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# James Uden, Spectres of Antiquity: Classical Literature and the Gothic, 1740-1830. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. 284. Cloth (ISBN 978-0-19-091027-3) $74.00.

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successful, and should be challenged, to further recognise our understanding of the political and social realities that allowed Rome to succeed in matters of war, when so many others across Italy failed. Rome was built by (and upon) its political culture, its military might, and in the minds of some aristocratic writers perhaps also a wider sense of civic responsibility. It was also however built upon its cultural realities grounded in the Roman family, the backbone of the republic.

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James Uden, *Spectres of Antiquity: Classical Literature and the Gothic, 1740-1830*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. 284. Cloth (ISBN 978-0-19-091027-3) $74.00.

In a way like the Gothic, James Uden's outstanding monograph (henceforth *Spectres*) may strike some readers as 'unclassical' in insight—and that is central to what makes the book so good.

On its surface, *Spectres* offers a series of case studies, moving chronologically from important precursors to the Gothic (Edward Young, Edmund Burke, Richard Hurd) through influential proponents of the genre's first wave (Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis)—all British but not all English—to an intriguing American example (Charles Brockden Brown) before concluding with a crucial crossover with second-generation Romanticism (Mary Shelley, centrally but not only *Frankenstein*). Each of these studies is historically detailed and compellingly argued. Focusing of course on the writers' engagement with ancient materials, including but not limited to traditional scholarly approaches to the Classics like knowledge of Greek and Latin, Uden shows how they develop their own complex images of 'the classical.' That alone would make the book valuable: a significant study of classical receptions in English-language literature in a genre that has continued to play a role in more recent cultures and must therefore have an effect on modern understandings of ancient worlds.

What truly distinguishes *Spectres*, however, runs deeper, as Uden explores the possibility that the authors' Gothic visions of antiquity may be taken all together to suggest a way of theorizing engagement with the past that "go[es] beyond the somewhat bland metaphor of reception"—namely, 'haunting' (232, discussion 230-33; *cf*. 215-16). The book accomplishes this in a way that is coherent and meaningful but, fittingly, not simply classical: it does justice to its materials by gently evoking their own cherished aesthetic principles, above all the idea of an ancient but unclassical sublime. It is characteristic of Gothic works to locate the sublime at an intersection of the sensory and memory or elegy, a paradox in which present experience is most intense, even overwhelming, when centered on something past or otherwise lost.

Uden emphasizes forms of this idea throughout. For example, Shelley's patchwork creature, in *Frankenstein* an impossibly reanimated assemblage of bodies whose individual lives are past (194-95; *cf*. 208-11 on "Valerius: The Reanimated Roman"), may be read as a literalized embodiment of notions that Burke put more abstractly (39-46) and that Radcliffe made concrete in imagery of faded tapestries and formerly stately buildings gone to ruin (esp. 86-87). A central interest of the Gothic is thus the unbidden encounter with a remnant—sometimes a revenant—of the past that makes otherwise vague awareness of mortality especially vivid. The experience is sublime since it emphasizes the incomprehensibility of time, dwarfing human civilizations and *a fortiori* human lives. Even the sublimity of natural landscapes could be sharpened

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by juxtaposition with human makings, as in the final disappearance of *Frankenstein*'s statuesque creature (193-94, 203-5) into Arctic wastes.

Hence the Gothic trope of ancient ruins—and yet, as Uden explicates, his authors' collective realization that, insofar as those are entered into artistic representation, they could be either actually ancient structures that had been ruined over time or artificial 'ruins' that were created in the present to seem as if from the distant past. If that last is a general way of describing any new depiction of old things, with present *ekphrasis* only representing the past, scholarship has emphasized how the Gothic in particular is deeply conscious of that possibility: the paradoxically powerful sublimity of 'the counterfeit' (esp. Jerrold E. Hogle's "The Gothic Ghost of the Counterfeit and the Progress of Abjection"; Uden makes warmly clear how large Hogle looms behind *Spectres*). This is at the core of Uden's argument: an important 'ghost of the counterfeit' is Gothic authors' haunted realization that 'classical antiquity' is not a natural fact but a matter of continuous re-invention in culture.

If that of course is the major premise of reception studies, Uden shows that it takes vivid form in Gothic texts, with significant implications for theory. It was clear already to Horace, in his influential *Ars Poetica*, that old materials *could* be put together in new ways and indeed *must* be for there to be any literary or artistic history—but Horace also insists that the combinatoric potential must be constrained by an aesthetics of the 'natural.' As Uden discusses (60-63), a later Horace thought otherwise, and his ideas and experiments in form became foundational: Horace Walpole, referring to and consciously riffing on his ancient namesake in *The Castle of Otranto*, thus "replaces an earlier eighteenth-century mode of classical imitation and emulation"—'the classical tradition'—"with one of *collection*" (57, italics original).

In this changed aesthetics of the ancient, "[c]lassical objects, phrases, and ideas are detached from their original context, fragmented, and playfully set in startling and disorienting juxtapositions" (57). This extended to other materials (as Uden observes, with reference to Emily Jane Cohen's "Museums of the Mind," 98 n. 45), but Uden argues cogently that it was applied with special force to 'the classical.' In some cases, this meant "exchang[ing] classicism for a 'classical effect,' an aspect of rhetoric, which approximates the scope and prestige of the classical while dimming its literary and historical specificity" (86; the case in point is Radcliffe's novels). This is significant in itself and insofar as similar aesthetics of 'classical effect' have continued in various cultural forms: for example, film adaptations of ancient stories are often more invested in perceived authenticity than in scholarly accuracy (*e.g.*, Jon Solomon, *The Ancient World in Cinema*; Marcus Becker, "On Visual Cogency").

As Uden starts to suggest in the conclusion (227-34), his argument in *Spectres* has potential upshots that go well beyond his discerning case studies. Uden's own suggestions there are modest, and I think they can be pushed further, including by considering 'haunting' as a mode of reception already at work in antiquity. For example, Walpole's practice of 'detachment from context,' innovative in its time, had been an element of Greek and Roman allusion, in which phrases could be redeployed without reference to their original settings (*e.g.*, Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style*). More generally traditions of rhetoric in antiquity made for different literary-cultural distinctions amongst categories like allusion, imitation, original composition, and translation (*e.g.*, Siobhán McElduff, *Roman Theories of Translation*). Indeed, late antiquity saw the emergence of a literary mode centered on *recomposition*, the *cento* (esp. Scott McGill, *Virgil Recomposed*; *cf.* more generally his *Plagiarism in Latin Literature*). As in Uden's examples from the Gothic, that was echoed in other areas of ancient culture, including architecture (*e.g.*, Helen Saradi, "The Use of Ancient Spolia in Byzantine Monuments").

These and other historical practices would therefore seem to provide contexts for extending the concept of 'haunting,' as Uden has identified it in the Gothic, to materials

from other times. Think, for example, of a revenant Rome in brick, haunting the marble fantasies of Augustan literature, an image that would resonate as well with Modernist classicisms (after Ellen Oliensis, *Freud's Rome*; *cf*. Manya Lempert, *Tragedy and the Modernist Novel*) in the wake of Mary Shelley's depiction of a future Rome haunted by 'the last man' (as Uden discusses, esp. 221-24). Such possibilities, long the stuff of 'classical effect' in fiction, can be made more clearly material for scholarship thanks to Uden's theorization: although he stays judiciously focused on his specified era, his approach is richly open to extension.

I therefore cannot recommend *Spectres of Antiquity* highly enough. I will certainly assign at least whole chapters in classes, and I predict its effect on my own engagement with classical materials. Already I am encouraged to feel more like the farmer in the first book of Virgil's *Georgics*, who encounters a huge armored skeleton in his field and stands in wonder at that ancient haunting …

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