GOTHIC ELEMENTS IN KEATS’S WORKS

Keats’s interest in the Gothic is best reflected by his love for the past and the Middle Ages. This also happens to be one of the most important characteristics of the romantic poetry. Many of the Romantic poets, particularly Coleridge, Scott, and Keats himself were attracted by the Middle Ages for its charm, magic and mystery. They turned to this period to escape from the sordid realities of life. Dissatisfied with the present, the Romantics went back to the past by means of their imagination, and recreated the atmosphere of the Middle Ages in their poetry as the Gothic novelists had done in their novels. The feeling for ‘strangeness’ and the ‘unfamiliar’ led the Romantics to introduce the elements of romance and chivalry in their poetry. They found in medieval life and medieval legend rich and ready source for these elements.

In *Specimen of an Induction to A Poem* (1817), its very first line expresses Keats fascination for a tale of chivalry: “Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry” (1). The poem on *Oxford: a Parody* (1817) which begins with “The Gothic looks solemn” (1), revealed the poet’s love for intense medieval colours, stained-glass windows, hidden vaults and sinister woods; aspects which provide a perfect background for sad knights and frightened ladies.

Keats a truly Romantic poet like Coleridge and Scott, took delight in the past in preference to the present and recreated the very spirit, atmosphere, and romance of the Middle Ages in his poetry, as in - *The Eve of St. Agnes* (1820), *The Eve of St. Mark* (1820), Isabella (1820), and *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (1820). The gorgeous pageant of Middle Ages - Church, architecture, superstition, and dress held a special appeal for Keats. Medievalism, with all its paraphernalia of romance and legend, love and adventure, is thus to be found in some of his best poems.

It is important to note here that apart from Keats’s romantic interest in Middle Ages and medieval romances, a close reading of his letters and poems also point out the influence of the Gothic novelists namely Beckford and Mrs
Radcliffe on him. Before taking up a discussion on the Gothic elements in Keats's important poems, my intention is to highlight the innumerable instances in Keats's poems that allude to the works of these two novelists.

In *Vathek*, Beckford's hero whenever thwarted, kicked the objects of his displeasure; in one instance even after they were dead "In the paroxysm of his passion he fell furiously on the poor carcases, and kicked them till evening without intermission". Keats's letters reflect his acquaintance with Beckford's *Vathek*. Writing to J.H. Reynolds July 11, 1818 (about the curator of the cottage where Burns was born), Keats had exclaimed, "I shod [sic] like to employ Caliph Vathek to kick him." Apart from this direct reference, there are many allusions to be found in Keats's poems. In *Endymion* (Book II) the mysterious caverns visited by Endymion were inspired by *Vathek*.

The Santons were a race of holy men who appear in *Vathek*, and suffer indignities by order of the Caliph. Furthermore, in Keats's letter poem, *Epistle to J.H. Reynolds* (25 March 1818) describing part of a castle as "Built by a banish'd Santon of Chaldee" (42) again relates to *Vathek*. The description of the interior of Kaf in *Vathek* whose subterranean recesses are approached from the halls of Eblis, (ruler of the under world) and which forms an oriental hell, is most impressive and primitively grand; it appeals to Keats's imagination. In *Hyperion*, the name Kaf, "most enormous Caf" (11.53) plays a dominant part. In *Vathek*, Eblis announces to Vathek and Nouronihar that his halls lead to the subterranean caverns of the mountain of Kaf. They enter these, and are at once in a completely different atmosphere; "the caverns are dark and gloomy, and the sullen roar of a cataract visible [...] the only sound that intruded on the silence of these doleful mansions." So in Hyperion, Book II:

\begin{verbatim}
It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears; where their own groans
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse
\end{verbatim}

(II. 5-8)

Here they meet "the pre-adamite kings" stretched on their sides for eternity, and learn from the greatest of them, Soliman Ben Daoud, that they too are
damned. He "laboured with profound sighs, and like his companions, kept his right hand on his heart." Similarly Keats's Titans:

Were pent in regions of laborious breath;
Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep
Their clenched teeth still clench'd, and all their limbs
Lock'd up like veins of metal, crampt and screw'd;
Without a motion, save of their big hearts [...] [II. 22-26]

In Beckford, the punishment is that their (pre-adamite kings) hearts are turned to burning fire, just like the hearts of Keats’s Titans, "Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd / With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse" (II. 27-28). This torture turns all who suffer it to hate their former companions:

Some stalked slowly on, absorbed in profound reverie; some, shrieking with agony, ran furiously about, like tigers wounded with poisoned arrows; Whilst others, grinding their teeth in rage, foamed along, more frantic than the wildest maniac. They all avoided each other, and, though surrounded by a multitude that no one could number, each wandered at random, unheedful of the rest, as if alone on a desert which no foot had trodden.  

Keats says of his Titans "Each one kept shroud, not to his neighbour gave / Or word, or look, or action of despair (II. 39-40). They are described as violent, full of rage and passion; the huge Enceladus in particular is described by Keats as "tiger-passion'd" (II. 68), a strange compound, unconsciously suggested by the oriental imagery of this part of Vathek.

Robert Gittings writes:

It may, of course, be argued that when any writer describes a set of infernal regions he is likely to draw upon a common stock of conventional imagery; there are bound to be fiery furnaces, gloom, and a certain amount of weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. What connects Keats's picture of the Titans so closely with Beckford's vision in the particular sequence in which both lead the reader. In both, and in the same order, there are two regions, one of brilliant, metallic light, music, attendant spirits, and long vistas or architecture, the other dark, damp, cramped rocky and soundless, except for the continual pouring of unseen waters. The connecting figure, in each case, is a sad, tarnished, and godlike giant, whose keynote is not energy
or defiance (as with Milton’s Satan) but much more of an uneasy melancholy.

Keats’s acquaintance with Mrs. Radcliffe’s works is evident from his own letters. Writing to Reynolds in March 1818 he says:

I am going among scenery whence I intend to tip you the Damosel Radcliffe — I’ll cavern you, and grotto you, and waterfall you, and wood you, and water you, and immense-rock you, and tremendous — sound you, and solitude you.  

Similarly, in February 1819, while writing to George and Georgiana he alludes to the titles of his last written poems (Isabella; or the Plot of Basil, St. Agnes’ Eve and The Eve of St. Mark). He writes “You see what fine Mother Radcliffe names I have.” In Radcliffe’s novel The Romance of the Forest, the refrain of one of the pieces of verse: “Love wave his purple pinions o’er my head.” seems to find its way into the last line of three verses in the poem To Hope (1817). “And wave thy silver pinions o’er my head” (6, 24, 30). It also happens to be the last line of the same poem “Waving thy silver pinions o’er my head” (48).  

The influence of Mrs. Radcliffe on Keats is clearly evident from the discussion that follows. There is a stream of minor ecclesiastics in Mrs. Radcliffe’s works, but of whom two in particular seem to be worth observing. In The Romance of the Forest there is a chapel of the abbey “where the hymn of devotion had once been raised, and the tear of penitence had once been shed; [...] where austerity anticipated an earthly purgatory” here, as one of the characters comments, “are probably deposited the ashes of some ancient monk, who, after having spent a life of abstinence and prayer, sought in heaven the reward of his forbearance upon earth.” In A Sicilian Romance “an old man issued from the vault with a lighted taper in his hand [...] who appeared to be a friar, and who had been doing penance at the monument of a saint.” There is also a man in The Mysteries of Udolpho, though he does not appear in dramatis personae, but in the incidental piece of verse “He turns his aching eyes, - his spirit fails.” Keeping in mind the above details let us read the description of
the Beadsman in Keats’ *The Eve of St. Agnes*. The similarity is unmistakable - ‘meagre, barefoot, wan,’ with his lamp and his penance, and his failing spirit, the Beadsman:

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meager, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptur’d dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison’d in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat’ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music’s golden tongue
Flatter’d to tears this aged man and poor;
But no-already had his deathbell rung:
The joys of all his life were said and sung:
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes’ Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul’s reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners’ sake to grieve.

(Stanzas, II, III)

One point of possible interest is the heroine’s name: Its sound was appealing to Keats’ ear; “beautiful name, the Magdalen,”¹⁷ he says in a letter. And, for what it is worth, he found Adeline in *The Romance of the Forest*¹⁸ and Maddelina in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.¹⁹

Again in *The Eve of St. Agnes* the general picture of the entry of the lover into the festivities of his foemen resembles the old attendants in Mrs. Radcliffe’s (of whom the most significant is Dorothee) *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. She says of herself “I am old, and – a little matter startles me”²⁰ and “I wonder what it is makes my old limbs shake so, to night,”²¹ Emily “drew one of the massy armchairs […] and begged Dorothee would sit down, and try to compose her spirits,”²² and later “Dorothee, at first, carried the lamp, but her hand trembled so much with infirmity and alarm, that Emily took it from her, and offered her arm, to support her feeble steps.”²³ The resemblance between
Keats' poetry and Radcliffe's passages is evident, from the following passage of *The Eve of St. Agnes*:

Ah, happy chance! The aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland:
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place:
"They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!"

(XI)

The following stanza of Keats' poem *The Eve of St. Agnes* is worthy of yet another close analysis:

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,
And as she mutter'd "well-a-well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, latic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,
"O tell me, Angela, by the holy moon
"Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
"When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

(XIII)

The mention of the 'lowly arched way' in the first line offers a consideration of the whole setting of the poem. The scene is some kind of vaguely medieval castle, of which the main features seem to be a chapel with aisles, (which is only used in the introduction) galleries dusky or oaken, wide stairs, Gothic windows with stained glass, hanging lamps, an iron gate, arras on the walls, carpets on the floor, and draughts; and its inhabitants use tapers to light their way along the passages.

In a tale of this kind Keats was not likely to trouble his head about historical accuracy. This requirement was of a congruous setting for his story. Hence this is not a period castle, but one of those from the 'Novel of Mystery and Terror'. There are in Mrs. Radcliffe's descriptions certain points of detail which seem to indicate that Keats built such portions of his castle according to her specifications rather than those of others. Let us therefore put together a
number of representative passages from Mrs. Radcliffe for example, in *Sicilian Romance*,

She took a lamp in her hand, and with cautious, fearful steps descended through the long winding passages to a private door, which opened into the church of the monastery. The church was gloomy and desolate; and the feeble rays of the lamp she bore, gave only light enough to discover its chilling grandeur. As she passed silently along the aisles [...]^{24}.

In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, “the cold air of the aisles chilled her [...] the moonlight, that streamed through a distant Gothic window [...]”^{25} “evening threw its melancholy twilight through the painted casements, and deepened the gloom of the oak wainscoting.”^{26} “Having passed up the great staircase, and through the oak gallery,”^{27} “the faded tapestry with which the chamber was hung,”^{28} “the great hall of his castle, where the costly tapestry that adorned the walls with pictured exploits of his ancestors, the casements of painted glass enriched with armorial bearings, the gorgeous banners that waved along the roof,”^{29} “the hall was sufficiently lighted by the large tripod lamp, which hung in the vaulted roof; and, while she should wait till Annette should bring a taper [...]^{30} In *A Sicilian Romance*, “Ferdinand descended into a large vaulted hall; he crossed it towards a low arched door,”^{31} “the dim glass of the high-arched windows, stained with the coloring of monkish fictions,”^{32} “this gallery opened into another, long and winding, which led to the grand staircase”^{33}. “The gallery terminated in a large old stair-case, which led to a hall below”^{34}. In *Romance of the Forest*, “After waiting a few minutes, he forced back the gate, which was heavy with iron work, and creaked harshly on its hinges,”^{35} “a window of the same order (Gothic), whose pointed arches still exhibited fragments of stained glass,”^{36} “the wind was high [...] she perceived the arras, with which the room was hung, wave backwards and forwards,”^{37} “from the centre of the ceiling descended a silver lamp.”^{38} So we have here all the features of Keats’ castle, and there are, later, a number of passages of more detailed resemblance, which seem to be beyond the range of chance
coincidence. Let us first examine the detailed description of a room in the
*Mysteries of Udolpho*, "In a large oriel window of painted glass, stood a table,
with a silver crucifix, and a prayer-book open [...] the late itself, lying on a
corner of the table."  

Then there are two passages from *The Italian*, in which Vivaldi is
watching Ellena, Passage 1:

She was rising from a small altar where she had concluded
the service; the glow of devotion was still upon her
countenance as she raised her eyes, and with a rapt
earnestness fixed them on the heavens [...] But, while he
thus hesitated, he heard her sigh, and then with a sweetness
peculiar to her accent, pronounce his name. During the
trembling anxiety with which he listened to what might
follow this mention of his name [...]  

Passage 2:

To ask himself, whether it was honourable thus to steal
upon her retirement, and become an unsuspected observer
of her secret thoughts [...] Ellena was alone, sitting in a
thoughtful attitude and holding her lute she appeared lost to
a consciousness of surrounding objects, and a tenderness
was on her countenance, which seemed to tell him that her
thoughts were engaged by some interesting subject [...]  

Vivaldi, while he listened to this, was immovable; he
seemed as if entranced [...] from this moment Vivaldi
seemed to have arisen into a new existence; the whole
world to him was paradise.  

In the *Sicilian Romance* we have the following description:

She gazed at him for a moment in speechless affright, while
he, throwing himself on his knee at the bedside, besought
her to fear nothing [...] I have bribed a servant of the castle
to open the gates, and before tomorrow’s dawn, you shall
be far on the way to Venice.  

Then in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* there is the constant background of
carousal, which Mrs. Radcliffe characteristically describes as “the wild uproar
of riot, not the cheering gaiety of tempered mirth;" and one of the allusions to
this is noticeable for the way in which the noise ceases; “the distant carousals
of Montoni and his companions – the loud contest, the dissolute laugh and the
choral song, that made the halls re-echo. At length, she heard the heavy gates of the castle shut for the night, and those sounds instantly sunk into a silence.”

Now let us examine the following instances from Keats’s poem *the Eve of St. Agnes*, which parallel the description, noted above. In Stanza XXIV, Keats remembers the arched windows and the stained glass from Mrs. Radcliffe:

A casement triple archd and diamond  
With many coloured glass fronted the Moon  
In midst were of a shielded escutcheon shed  
High blushing gules,

(XXIV. 1-4)

The descriptive splendour of Mrs. Radcliffe inspires him to recall certain pictures. He remembers silver cross, which will catch the light:

High blushing gules: she kneeled saintly down  
And inly prayed for grace and heavenly boon;  
The blood red gules fell on her silver cross  
And her white hands devout

(XXIV. 4-7)

In Stanza XXVIII, Keats combines the feelings, emotions and sentiments of the hero of the *Romance of the Forest* who heard the breathing, and Vivaldi of *The Italian* who as he listened was entranced and felt himself in Paradise, he writes:

Stol’n to this paradise, and so entranced,  
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,  
And listend’ to her breathing, if it chanced  
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;  
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,  
And breath’d himself: then from the closet crept,  
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,  
And over the hush’d carpet, silent, stept,  
And ‘tween the curtains peep’d, where lo!-how fast she slept

(XXXVIII)

Madeline’s frightened awakening in Stanza XXXIII:

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute –  
Tumultuous, - and, in chords that tenderest be,  
He play’d an ancient ditty, long since mute,  
In province call’d, “La belle dame sans mercy:”  
Close to her ear touching the melody;
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan:
He ceased – she panted quick – and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptural stone

(XXXIII)

In Stanza XL idea of the tempest and lamps reminds one of Mrs. Radcliffe – the lamp a hanging one, and the agitations of the arras in *The Romance of the Forest.*

A chain-droop’d lamp was flicking by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound
Flutter’d in the besieging wind’s uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor

(XL. 6-9)

There are strong links between the Gothic and Romanticism; the desire to test the boundaries of experience, the exploration of passion, the dominance of the imagination, the foregrounding of the irrational, the opposition to restriction and tyranny, the advocacy of political, emotional and imaginative freedom. All these aspects find expression in some form in the poems of Keats.

Keats’ *Endymion* (1818) a poem in four books appeared when he was just twenty-one years of age. It told in 4000 lines the love of the moon goddess Cynthia for the young shepherd Endymion. It was the sheer beauty of the legend of Endymion, its association with the moon goddess, and its theme of endless youth and love that appealed and inspired him to write the poem.

His intention was to fill his four books with living characters, set them moving in a world of their own, and breathe new meaning into the old legend. The meaning as he phrased it in his first lines, was quite simple:

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases, it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing

(I. 1-5)

The things of beauty were for him – the sun, the moon, daffodils, and clear streams; but also the memory of “the mighty dead” (1.21) – the great names of
history and "All lovely tales that we have heard or read" (1. 22). The poem tells with a wealth of invention, the story of Endymion. His plan was to send Endymion on a journey through the elements in search of his goddess; to describe the strange worlds through which he passes and mingling with this story the myths of Venus and Adonis, of Glaucus and Scylla, and of Arethusa.

The second book of Endymion begins in summer setting of heath and woodland. Keats in the first book got his story under way, where Endymion confides to his young sister Peona that he has fallen in love with a mysterious bright being – (it is the goddess of the moon, though he does not know it). Three times she has appeared to him in his dreams; from the sky, from a well, and in a cave. So he is bidden to search for her through the regions of earth, water, and air, and he starts by plunging into the depths of the earth. This lifeless world miraculously springs into leaf and flower as he approaches the bower of Adonis (Book II), where he discovers Venus waking her lover from his winter sleep. It is Venus who then guides him to a mossy bower, where he meets the love of his dreams in a brief but rapturous encounter. Yet she steals away from him without revealing her identity and he wanders on forlorn. After meeting two more lovers – Alpheus, the river god pursuing the stream-changed Arethusa – and praying for their happiness, Endymion looks up to find "the giant sea above his head" (II, 1023). Thus completes the first stage of his journey.

In the third book Endymion makes his way across the floor of the sea, past sharks and skeletons and forgotten wrecks. Here he meets Glaucus, a terrifyingly old man who begs Endymion to free him from the doom of endless age by performing a magic rite. Thereupon Endymion changes Glaucus back to his youthful self, helps him to reunite with his beloved nymph Scylla and restores to life all the drowned lovers of ten centuries past. In the celebration which follows, Venus promises Endymion that soon his love will be revealed to him and his devotion rewarded in "endless heaven" (III. 1027). He faints with joy, and wakes to find himself back on earth again.
The action takes a most unexpected turn in book four and the tone changes from joyous idealism to melancholy. Endymion whose courage and humanity has been tested through his early adventures, is now all ready to continue his journey through the region of air to win his promised love. Yet just at this point he is met by the dark-haired Indian maid who sings the song “O Sorrow” (IV. 146). While reproaching himself for infidelity, he falls passionately in love with her. Dreaming together they ascend into the heavens. On awakening Endymion finds Cynthia (the goddess of moon) bending over him and realizes at last that she is the love of his visions. However she fades from his sight as he turns back to the Indian maid who too fades away in the cold light of the rising moon. In despair Endymion enters the Cave of Quietude and sleeps. On awakening he finds himself on earth again with the maiden on his side. Renewed in spirits he decides for earthly love and earthly life, and paints a picture of the idyllic pastoral life that he and his Indian maid will lead together. But the maid declares that it is forbidden for her to be his lover; that if she surrenders to the human love of Endymion she will be surrendering herself to the doom of mortality.

Endymion is once more plunged into misery, Peona once again makes a re-appearance and attempts to revive the spirits of her brother. With another turn-about, Endymion announces his decision to live as a hermit for the rest of his days imploring only that he may meet the maid for one last time. The three meet again and as the day passes the maid reveals herself to be Cynthia. She accepts Endymion, who is to become a sort of god and so an immortal. Sidney Colvin writes:

The ‘one bare circumstance’ of the story was in the result expanded through four long books of intricate and flowery narrative, in the course of which the young poet pauses continually to linger or deviate, amplifying every incident into a thousand circumstances, every passion into a world of subtleties. He interweaves with his central Endymion myth whatever others pleased him best, as those of Pan, of Venus and Adoris, of Cybele, of Alpheus and Arethusa, of Glaucus and Scylla, of Circe, of Neptune, and of Bacchus; leading us through labyrinthine transformations, and on
endless journeying by subterranean antres and aerial gulfs and over the floor of ocean. The scenery of the tale, indeed, is often not merely of a Gothic vastness and intricacy; there is something of Oriental bewilderment – an Arabian Nights jugglery with space and time – in the vague suddenness with which its changes are effected.  

Endymion’s journey through the four books is thus full of adventures supernatural in content and often Gothic in detail.

The narrative of Book II, which begins with an account of Endymion’s descent into “The silent mysteries of earth” (II.214) is clearly understood to be a descent into the realms of death. We have been admirably prepared for this by a prelude passage in Book 1, where the innocent bird in front of Endymion is seen as “A disguised demon, missioned to knit / My soul with under darkness; to entice / My stumblings down some monstrous precipice” (I. 701-703). This episode emphasizes the Gothic features of loneliness and isolation of its hero. At the beginning of the second book Endymion is seen wandering about, aimlessly, “Through wilderness, and woods of mossed oaks; / Counting his woe-worn minutes, by the strokes / Of the lone woodcutter” (II. 49-51). At length he meets with the winged messenger who seems commissioned from heaven to lead him:

Through buried paths, where sleepy twilight dreams
The summer time away [...]
[.................................]
He sinks adown a solitary glen,
Where there was never sound of mortal men,
Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences
Melting to silence, when upon the breeze
Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet,
To cheer itself to Delphi.

(II. 73-82)

In another scene led by a magic butterfly, Endymion comes to a fountain by a cavern’s mouth, and is warned by a naiad that he “Must wander far / In other regions, past the scanty bar / To mortal steps” (II. 123-125). Then a voice from the cave urges him to “[...] descend where alleys bend / Into the sparry hollows
of the world!” (II. 203-204). This caverned voice bids the young lover to descend into the hollows of the earth and adds:

[...] He ne'er is crown'd
With immortality, who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead: so through the hollow,
The silent mysteries of earth, descend!
[..........................]
Into the fearful deep, to hide his head
From the clear moon, the trees, and coming madness.

(II. 211-214, 217-218)

The climax of this part of the poem, just before Endymion makes his first bid for renewed life occurs in the lines:

What misery most drowningly doth sing
In lone Endymion’s ear, now he has raught
The goal of consciousness? Ah, it’s the thought,
The deadly feel of solitude

(II. 281-284)

Cheered by the words of Venus, Endymion continues his journey onwards:

Through caves, and palaces of mottled are,
Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquoise floor
Black polish’d porticos of awful shade,
And at last a diamond balustrade

(II. 594-597)

The dominant image of the thousand fountains is one of awe, mystery and wonder. The columns of the fountains are described as rising to a “poplar’s height” (II. 607); their sound is like “dolphin tumults” (II. 610); and sometimes they are:

[...] Weeping trees.
Moving about as in a gentle wind
Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refin’d,
Pour’d into shapes of curtain’d canopies,
Spangled, and rich with liquid broideries
Of flowers, peacocks, swans, and naiads fair.

(II. 615-620)

Endymion finds a new and more austere vision awaiting him in “deepest gloom” (II. 629):

Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below,
Came mother Cybele! Alone-alone -
In somber chariot; dark foldings trown
About her majesty, and front death-pale,
With turrets crown'd four maned lions hale
The sluggish wheels

(II. 639-344)

Keats regards the sea as monstrous and myriad because it is the theatre of an eternal fierce destruction:

The mighty deeps
The monstrous sea is thine-the myriad sea!
O Moon! Far-spooming ocean bows to thee,
And Tellus feels his forehead's cumborous load

(III. 68-71)

In Book III Keats describes Cynthia who "pines for one as sorrowful" (III. 75) whose "cheek is pale/for one whose cheek is pale" (III. 75-76) with the regality whose pure light:

[...] fathoms eddies, and runs wild about
O'erwhelming water-courses; scaring out
The thorny sharks from hiding holes, and fright'ning
Their savage eyes with unaccustomed lightning.

(III. 87-90)

As Endymion overcome with awe at the sight of these wonders, lifts his thoughts up to the moon-goddess he glimpses in the distance a seated figure:

He saw far in the concave green of the sea
And old man sitting calm and peacefully
Upon a weeded rock this old man sat,
And his white hair was awful, and a mat
Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet

(III. 191-195)

Keats's interest in Gothic conventions is most evident when he describes the state and the story of the old man Galaucus at the bottom of the sea. Glaucus' plunge into the sea and his ability to breathe within its depths gives him a wonderful sense of freedom. However, his love for the nymph Scylla, who repulses him; his call on Circe for aid and to fall into her power, and to discover her sinister aspect all make a wonderful Gothic reading. She condemns him to a thousand-year sojourn at the bottom of the sea, at the end of which he will die. He is compelled to accept this doom and finds, floating in
the sea, the corpse of Scylla: "Cold, O cold indeed / Were her fair limbs, and like a common weed / The sea-swell took her hair" (III. 623-325). Pitying, he places the body in a niche within a submarine "fabric crystalline" (III. 328). He himself grows old. For a "cruel, cruel space" (III. 639) of time he remains despairing in his sea-prison. But one day there is a great storm. A ship is wrecked, and its crew drowned. The bodies float down past him through the water; from the hand of the old man he takes a scroll and a slender wand; reading the scroll, he finds a prophecy relating to himself. The prophecy first describes his plight, and then goes on to a promise:

If he utterly
Scans all the depths of magic and expounds
The meanings of all motions, shapes and sounds;
If he explore all forms and substances
Straight homeward to their symbol-essences;
He shall not die

(III. 696-701)

The words of the prophecy are remarkable, and illustrate the fact that Keats's concern with magic is unremitting. The Glaucus episode is central in Book III and clearly embodies Gothic fears and convention of which Keats was familiar with.

In Book IV the voice of the wretched lament of the Indian maid is raised:

Ah, woe is me! That I should fondly part
From my dear native land! Ah, foolish maid!
[..........................................]
To one so friendless the clean freshet yields
A bitter coolness; the ripe grape is sour

(IV, 30-35)

Endymion's Pegasus flight appears in Book IV of the poem where he is soaring to heaven with the Indian maid on "two steeds jet-black, / Each with large dark blue wings upon his back" (IV, 343-344). Keats describes the flight:

[…] Through the air they flew,
High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew
Exhal'd to Phoebus' lips, away they are gone,
Far from the earth away-unseen, alone,
Among cool clouds and winds but the free,
The buoyant life of son can floating be
Above their heads, and follow them untir’d

(IV. 347-353)

Endymion’s despair (in Book IV) because of the disappearance of the Indian maid finds him in the Cave of Quietude – a state, which perhaps balances the “den of discontent” of Book 1 (928-929):

There lies a den,
Beyond the seeming confines of the space
Made for the soul to wander in and trace
Its own existence of remotest glooms

(IV. 513-15)

The den is a region in which to wander, at its centre is an extraordinary calm, where the soul may rest:

But few have ever felt how calm and well
Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.
There anguish does not sting; nor pleasure pall:
Woe-hurricanes heat ever at the gate,
Yet all is still within and desolate

(IV. 524-528)

A picture of horror is depicted where the soul retreats into its own abyss of loneliness, fear, or sorrow – and finds there a strange new happiness.

Hail, gentle Carian!
For, never since thy griefs and woes began,
Hast thou felt so content: a grievous feud
Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude

(IV. 545-548)

The final scene of this strange tale is marked by Gothic details of death imagery. For the rest of the day Endymion remains sorrowing, motionless as a corpse; when evening falls, he makes his way slowly to the sacred grave. He will say farewell, and die:

Night will strew
On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,
And with them shall I die; nor much it grieves
To die, when summer dies on the cold sward
[..........................................................]
My kingdom’s at its death, and just it is
That I should die with it: so in all this
We miscall grief, bale, sorrow, heart break, wise,
What is there to plain of? By Titan’s foe
I am but rightly serv’d.

(IV. 933-944)

At this point it would be significant and appropriate to quote David Punter that, “Keats is capable of seeing the dark side of the old legend as in Endymion (1817):”

Groanings swell’d
Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew,
The nearer I approach’d a flame’s gaunt blue,
That glar’d before me through a thorny brake.
This fire, like the eye of Gordian snake,
Bewitch’d me towards; and I soon was near
A sight too fearful for the feel of fear:
In thicket hid I curs’d the haggard scene -
The banquet of my arms, my arbour queen,
Seated upon an upturn forest root;
And all aroimd her shapes, wizard and brute,
Laughing, and wailing, groveling, serpenting
Showing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and sting!
O such deformities.

(III. 490-503)

The reading of John Keats’ poem The Eve of St. Agnes (1820) as discussed earlier reveals the influence of the Gothic on the young poet’s mind. The poem is the story of Madeline, a damsel of noble lineage who is in love with Prophyro, the son of her father’s enemy. Having heard the legend of St. Agnes’ Eve, that young virgins might by performing certain ceremonies and rites would dream of their lovers, Madeline determines to test the popular belief. Young Porphyro on learning of her desire (from her duenna) resolves to fulfil the legend in person. Madeline is quite delighted when she finds the supposed vision become a palpable reality. While all in the castle are sleep, the two lovers elope together; the old nurse dies in the night and thus the tale ends.

In the first, second, and third stanzas of the poem, Keats has introduced a dark and morbid setting common to the Gothic — frozen, imprisoned images in the chapel and the Beadsman’s own imminent death. “the sculptur’d dead, on each side, seem to freeze, / Emprison’d in black, purgatorial rails” (II. 14-15) where upon he realizes that “already had his deathbell rung: / The joys of
all his life were said and sung" (III. 22-23). As the poem continues, it is left to the pious and spiritual Beadsman to tell the young damsel the superstition of St. Agnes' Eve. This passage permits Keats to introduce the idea of myth revision as well as to expand the usual Gothic elements incorporated in this poem. Keats has skillfully woven an adult fairy tale with a classical love story to which he has included many classic Gothic elements: a knight, a naïve, unsuspecting maiden; an impenetrable castle; and, at the end of the tale, a stormy night into which the knight and his captured maiden — lovers at last escape from the imprisoning castle.

David Punter writes:

The Eve of St. Agnes (1819), again, is a poem with a conventionally Gothic plot, but there is a dreaminess and a lack of event in it which conveys a very distinctive impression. Keats is at his best, not when describing the events themselves, but when, at the end of the poem, he relegates the whole action to the world of dream.48

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
Those lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitch'd, with meager face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold

(XLII)

The Eve of St. Agnes is suffused with the spirit of medievalism and romance. The poet has skillfully blended the story of Porphyro and Madeline with the medieval legend and described it with all the medieval richness and splendour. The simple but adventurous story of Porphyro and Madeline captures the very atmosphere of the Middle Ages — a world of ideal love, chivalry, feasts, solemn religious rites, and even danger. The biting cold, the dancing of the revelers, the howling of the winds, the silence and the gloom of the corridors of the castle only help to re-enforce the warmth and intensity of the love of Porphyro and Madeline.
In *The Eve of St. Agnes* we find all the medieval accessories. The scene is laid in some kind of a medieval castle, of which the main features seem to be a chapel with aisles, dusky galleries, wide stairs, Gothic windows with stained glass, hanging lamps, an iron gate, arras on the walls, tapers to light one’s way along the passage etc. All these descriptive details lend themselves to evoke a very Gothic atmosphere.

The story of *Isabella or the Pot of Basil* (1820) is based on Boccaccio’s Decameron. The proud brothers of Isabella (a Florentine Lady) on discovery of the love of their sister and Lorenzo (a youth in their employ), decoy him under the pretence of a ride into a wood, where they murder and bury him. The anticipation of the assassination is wonderfully conceived in one epithet in the narration of the ride:

So the two brothers and their murder’d man  
Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno’s stream  
Gurgles through straiten’d banks [...]  
[.................................]  
[...] They pass’d the water  
Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

(XXVII. 209-211, 215-216)

On returning to their sister, they delude her with a story of having sent Lorenzo abroad after their merchandise. However, the spirit of the lover appears to Isabella in a dream and apprises her of the happening as well as the spot where he was buried. To ascertain the truth of the vision, she sets out to the place accompanied by her old nurse. Her digging for the body is described thus:

She gaz’d into the fresh-thrown mould, as though  
[.................................]  
Then with her knife, all sudden, she began  
To dig more fervently than misers can.  
[.................................]  
And so she knelled, with her locks all hoar,  
And put her lean hands to the horrid thing:  
Three hours they labour’d at this travail sore;  
At last they felt the kernel of the grave

(XLVI. 361, 367-368; XLVIII. 280-283)
Having found the body she severes the head, and takes it home. Wrapping it in a silken scarf, she entombs it in a garden-pot, and sets a plant of basil over it. Her brothers, observing how she cherishes this herb, steal the pot and discover the head; conscience stricken they flee. But Isabella in misery and grief (since she loses her basil) pines away and at last dies.

Keats’s Isabella is informed by a whole series of Gothic elements. It is the re-working of a medieval tale in which the medieval setting (an appropriate setting for the supernatural elements of the tale) along with the Gothic details combine to evoke the atmosphere at once most ghoulish and horrifying. The horror description in the poem is when Isabella is pictured cherishing the severed head of her lover:

She calm’d its wild hair with a golden comb,
And all around each eye’s sepulchral cell
Pointed each fringed lash; the smeared loam
With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,
She drench’d away: - and still she comb’d, and kept
Sighing all day – and still she kiss’d, and wept

(II. 403-408)

Isabella is at the centre of a series of transgression, a defining characteristic of the Gothic. Isabella transgresses the boundaries of social and financial propriety by entering into a relationship below her social class. She transgresses the boundaries of reason in her behaviour, digging up and kissing the dead head, planting it in a pot, rejecting the world to luxuriate in melancholy indulgence. Her vision is an imaginative transgression of the rational. She transgresses the boundaries of good taste, taking sensuous pleasure in caressing the decaying head. In a typical Keatsian fashion Isabella the poem and Isabella the heroine bring into conjunction (which reason and conventional 19th century morality seek to divide and keep apart) social classes, life and death, the living and the dead, joy and melancholy, the beautiful and the horrific, the pleasurable and painful, decay and regeneration. As in the Gothic, the poem tests the boundaries which separate such oppositions.
The role of the brothers is also interesting from a Gothic perspective. They can be seen as representing the typically Gothic feature of the evil or barbaric relation, their barbarism is not only expressed in the murder of Lorenzo, but as exploiters of humanity and of nature, “The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark / Lay full of darts” (XV. 116-117).

*Isabella* could be seen as a Gothic re-working of a typical Keatsian theme, transience and the attempts to transcend it. In Isabella’s vision, but especially in her actions, we are presented with a macabre even ghoulish vision of an attempt to immortalize or transcend the temporality and limitations of human desire and emotion. ⁴⁹

Keats himself noted the sentimentality of *Isabella*. This excessive indulgence in emotion is another typical Gothic characteristic transgressing the boundaries of emotional restraint and control.

*The Eve of St. Mark* (1820) an unfinished poem by Keats, for its Gothic detail and atmosphere draws upon his impression of Chirchester ⁵⁰, where he had stayed from January 21 to 23, 1819. The legend of St. Mark envisages death and multiple deaths. Bertha’s book tells her that if she stands in the church porch at midnight she will see the phantoms of all those who are to die within the year. It is a gruesome thought. In the fragment of the poem our attention is concentrated on Bertha, a curiously unsatisfactory heroine:

> Bertha was a maiden fair,  
> Dwelling in the old minister-square;  
> From her fire-side she could see,  
> Side long, its rich antiquity,  
> Far as the Bishop’s garden-wall;  
> Where sycamores and elm-trees tall,  
> Full-leaved, the forest had outstriped,  
> By no sharp north-wind ever nipt,  
> So shelter’d by the mighty pile.  

(39-47)

Though a “maiden fair” (39) Bertha has the mannerisms of an old maid. She spends the day in reading. Living alone in a house where “all was silent, all was gloom” (67), she seems to be a “poor cheated soul” (69). There is a
suggestion of dire poverty; even the book she reads is “A curious volume, patch’d and torn” (25). When light fades she does not light a candle; she “strikes a lamp from the dismal coal” (70). And her own shadow hovers about the room with sinister effect:

her shadow still
Glower’d about, as it would fill
The room with wildest forms and shades,
As though some ghostly queen of spades
Had come to mock behind her back,
And dance, and ruffle her garments black

(83-88)

The French title *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (1820) in English means ‘The Beautiful Lady without Mercy.’ The poem is the story of knight-at-arms who is disappointed in his love with a fairy. He wonders the cold hillside waiting for the apparition that has enthralled him.

The fairy who came in the shape of a beautiful woman showed her passionate love for the knight and took him to her fairy cave, calmed his senses, exercised a magical influence on him by her sweet song, and made him fall in a deep slumber. In his sleep, he saw a horrible dream. In this dreadful dream he saw pale and awe-struck kings, princes and warriors. The horror of the dream wakes up the knight, who finds himself lying all alone on the cold hillside. The beautiful and charming lady had disappeared.

In the poem, the image of the knight “palely loitering” (I. 2) by the wintry lake, “so haggard and so woe-be gone” (II. 6) is related to Gothic convention of the wanderer and sense of loneliness. When the knight falls asleep in the “elfin grot” (VIII. 29) he dreams not of love and warmth but of betrayal and death:

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pal warri ors, death-pale were they all;
Who cry’d – “La belle Dame Sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!”

(X. 37-40)

Upon awakening the knight finds himself alone and realises the lady herself was a delusion. In fact David Punter states:
The beautiful lady in Keats’s *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* is a vampire, who sucks the blood not only from the hero of the poem but also from the entire surrounding world, leaving it pallid, meaningless, stripped of aura.51

Keats in *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* captures with great success the very spirit of medievalism (The poem is replete with the magic and enchantment of the Middle Ages; the knight-at-arms, the cruel mysterious lady “a fairy’s child” (IV.14), the elfin grot). Written as a ballad (a form of poetry popular in the Middle Ages). It makes use of the theme of a fatal, magical love which lures a man to his doom as found in folk-legend. The romantic movement which had revived an interest in such themes, made Keats (like Coleridge in *Christabel*) succeed in creating through an atmosphere of medieval romance, a mood of psychological terror and desolation.

Keats’ *Lamia* (1820) has all the Gothic elements to proclaim the poet’s interest in this particular literary genre. The story was taken by him from Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy. *Lamia* opens with the story of Hermes whose love pursuit, takes him to the Isle of Crete. There he encounters the spectacular serpent Lamia. Lamia’s lament arouses Hermes pity and interest. Not only she inspires him to believe that she can make the object of his desires appear, but in the process also reveals to him that she was once a woman; that how she loves a Corinthian, and her desire to be transformed. Thus a bargain is struck between her and Hermes.

*Lamia* endures a painful transition and vanishes to appear in Corinth to await the passing Lycius who rapidly falls in love with her. Magically they pass through Corinth to a beautiful, mysterious house provided by Lamia to live in their own love-world. When the outer world’s noises intrude, Lycius is roused to seek social recognition of their union in the form of a wedding. Despite Lamia’s protestation, he insists and she capitulates on the condition that he excludes Apollonius—sage and teacher. At the nuptial feast, Apollonius enters uninvited. His perceptive eye forces Lamia’s dissolution. The philosopher has
rightly identified her as a serpent, however, Lycius dies at the loss of his beloved.

Keats’s description of Lamia as a snake woman evokes horror. As a snake she is a thing of great beauty but nevertheless a serpent:

She was a Gordian shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Stripped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr’d;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolv’d, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
So rainbow-sided, touch’d with miseries,
She seem’d, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon’s mistress, or the demon’s self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne’s tiar:
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
She had a woman’s mouth with all its pearls complete:
And for her eyes: what could such eyes do there
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.

(I. 47-63)

Lamia’s transformation into a woman is a kind of destruction (of the serpent’s beauty) that involves a process of real suffering, anguish and pain:

Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foam’d, and the grass, therewith besprent,
Wither’d at dew so sweet and virulent;
Her eyes in torture fix’d, and anguish drear,
Hot, glaz’d, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
Flash’d phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling tear.
The colours all inflam’d throughout her train,
She writh’d about, convuls’d with scarlet pain:
A deep volcanian yellow took the place
Of all her milder-mooned body’s grace;
And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede;
Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
Eclips’d her crescents, and lick’d up her stars:
So that, in moments few, she was undrest
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
And rubious-argent: of all these bereft,
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
Still shone her crown; that vanish’d, also she
Melted and disappear’d

(I. 146-166)

Keats’s interest in Gothic architecture is revealed from his description of the magnificent house where Lamia and Lycius live for some time, (undisturbed by the world) in mutual passion. The house remained invisible to all eyes, but those of Lycius

A pillar’d poch, with lofty portal door,
Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow
Reflected in the slabb’d steps below,
Mild as a star in water.

(I. 379-382)

Speaking of the supernatural charms of his serpentine heroine, Keats writes:

Let the mad poets say what’e’er they please
Of the sweets of Faeries, Peris, Goddesses,
There is not such a treat among them all,
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
As a real woman, lineal indeed
From Pyrrha’s pebbles or old Adam’s seed.

(I. 328-333)

Lycius’s journey to Corinth is controlled by a spell that reduces the long distance to a few paces. He seems to be in a state of sleepwalking, where the distinction between waking and dreaming, knowing and doing is blurred. The effect of Lamia’s spell on Lycius is described thus:

The way was short, for Lamia’s eagerness
Made by a spell, the triple league decrease
To a few paces; not at all surmised
By blinded Lycius, so in her comprised.
They pass’d the city gates, he knew not how,
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

(I. 344-349)

The encounter of Lycius and Lamia with Lycius’s tutor the sage Apollonius evokes a sense of horror and fear:

Muffling his face, or greeting friends in fear,
Her fingers he press’d hard, as one came near
With curl’d gray heard, sharp eyes, and smooth bold crown
Slow-stepp’d, and robed in philosophic gown:
Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,
Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
While hurried Lamia trembled: "Ah," said he

'\[\ldots\]\n‘Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
And good instructor; but to-night he seems
The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams.

(I. 362-368, 375-377)

Under the power of Apollonius’s philosophical stare, Lamia’s enchanted existence becomes endangered. She desires Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, the house and all that was in it, vanishes in an instant. Apollonius as a weaver of wizardry entangles Lamia in his own illusory spell of philosophy. He conjures her up as a hideous parody of her former self and denounces her as a “foul dream” (II. 271). Lycius dies disillusioned. His death at the close of the poem is a macabre representation of the illusory dream mode disclosing its realistic counterpart. A public ceremony of marriage that should have united the lovers, instead separates them forever. The act of matrimony leads only to the preparation of Lycius’s funeral; his “marriage robe” (II. 311) becomes his death shroud.

Keats wrote two versions of the poem ‘Hyperion’ and each remained an uncompleted fragment. The fragment, Hyperion (1820) is generally considered to be one of Keats’s greatest poetic achievements. It strikes our imagination by the vastness of its conception, the grandeur of its style and the awe-inspiring visions of primitive cosmology.

The story of Hyperion relates the overthrow of the Titans – the second generation of gods, by the third generations – the Olympians. The Titans with whom Keats rank the Giants also, were an ancient dynasty of gods presiding over the powers of Nature and ruled over by Saturn. The situation when the poem opens is thus: Saturn, chief of the second dynasty of gods has just been dethroned with his fellow-gods by his sons and daughters – the Olympians (as he had himself in his youth dethroned his father Uranus and his follow-gods). The war against Saturn was led by his son Jupiter, who had seized and used his father’s weapon, the thunderbolt. Saturn driven away from his kingdom, lies in
desolation and sorrow in a deep dell. Though Saturn and all the Titans have been defeated, dethroned, and disgraced, Hyperion – the splendid sun-god still retains his kingdom. But Hyperion too is in danger of losing his kingdom and be superseded by Apollo – the god of music and light.

In *The Fall of Hyperion, a Dream* Keats re-casts *Hyperion* into the shape of a vision which too remains unfinished. If in the first, the story of Hyperion is told in direct narrative, his new plan was to relate the fall of the Titans in the form of a vision revealed and interpreted to him by a goddess of the fallen race. He had broken off his work on the first *Hyperion* at the point where Mnemosyne is enkindling the brain of Apollo with the inspiration of her ancient wisdom. In the second version, Keats identifies the Greek Mnemosyne, the mother of the Muses with the Roman Moneta and makes his Mnemosyne-Moneta the priestess and guardian of Saturn’s temple. His vision takes him first into a garden of delicious fruits where he sinks into a slumber and on waking up finds himself on the floor of a huge temple. Presently a voice, the voice of Moneta, summons him to climb the steps leading to an image besides which she is offering sacrifice. Obeying her with difficulty, he questions her regarding the mysteries of the place, and learns that he is standing in the temple of Saturn. Then she unvels her face, and on seeing it he feels an irresistible desire to learn her thoughts. Thereupon he finds himself conveyed in a trance to the ancient scene of Saturn’s overthrow. From his point Keats begins to make use of the text of the original *Hyperion*.

In the following passage from *Hyperion*, the Titan Hyperion ignorant of his family’s fate succumbs to a premonition of doom:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{For as among us mortals omens drear} \\
\text{Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he –} \\
\text{Not at dog’s howl, or gloom-bird’s hated screech,} \\
\text{Or the familiar visiting of one} \\
\text{Upon the first toll of his passing – bell,} \\
\text{Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp;} \\
\text{But horrors, portion’d to a giant nerve,} \\
\text{Oft made Hyperion ache [...]} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(I. 169-176)
The narrator presents a conventionalized Gothic scenario – the screeching of the owl, the ghostly visitation, and superstitious dread. While he seems to reject the conventional Gothic as an inadequate mode to frighten him “Not at dog’s howl, or gloom-bird’s hated screech” (I. 171), he nonetheless cites its features to encourage the reader to imagine a Gothic of enormous magnitude “portion’d to a giant nerve” (I. 175). Hyperion then envisions his family as spectres:

O monstrous forms! O effigies of pain!
O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom!
O lank-ear’d phantoms of black-weeded pools!
Why do I know ye? Why have I seen ye? Why
Is my eternal essence thus distraught
To see and to behold these horrors new?
[..............................]
Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
[..............................]
Of all my lucent empire? It is left
Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine
[..............................]
I cannot see – but darkness, death and darkness.

(I. 228-233, 235, 239-240, 242)

The Gothic protagonist whose home or “cradle” (I. 236) has become a ruin, it is a place he can no longer own. He reduces himself to the ghostliness that his family has already assumed “it is […] nor any haunt of mine” (I. 239-240). Whether it is these hallucinatory “spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom” (I. 229), or the alternation between pastoral and sublime landscapes, or the emphasis on affective states of distress, anxiety, melancholia, and hysterical questioning, the reader can easily identify Keats’s overt allusions to the Gothic mode.

The major figures in Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion – the fallen Titans, Hyperion, Apollo, and the poet-narrator in The Fall of Hyperion – repeatedly receive a physical or psychological beating as they attempt to narrate the origin of poetry.

The extensive tableau that opens Book II of Hyperion illuminates the Titans in a Gothic ized torture chamber, a place where each vividly rehearses his or her agony:
Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep
Their clenched teeth still clenched, and all their limbs
Lock'd up like veins of metal, crampt and screw'd;
[..........................................................]
Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave
Or word, or look, or action of despair.
Creus was one, his ponderous iron mace
Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
Iapetus another; in his grasp,
A serpent's plashy neck; its barbed tongue
Squeez'd from the gorge, and all its uncurl'd length
Dead; and because the creature could not spit.
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
Next Cottus: prone he lay, chin uppermost,
As though in pain, for still upon the flint
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
And eyes at horrid working [...]

(II. 23-25, 39-52)

The beginning of Hyperion prefigures other forms of incommuni-
cability. The language of the poem Hyperion is trooped as sickness a "palsied
tongue" (I. 93) and self-inflicted pain "I am smother'd up" (I. 106); to conjure
up horror pictures of Gothic details. Most radically it becomes the experience
of bodily dispossession – of choking at the moment when change is imagined:

He spake, and ceas'd, the while a heavier threat
Held struggle with his throat but came no forth;
[.................................]
So at Hyperion's words the Phantoms pale
Bestir'd themselves, thrice horrible and cold;
[.................................]
[...] through all his bulk an agony
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
Making slow way with head and neck convuls'd
From over-strained might...

(I. 251, 252, 255-256, 259-263)

In The Fall of Hyperion, the Titans' speech regresses into mere cries and
noises, or into silence – a reflection of its own decline. The following syntactic
repetitions of Saturn mirror this bodily disposition / dysfunctioning:

[...] Moan, moan,
Moan, Cybele, moan, for thy pernicious babes
Have chang'd a God into a shaking palsy
Moan, brethen, moan; for I have no strength left,
Weak as the reed-weak-feeble as my voice –
O, O, the pain, the pain of feebleness.
Moan, moan [...] (I. 424-430)

Furthermore, Keatsian fancy creates a picture of immobility, inertia and benumbness: Apollo sits “until a melancholy numbs my limbs” (III. 89), while Hyperion winds up “like the bulk / Of Memnon’s image at the set of sun” (II. 373-374). Mnemosyne’s face is fixed in “eternal calm” (III. 60); and in The Fall of Hyperion we are presented with the “chambers of [Moneta’s] skull” (I. 278) and her “broad marble knees” (I. 214), as well as the poet’s attempts to mount the altar steps or bear the burden of the Titan’s pain himself too are laden.

Pain, the most private of states goes public in both Hyperion fragments as the poet represents at various points, subjective dissolution in seizure like states: in Hyperion Apollo’s “wild commotions” (III. 124) and Saturn’s “to shake and ooze with sweat” (I. 137); and in The Fall of Hyperion, the poet’s struggle against “the cloudy swoon” (I. 55) and the “electral changing misery” of Moneta’s brain (I. 246) – these Gothic moments, evoke a sense of distaste, even aversion; affective responses that check sympathy. As early as Sleep and Poetry (1817) he identifies the Gothic as a mode of power, not of sympathy:

But strength alone though of the Muses born
Is like a fallen angel: trees up torn,
Darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchers
Delight it; for it feeds upon the burrs,
And thorns of life; forgetting the great end
Of poesy, that it should be a friend

(241-246)

In The Fall of Hyperion the poet’s Miltonic conceit that he cannot find words adequate to mourn Moneta’s pain suggests rather ‘his rhetorical inability to traverse the psychic distance necessary for a transformative sympathy.

When he introduces Apollo, the narrator of Hyperion ostensibly redirects the narrative away from the suffering bodies of the Gothic scenes by
using the pastoral mode: “O leave them, Muse! O leave them to their woes; / […] / Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp” (III. 3,10). If he hopes to depart from the impious woe with a major shift in character, tone, and scene, then his attempt fails. The pain of Books 1 and 11 resurfaces. Newly awake in his bower, Apollo waits (in impotence and ignorance) the experience of Jupiter’s Olympian power on his body, just as the Titans did. But while the Titans ineffectually resisted the experience, Apollo longs for it. He eagerly awaits the physicalized intoxication of poetic power: “deify me, as if some blithe wine/Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk” (III. 118-119). When that power expresses itself through Apollo, Keats scripts it as painful pleasure and pleasurable pain:

Soon wild commotion shook him, and made flush
All the immortal fairness of his limbs;
Most like the struggle at the gate of death;
Or liker still to one who should take leave
Of pale immortal death, and with a pang
As hot as death’s is chill, with fierce convulse
Die into life: so young Apollo anguish’d:
His very hair, his golden tresses famed,
Kept undulation round his eager neck.
During the pain Mnemosyne upheld
Her arms as one who prophesied – At length
Apollo shriek’d; - and lo! From all his limbs
Celestial.

(III. 124-136)

David Punter writes:

What Keats adds to the Gothic is in a different area, in his apprehension of the terrifying transience of beauty, and in *The Fall of Hyperion*, in his fear of he proximity of beauty and decay.52

And yet I had a terror of her robes,
And chiefly of the veils, that from her brow
Hung pale, and curtain’d her in mysteries
That made my heart too small to hold its blood
This saw that Goddess, and with sacred hand
Parted the veils. Then saw I a wan face.
Not pin’d by human sorrows, but bright blanch’d
By an immortal sickness which kills not

(I. 251-258)
Keats’s romances often portray through this mode complex relations of innocence and experience, life and death, ideal and real that points towards the inherent dangers of confusing fact and fiction. Morris Dickstein argues that “Keats discovers in romance a literary terrain rich with potential that permits a reorientation to an aesthetic which embraces tragedy through a series of negating images.” Furthermore, this study highlights Keats’ use of the medieval model associated with the Gothic in his poetry.

In the longer pieces of narrative phantasy (which form the larger portion of his writings), he selects for example in Endymion – a legend of the sensuous Grecian mythology, or as in Isabella or the Pot of Basil – a story from Boccaccio, or as in The Eve of St. Agnes – the hint of a middle-age superstition or as in Lamia – a story of Greek witchcraft, Keats gets himself to weave out the little text of substance so given into a linked succession of imaginary movements and incidents taking place in the dim depths of forest, grotto, seashore, the interior of Gothic castle, or the marble vestibule of a Corinthian palace. This in effect aids and adds to the Gothic dimension that one discovers in reading the poems of Keats.
Notes:


5. Ibid. p. 112.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid. p. 110.


11. Ibid. p. 114.


13. Ibid. p. 38.


21. Ibid. vol. IV, p. 32.
22. Ibid. vol. IV, p. 55.
23. Ibid. vol. IV, p. 52.
26. Ibid. p. 119.
27. Ibid. p. 375.
28. Ibid. p. 364.
29. Ibid. p. 107.
32. Ibid. p. 29.
33. Ibid. p. 11.
34. Ibid. p. 91.
36. Ibid. p. 37.
37. Ibid. p. 9.
38. Ibid. p. 117.
43. Ibid. vol. III, p. 118.
44. Ibid. vol. II, p. 475.
48. Ibid. p. 113.
49. "Isabella and the Gothic " <www.greenhead.ac.uk/becon/ english/ keatgoth.htm>[12 March 2003]
50. With some reminiscences, probably of the churches and abbeys seen on his earlier tour with Brown to North England and Scotland.

51. Punter, op.cit. p. 117.

52. Ibid. pp. 112–113.