

THE CLASSICS AND THE GOTHIC

UDEN (J.) *Spectres of Antiquity. Classical Literature and the Gothic, 1740–1830*. Pp. x + 267, ills. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. Cased, £47.99, US\$74. ISBN: 978-0-19-091027-3.
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The links between Gothic literature and the Greek and Latin classics are rich and full of nuance. Although since the origins of the Gothic genre the opposition between the Gothic and the classical has been highlighted, in recent years a number of works have proved that Gothic literature never dispensed with the classics, but instead established an intense dialogue with them. This interaction resulted in a literary tension where the classical models were transformed to conform to a new literary and aesthetic sensibility, that of Romanticism. In this volume U. employs wide-ranging research to examine and support some of these ideas.

After an introduction that synthesises the main ideas of the volume, Chapter 1 focuses on three authors vital to the understanding of the new relationship established between Gothic literature and the classics: Edward Young, Edmund Burke and Richard Hurd. Young, whose essay *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759) inspired the title of U.'s volume, represents the classical world as a spectre that could 'dwarf our understanding, by making a giant of theirs'. On the other hand, Burke and Hurd offer a more conciliatory perspective. From an aesthetic point of view, Burke vindicates the importance of the sublime in classical literature, connecting it directly with the new literary sensibility that emerged in the mid eighteenth century. Hurd, for his part, emphasises the sense of continuity between the classical and the Gothic, pointing to authors such as Homer and Virgil as the true forerunners of Gothic literature. The connection that U. establishes between Young, Burke and Hurd is pertinent, and it anticipates the complex response of the Romantics to the classics.

Chapter 2 centres primarily on the study of Gothic literature's foundational novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1864), but also extends to *The Mysterious Mother* (1768) and *Hieroglyphic Tales* (1766) by the same author. It begins by examining an element that proves to be fundamental to the interpretation of Walpole's entire literary work, namely his personal art collection. U. argues that, instead of rejecting the classical, in his works Walpole reorganises and relocates it, constructing a 'Gothic classicism'. The chapter ends with a section dedicated to other authors writing in the wake of Walpole, specifically Arthur Murphy and Clara Reeve, whose texts, as U. shows, are perfect examples of this intersection between the classical and the Gothic.

Chapter 3 reveals the apparent dilution of the presence of the classical world in Anne Radcliffe's works. A closer examination reveals the sophisticated network of allusions to Latin and Greek cultures that underlies the construction of some of her characters and the atmosphere distilled in her works. U. emphasises the relevance of the concept of 'remembrance', a term used frequently by Radcliffe, which bestows a 'classicizing veneer' (p. 87) on her stories. Her portrayal of Greece and Rome, however, is far from an idealised one, and in some cases even turns into a threatening presence. The chapter constitutes a interesting symbolic view of the classical world, which transcends Radcliffe's work.

In Chapter 4 the work of Matthew Gregory Lewis allows U. to analyse a 'queer' reception of the classics, partly prompted by the author's homosexuality and evident in his interest in authors such as Horace or Anacreon, both of whom are evoked in his novel *The Monk* (1796). U. also shows how Lewis's career as a translator influences the reappropriation of

the classics in his literary work, and we can see an example of this in Lewis's translation of Anacreon's epigrams and in his work *The Love of Gain* (1799), an imitation of a satire by Juvenal. U. successfully proves how the classical, the Gothic and the homoerotic merge in the work of Lewis, who finds in the Greek and Latin authors a way to express the terror he endures because of his sexual orientation.

With the work of Charles Brockden Brown, U. delves into the beginnings of the Gothic genre in America. This chapter offers a thorough analysis of the classical references in Brown's Gothic novels, which complements and expands on other previous studies on the topic. Despite Brown's solid background in Latin and Greek, he soon adopts a critical viewpoint regarding the usefulness of classical studies in the modern world. In fact, it is an excessive devotion to the classics that leads the protagonists of *Wieland* (1798) and *Ormond* (1799) to their final destruction. In this context, some classical authors (Cicero, Ovid) are presented as figures of cultural authority whom Brown aims to debunk. His reaction acts as a mirror to the changes in education systems during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a period in which the place of Latin and Greek in the syllabus was gradually but significantly reduced.

Lastly, U. sees in the work of Mary Shelley an example of 'embodied Antiquity', where the classical world becomes a tangible and corporeal presence ripe for interaction. His analysis dwells largely on *Frankenstein* (1818), but also includes 'Valerius: The Reanimated Roman' (1819), *The Last Man* (1826), *Mathilda* (1819–1820; published in 1959) and the poem *Proserpine* (1832). According to U., Shelley explores the dual feeling of attraction and repulsion provoked by the classical world, a paradoxical reaction that generally results in 'scenes of failed intimacy between the present and the past' (p. 194). Modernity longs for this dialogue with classical antiquity, but eventually only finds 'unresponsive ruins' (p. 194). He closes the chapter by linking Mary Shelley's work with Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth, the Wanderer* (1820), which, according to some scholars, marked the end of Gothic literature as a genre.

Especially interesting is the methodological approach proposed in the afterword. In an attempt to go beyond the generally accepted dichotomy between classical tradition and classical reception, U. propounds that the relationship between the classics and Gothic literature is a process of 'haunting', whereby the present responds to the past's invasion with a double reaction of fascination and terror, captivation and repulsion. The Gothic authors question the authority of the classics, which, as Young had anticipated, constrained the modern writers' creativity, but, at the same time, these modern authors appropriate, transform and include the classics in their new concept of literature. Here U. reaffirms some of the ideas put forward by F. García Jurado (*Nova Tellus* 26 [2008]) and A. González-Rivas (*Los clásicos grecolatinos y la novela gótica angloamericana* [2011]) as regards this particular case of classical reception, which is as peculiar as it is controversial. As U. claims, 'there is no dramatic clash between Gothic and classical; only redirection' (p. 19).

U.'s prose is clear and flowing, and his analysis is thorough. The corpus of authors and works selected is suitable and enables U. to trace the evolution of the phenomenon that he is studying in a comprehensive manner. Each chapter accounts for the classical education received by the respective author, and the literary production of each author is examined in depth. The chapters transition smoothly thanks to the final section included in all of them, which helps to connect the works just analysed with the ensuing ones. The result is a study that is both solid and cohesive, where each statement builds upon the previous ones and which thereby lays substantial foundations for future research.

Notwithstanding these strengths, in terms of general context there is a lack of deeper reflection on Gothic literature as a genre (or mode), including its temporal scope. This has

already been extensively discussed (e.g. V. Sage, *The Gothic Novel* [1990]; F. Botting, *Gothic* [1996]; A. Smith, *Gothic literature* [2007]; and M. Aguirre, *The Grammar of Gothic* [2021]), but a more substantial focus on it would help to explain the parameters within which the corpus of works covered in this study was selected. The differences between the reception in Gothic literature of Greece and of Rome would also seem deserving of greater attention, with a view to exploring the opposition between these two cultures that spread throughout the nineteenth century. Finally, there is a need for greater precision in the way in which contributions made by previous studies are acknowledged, as this would help readers to evaluate properly how far U.'s approach is innovative and how far it derives from other works.

This comprehensive volume evinces the powerful symbolism acquired by the classics in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, from political, aesthetic and literary points of view. Furthermore, U.'s work constitutes an excellent way into Gothic literature, highlighting the key authors and the development of the genre over time. Readers approaching it from the perspective of both classical and English studies are likely to find this work an engaging and thought-provoking study that takes us deeper into a topic that is as fascinating as it is challenging.

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ANCIENT EPICS AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

IRBY (G.L.) *Epic Echoes in The Wind in the Willows*. Pp. x + 140, ills. London and New York: Routledge, 2022. Cased, £44.99, US\$59.95. ISBN: 978-1-03-210510-9.

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This volume argues that classical intertexts infuse the riverside Arcadia of Kenneth Grahame's children's classic *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). Through thematic chapters I. explores the 'epic echoes' of works by Homer, Apollonius of Rhodes, Aristophanes, Euripides and more, as they connect with the novel. Close readings of how Grahame draws on epic concepts such as heroism, *katabasis*, wit, *xenia*, *aristeia* and *nostos* offer insights into the characters and exploits of the novel.

The book is divided into nine chapters: an introduction, which sets the scene for Grahame's classical background, and thematically organised chapters on 'The Wind in the Willows and Ancient Epic'; 'The Heroic Landscape'; '*Polymetis* and *Polytropos*: Sage Water Rat and "Clever" Toad of Toad Hall'; 'Adventure: the Wine-dark Sea, Motor Cars, and the Sea Rat'; 'Temptation and Oblivion: Lotus-Eaters and Sirens'; '*Kleos* and *aristeia*: Glory and the Battles for the Halls'; '*Nostos* and *Dulce Domum*' and 'Conclusion: the Spirit of Divine Discontent and Longing'. In these chapters, themselves divided into helpfully titled sections, I. identifies classical and epic precedents for aspects of *The Wind in the Willows*. A Homeric scholar, I. knows her classics and uncovers epic parallels that underscore the character and yearnings of the novel's animal protagonists: Toad's ventureful vaingloriousness; Ratty's wit and trickery; Mole's kind