices (van

Dijk, 2001). Van Dijk's insistence on explicating the connections between textual form, reader/writer mental models, and social context makes his model especially apt for poetry, where compressed language concentrates the lexical fields, modality patterns, and cohesive devices that construct readers' schemata (van Dijk, 2001). Van Dijk's approach has been adapted and extended by CDA scholars who emphasize genre-sensitive adjustments required for lyric and narrative poetry. The view of language as social practice holds that the reading of literary texts must be tied to social organisation and ideological gains in the decoding process (Fairclough, 1995). The methodological handbooks provide the analytical tools for analyzing transitivity, modality, metaphor, and cohesion, which help make a microstructural reading of figurative and elliptical language characteristic of poems (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Keats scholarship provides the conceptual and situational foundation for a van Dijk-informed reading of "La Belle Dame sans Merci." Close readings lay stress on the balladic frame of the poem, the refrains, the archaic diction, and groups of images (sleep, withered flora, wounds) as techniques that generate the narrative's liminality and instability (Abrams, 1971). The work of voice and focalization by Vendler aids in the operationalization of the concept of mental-model of voice and focalization on lyric: the testimony of the knight is not an unmediated report but a reconstruction of his mental model in a more structured form, and thus, to interpret this the discourse level operationalization of the concept of mental-model is crucial (Vendler, 1981).

Intertextual and genre studies demonstrate the conversation Keats is having with the tradition of mediaeval romance, folk-balladry, and the femme fatale, sometimes these interdiscursive echoes give the cultural schemata by which readers can look to interpret the role of lady as enchantress and threat to which that tradition can be referred as just the sort of background knowledge that van Dijk context models seek to reenact and interpret (Harris, 1995). These intertextual chains can be mapped to help a discourse analyst trace the influence of cultural narratives about gender and otherness on the poem in terms of its intellectual-model effects and ideological valences. There is empirical evidence of the usefulness of van Dijkian CDA in short, imagistic poetry. To evidence ideological conflicts between solitude, duty, and landscape, Iqbal, Bari, and Bibi (2025) apply the categories by van Dijk to the poem by Robert Frost, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, whereby the categories of words and the elements of the work transform into the macro-thematic mapping, complemented with the micro-analytic examination of modality, transitivity, and lexical domains. Their research offers a methodological paradigm for Keatsian analysis by showing how short poems yield to discourse-analytic protocols that recreate the mental models of the speakers and locate them within the cultural schemata (Iqbal, Bari, and Bibi, 2025). A similar analysis approach to van Dijk is the feminist and gender oriented criticism which recognises, the probable ideological object (agency, victimhood, and cultural constructions of femininity), that a discourse analysis must investigate in the knight-lady interaction; fusing feminist assumptions with the van Dijk procedures of tracing the connexion between textual feature and mental model reinforces the explanatory strength of the analysis (Showalter, 1985). Such triangulation helps the analyst check how certain lexical decisions, modal forms, and cohesive patterns in Keats repeatedly recreate or trouble the expectations of gender. Critiques of methodological approaches in the literature warn researchers to make CDA less evaluative in poetry research. Those who administer caution have suggested that over-instrumentalisation of CDA may merely desensitise one to ambiguity in poems. Suggested solutions include offsetting analytic rigour with sensitivity to prosody, metaphor, and deliberate indeterminacy, such that evaluative statements are firmly anchored in discernible textual

instances (Barker, 2003). Debates on best practice promote cautious sampling of textual instances, expressive association of microfeatures to presumed mental models, and support for historical/ contextual data measures, which this study adheres to to avoid speculative or reductionistic textual interpretations. Disjunctions persist in openly published Van Dijk-based analyses of the Keats ballad. However, there are many studies of Keatsian close reading and of CDA methods; few trace Keatsian lexis and cohesion onto reconstructed mental models and models of the Romantic context using van Dijk's categories. Similarities between Frost and Iqbal et al. (2025). It is possible, as Frost allows, to fill this gap through a similar van Dijk-guided study, which could occupy the remainder of this study by demonstrating the presence of gendered and Romantic-era schemata in poetic microfeatures using concrete textual examples.

METHODOLOGY

The paper applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), an interpretive-analytic approach, to the poem "La Belle Dame sans Merci" by John Keats. The methodology of this research is qualitative. The methodological objective is to relate the observed textual characteristics (micro- and macrostructure) to the reconstructed mental models, and to enable those models to be placed within the context models (Romantic-eco-cultural models).

Data and Sources

Primary source: The text of Keats' poem 'Le Belle Dames sans Merci', which was published/printed in 1819.

Secondary source: Theoretical commentaries on the poem, historical sources on the Romantic culture and gender ideologies, and sources on methods of van Dijkian CDA and its application to poetic texts.

Data Analysis Procedures and Framework

A van Dijk critical discourse analysis of John Keats's poem La Belle Dame sans Merci, incorporating macrostructural, microstructural, cognitive, superstructural, interdiscursive, and socio-ideological levels to provide a consistent explanation of how the poem's language creates meaning.

Macrostructure analysis: Determine the primary thematic suggestions and schematic issues that the poem addresses (e.g., enchantment, loss, otherness) and effects of narrative frames (interrogator/knight / implied reader positioning).

Microstructure analysis:

Lexical analysis: Compile lexical fields (flora, sleep, wounds, sight/vision, motion, etc.) and semantic clustering.

Modal and epistemic analysis: List modal verbs and epistemic qualifiers to identify the certainty and position of the speaker.

Transitivity, agency: Conceptualize processes at the clausal (material, mental, relational) level to observe the distribution of agency between the knight and the lady.

Cohesion and reference: Map pronouns, anaphora, signs of time, and refrain repetition, which lead to continuity or discontinuity in the text.

Mental Modal Analysis: Rebuild the mental picture of the knight and the lady with the use of microstructural evidence: focalization, signs of evidence, cues of memory, and gaps. Reconstructing the implied reader and interlocutor model.

Interdiscursive/intertextual mapping: Traces the intertextual resonances (medieval romance, folk ballads, femme fatale tropes) and analyzes at what point the poem refers to or makes play with these elements.

Superstructure analysis: Importantly, the methodology also considers superstructures, which refer to the organization of texts (e.g., headlines, leads, thematic sequencing). By analyzing how superstructures frame information and guide interpretation, the study highlights how discourse structure itself can legitimize dominant ideologies.

Context-model (socio-cultural positioning) analysis: Place redefined mental models within historically informed systems regarding gender, nature, and the supernatural in the Romantic era. Facilitate the corroborating of probable cultural presumptions that the modern reader is likely to bring to the poem with the use of secondary sources. Determine the instantiations and challenges of these schemata by tracing particular choices of lexicon and semantics.

FINDINGS

These are the findings of a van Dijk critical discourse analysis of John Keats's poem *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, incorporating macrostructural, microstructural, cognitive, interdiscursive, and socio-ideological levels to provide a consistent explanation of how the poem's language creates meaning.

MACROSTRUCTURAL FINDINGS

The prevailing theme of the poem is magic, destruction, and ruin. The macro-topic may be put in the following statement: an affair with a seductive foreigner causes a brief yet startling intimacy, abandonment, and spiritual sterility. The balladic frame questioning the interlocutor, the testimony of the knight, and the final picture of the knight standing lonely and palely loitering establish a straightforward plot line and leave the issues of causality and ethical accountability unresolved. It is a macro-topic that organises the reader's expectations and provides the narrative scaffold on which achievements in microstructural features attach ideological significance.

MICROSTRUCTURAL FINDINGS

Semantic clustering and Lexical fields: There are three powerful lexical bundles which are repeated in the text: (1) flora and decay (sedge, withered, knell, faded), (2) sleep and dreaming (sleep, dream, slumber, laid), and (3) sight and bodily wound (eyes, pale, cold, sore, garland). These groupings interlace to form an ecology of enchantment, shifting from sensual fullness to physical and symbolic desiccation. Flora/decay cluster is co-occurring with images of reward (roots, honey, ointment) at the beginning of the story of the knight, and this semantic opposition strengthens the feeling of barrenness in the end.

Modality and epistemic situation: The story of the knight is characterised by extensive epistemic hedging and indicators of evidence (memory verbs, reported speech, rhetorical questions). This generates an attitude of indecision: the knight revisits the past in a form of vision or impression and not as objective facts. The questions and the interlocutor's descriptive labels provide epistemic footing for the knight as an eyewitness and judge of his statements; the reader is even encouraged to question or recreate the knight.

Agency distribution and transitivity: Analysis at the level of the clause includes a variable distribution of the agency: the active role of the lady is often allocated by the material processes (she made sweet moan, she took him), and knight is usually integrated into the situation as either an agent (he is alone, palely loitering, haggard) or a subject (she took a bird). Here, the syntactic structure foregrounds female action at the time of enchantment and male inaction during the post-enchantment progression. Active or stative constructions convey the condition of the knight, which is strengthening his effectiveness and the active role of the lady in creating his fortune. Cohesion, repetition, and prosodic focus: Refrains and repetitions (the question-answer frame repeated; the images of sleep and garlands repeated) produce not only a rhythmic unity in the

poem, but also semantic echo, which highlights its cyclical and dreamlike nature. Anaphoric allusions and sudden shifts in the narration create gaps that prompt the reader to infer a missing causal connection, leading to interpretive indeterminacy.

Metaphor and condensed figuration: The erotic, supernatural, and fatalistic registers are compressed in metaphors that image food and ointment, referring to erotic nourishment that ironically comes before drying out; and flower garlands, which image celebration and deathly decoration. It is the compressed metaphors that allow ideological readings without moralising.

RECONSTRUCTIONS OF THE MENTAL MODELS

Mental model of Knight: The mental picture that the knight has is incomplete, emotion-oriented, and backward-looking. He codes the lady as a thing of magical attractiveness who gives and takes away. Sensory impressions (sight, touch, taste) shape his mental model rather than propositional understanding in generating a testimonial voice that puts more emphasis on feeling than cause. There is a trace of ambivalence in the Knight model: he recalls being loved and enslaved; he recounts reward and incarceration simultaneously, suggesting a conflict between cognition, agency, and self-blame.

Mental model of the lady: The lady serves as an active agent, initiating within the knight's focalization, as enchanter, nurturer, and then withdrawer. The attributive actions of linguistic devices are also systematically projected onto her, making her the causal core of the story despite her internal motives being unclear. The lady is discursively constructed, thus, as desirable and dangerous.

Interlocutor and implied reader mental models: The sceptical and diagnostic attitude of the interlocutor is used to interpret the testimony of knights as the object of interpretation and sympathy. This placement challenges the reader to judge the facts, fill in gaps, and consider cultural schemata (fairy-tale, femme fatale) in interpreting the knight's situation.

SUPERSTRUCTURAL FINDINGS

The poem is a dramatic dialogue framed by an interrogative structure: It begins with an external interlocutor (an unidentified traveler) who encounters the knight and questions his sorrowful condition (Stanzas 1-3). This functions as an introduction and frame for the main narrative. The central part of the poem centers on the knight's own account of his encounter with the mysterious lady (Stanzas 4-12). This narrative unfolds in three units: The knight's meeting with the lady and their brief, enchanting love affair (Stanzas 4-7). The climax, where the lady leads the knight into a supernatural grotto (Stanza 8). The knight's dream-like vision of previous victims and his eventual abandonment and ruin (Stanzas 9-12). The poem concludes by returning to the initial image of the lonely, palely loitering knight, creating a circular, cyclical effect that echoes the balladic tradition and emphasizes the narrative's unresolved, haunting nature. This framing creates a question-and-answer dialogue that brackets the main story, enhances the mysterious, dreamlike atmosphere, and highlights the unreliability of the knight's narration.

INTERTEXTUAL AND INTERDISCURSIVE DISCOVERIES

Cited genres and cultural scripts: The poem refers, in selective ways, to medieval romance, folk, and folk ballad, as well as to fairy lore. These genres are indicated by linguistic markers (archaic diction, balladic stanza, the garland, and knight motifs) and produce relevant schemata (encounter in court, charm, social revenge). These intertextual signals also provide background information that readers apply to the concepts of agentic and culpable agency--in short, schemata that lead readers to view the lady as an archetypal seductress and the knight as the archetypal victim.

Respects of intertextuality: Interdiscursivity maximises the ambiguities of the poem's ideology by referring to the romance and ballad traditions; it naturalises certain gender expectations and, at the same time, permits Keats to challenge and manipulate them through ironic opposition (celebratory garland - corpse-like imagery).

SOCIO-IDEOLOGICAL AND GENDERED IMPLICATIONS

Gendered linguistic power relations: The microstructural distribution of agency exhibited is normalised in a feminine otherness and masculine vulnerability discourse. The active verbal and material predicates portrayed by the lady create an image of female agency as strong and could be transgressive; the grammatical passivity and the expression of affection by the knight generate an image of vulnerability and deprivation, i.e., masculinity. These trends align with the anxieties of the Romantic age regarding female autonomy, desire, and the disruptive power of imagination. The poem's language not only conveys those fears but also allows them to remain unanswered, enabling them to be read in various ways (as a cautionary tale, an attack on romantic idealisation, a psychological allegory).

Ideological indexing across gender: This is another poem to index more general Romantic ideals and contradictions: the exaltation of feeling and imagination and fear of irrationality and dissipation, the spiritualization of natural landscape, which is both eroticized and pathologized. Discourse, therefore, plays a part in establishing a Romantic ideology that both glorifies and problematizes transcendence through beauty.

Interpretive Synthesis

Reading integrated, generated by the van Dijk strategy

Micro features (lexical cluster, modality, transitivity, cohesion) stick together to form some mental-modelling process whereby the subjectivity of the knight is created as a consequence of the cultural magic, the lady is designed as the agent of the remainder of the fate, and the reader is implicitly called upon to provide the causal connections not covered in the reading. The talk thus domesticates a story of male loss of agency associated with female agency, without diminishing aesthetic ambiguity, which prevents a single moral judgement. The analysis demonstrates how particular lexico-grammatical decisions impose ideological possibilities for representing the lady: it is necessary to make her legible as an enchantress, the knight as a victim, and leave interpretation to the reader.

Limitations of the Findings

Findings are interpretative reconstructions based on systematic textual evidence; they do not constitute evidence of the author's purpose and additionally depend on the code definitions and sampling decisions outlined in the methodology. The intentional ambiguity and the poem's prosodic impact did not allow exhaustive codification; specific poetic characteristics (subtleties of tone, musicality) can instead be understood through close reading, even apart from categorization alone. This is reduced in the study by combining coded evidence and illustrative close-read excerpts. The discourse analysis, informed by van Dijk, shows that the thematic drama in *La Belle Dame sans Merci* is performed by compactly clustering lexical images, modality structures that create epistemic ambiguity, and transitivity structures that assign agency to the lady and precondition the knight's related affective response. These discursive actions rebuild the mental conventions of the time that were pertinent to the pattern of gender, desire, and imagination of the Romantic period, making the poem ideologically rich and interpretively open.

DISCUSSION

This Dijkian analysis of *La Belle Dame sans Merci* both validates and extends earlier research by showing that Keats's formal choices have cognitive and ideological effects rather than mere impressions (Abrams, 1971; Van Dijk, 2009). The description reveals that repetitive images and prosodic features not only establish atmosphere but also serve as cohesive and lexico-grammatical resources that trigger readers' mental models and place interpretive responsibility (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). As the emphasis of prosodic and formalist accounts is made on metre, stanzaic form, and vocal point of view, the current analysis has integrated those elements of prosodics within the line of discourse and considers rhythmic repetition and refrains as unifying elements that establish salience and focalization (Vendler, 1981; Fairclough, 1995). This re-packaging explains the role of prosody in epistemic framing, which refers to what is foregrounded as felt experience and what is presented as a veridical report (Vendler, 1981). These discoveries coincide with feminist readings that characterise the lady as a locus of transgressive agency, while the knight is an affected and dispossessed subject. Yet, Keats's discourse also reveals ambivalence, so that it does not allow an ideological fix (Showalter, 1985). Microstructural analysis (agency coded with an active predicator through lady; the experiential constructions through knight) underlies the feminist issues of representation and draws attention to the constraints of reductive ideological readings on poetic indeterminacy (Showalter, 1985; Barker, 2003). Methodological precedents predicting the representation of Van Dijkian CDA in short lyric texts (e.g., the Frost study as a template) predicted genre-specific bendability by placing greater emphasis on interdiscursivity and clusters of metaphors when working with Keatsian romance echoes (Iqbal, Bari, and Bibi, 2025; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Such precedents confirm the methodology, but part of their warning is that such micro-evidence, coded and close-reading exemplars, must be closely fused (Barker, 2003). Van Dijk (1995) evaluative orientation can be applied to the technique of lyric to pose scale and stance questions that dominance in social CDA does not translate directly into the ambiguity of lyric, so the best way of thinking about dominance is therefore not as a claim of social power in the conventional sense of the term. This reconceptualization maintained CDA's explanatory power and honoured its poetic indeterminacy (Barker, 2003).

Shortly, van Dijkian microanalysis with feminist, historic, and prosodic analysis yields more than anyone includes in supplementary elements of analysis: the formal observations on garlands, sleep-images, and refrains are made to purchase elucidation when associated with the lexico-grammatical patterns that actualise mental patterns, and cultural schemata (Abrams, 1971; Vendler, 1981; Showalter, 1985). Further comparative study to find out whether the patterns revealed here (agency of women expressed in material predicates, passive agency of men represented in experiencer constructions, epistemic defensiveness expressed by hedging entreaties of testimoniality, etc.) are structural properties of the genre or peculiar to the poetic system of Keats.

CONCLUSION

The present discourse analysis based on Van Dijk shows that the haunting effects of the work by John Keats, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, are constructed with the help of closely coordinated microstructural decisions (lexical clusters, modality, transitivity, cohesion) that produce specific mental images and trigger the Romantic-era schemata of gender, desire, and the supernatural. Agency is constantly ascribed in the poem to the enigmatic lady, where the knight is represented as an overpowered, testimonial viewpoint; epistemic fragility is established through modality and

indicators of evidence, which entice the reader to reconstruct rather than take a firm moral stance. The cultural background information readers use to interpret agency and culpability is based on intertextual cues (medieval romance and ballad traditions), and it is form, rather than content, that creates the poem's ideological resonances. "La Belle Dame sans Merci" serves as a cyclical return to the poem's opening frame, reinforcing the knight's tragic fate. After recounting his eerie and enchanting encounter with the fairy-like lady and his subsequent dream of past victims, the knight awakens alone and desolate on the cold hillside.

Key contributions

Empirical connection between formal characteristics and cognitive image: This research provides answers to the exact lexico-grammatical devices that represent the mental images of the knight and the lady.

Methodological adaptation: This study shows how Van Dijk's CDA can be applied to lyric poetry by placing greater emphasis on interdiscursivity and metaphor clusters, as well as on traditional microstructure measures.

Integrative reading: Combines close reading with feminist critique and discourse analysis to explain the ambiguity in poetry and the patterns of discernible ideological characteristics.

Limitations

Improvisational but not categorical: Interpretations represent evidence-driven reconstructions, and not statements concerning the author's intentions. In this research, aspects of prosody and music can only be partially captured by codification; tonal nuances may require more than categorical coding.

Future Research

Future research may conduct a comparative Van Dijkian analysis of Romantic ballads to determine whether the patterns of gendered agency observed here are used throughout the genre. A mixed-methods expansion will be conducted by future researchers, in which corpus-based collocation analysis of the majority of Keats' collocations will be used, and close-coded case studies will be used to place the ballad within authorial lexicogrammatical inclinations. More extensively intertwined with reception-historical work to examine the influence of historical events as they shaped the schemata for contemporary readings of the knight-lady interaction. Overall, when delicately applied in poetic form, Van Dijk's discourse structure helps us understand both that the language used by Keats creates aesthetic ambiguity and that the ideological possibilities it opens are distributed to readers and linguistically readable.

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