



John Duncan,
'The Riders of
the Sidhe' (1811).

A 19th-century influence of Gothic Faerie: The fairy tree, fairy lover, fairy art, and fairy revenge in Clay F. Johnson's poem 'A Ride through Faerie'

Tatiana Fajardo

In the pages of the early Gothic romances such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), generally considered to be the first Gothic novel, or Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777), one finds a gloomy, melancholy aesthetic tinged with macabre mystery, decay, terror and death. Little has been published with regard to the idea of 'Gothic Faerie', or the darker realm of fairyland, and the connections between some pieces of Gothic literature with the more magical world of supernatural enchantment, fairy magic, and all the fantastic illusions of *ignes fatui*. This relationship between the Gothic and the concept of 'Gothic Faerie' emerges in Clay F. Johnson's poem 'A Ride Through Faerie' (2019), which I will be discussing in this essay, and which holds both 'dreams poetical / And visions phantasmal' while employing the figure of the fairy.¹

Interestingly, what the English essayist Joseph Addison wrote in *The Spectator* in 1712 is most relevant here as it pertains to this idea of 'Gothic Faerie':

There is a kind of Writing, wherein the Poet quite loses Sight of Nature, and entertains his Reader's Imagination with the Characters and Actions of such Persons as have many of them no Existence, but what he bestows on them. Such are Fairies, Witches, Magicians, Demons, and departed Spirits. This Mr. Dryden calls the Fairy Way of Writing, which is, indeed, more difficult than any other that depends on the Poet's Fancy, because he has no Pattern to follow in it, and must work altogether out of his own Invention.²

Johnson makes use of this 'fairy way of writing' in his poem 'A Ride Through Faerie', first published in *Enchanted Conversation: A Fairy Tale Magazine* in September 2019, introducing magical characters that could be interpreted as fairies, witches, even departed spirits, and which certainly imagines a poetic narrative following his own 'poet's fancy' that Addison writes of. However, when writing his poem, Johnson was also influenced by his 19th-century Gothic literary interests, including the ideas and concepts of 'Gothic Faerie'.

A self-professed obsessive for the Romantics, especially the life and writings of John Keats whose work I will touch upon shortly, Johnson has written that much of his early poetry was influenced by the aptly nicknamed 'haunted summer' of 1816, where stormy weather enticed Lord Byron to challenge his guests at the Villa Diodati in Switzerland to write a ghost story.³ What was later born from this ghost story challenge were two masterworks of Gothic fiction that, over two hundred years later, still influence writers today: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus* (1818) and Dr John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819).

However, Johnson's Keatsian influence should not be underestimated in relation to the composition of 'A Ride Through Faerie' in 2019. In the same essay describing his literary influences, Johnson writes: '[T]his year of 2019, for me, is all about Keats. It is the 200th anniversary of, in my opinion, Keats greatest year, or *annus mirabilis*.'⁴ He further points out that 1819 was the year in which Keats wrote "'La Belle Dame sans Merci'" in April' and 'his exceptionally brilliant piece of Ovidian witchery *Lamia* over the summer.'⁵ These two poems by Keats are important to this argument and will be discussed in detail in this essay.

Besides being inspired by 19th-century literary Gothic, Johnson's poem was also written as a response to the ecocide that occurred in the Amazon during the summer of 2019, when the world became engrossed in a raging inferno that seemed ceaseless in its consuming devastation. Although fires do occur in nature naturally, the conflagration in the Amazon that year was unnatural. It was manmade deforestation encouraged by governments who had recently passed anti-environmental legislation.⁶

Written with such ideas in mind, and the poem's focus on the avaricious destruction of nature and the inherent consequences that follow, Johnson's 'A Ride Through Faerie' not only fits within the concept of 'Gothic Faerie' but is also a perfect example of 'eco-Gothic'. The forest that Johnson describes throughout his poem is alive and feeling, sentient and living, conscious and thinking, and, at times, ambivalent and threatening. Elizabeth Parker writes:

The forest that is ostensibly alive is the forest that is both animate and sentient. By 'animate', I mean that it somehow demonstrates physical movement, which causes (or at least threatens) harm to the human; by 'sentient', I mean that it shows evidence of conscious, insidious thought and intention.⁷

With the origins of the poem's inspiration in mind, my essay will focus on the 19th-century influences that aided in shaping 'A Ride Through Faerie', which is divided into

four distinct parts, each containing themes and tropes of 'Gothic Faerie'. In the order that they appear in Johnson's poem, I will begin with a brief look into the folklore of the hawthorn tree and its deep-rooted associations with Faerie. Next, I will discuss the fairy lover in Keats's 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' (1819) and 'Lamia' (1820). I will continue by briefly analysing the fairy art of John Anster Fitzgerald and the echoes of Edgar Allan Poe present in Johnson's stanzas, particularly regarding the horror tale 'Ligeia' (1838), and, in conclusion, explore fairies and the fairy revenge in connection to the Irish authors William Butler Yeats and Lady Francesca Speranza Wilde.

Johnson's poem tells the story of a mortal man, Lord Ortho, who cuts down a hawthorn tree in order to build a house, and, by doing so, awakens the fairy world connected to the tree. Setareh, a seemingly supernatural being, lures him into her realm, marries him and wreaks revenge on him for destroying her powerful natural habitat.

The Fairy Tree: The Folklore of the Hawthorn Tree

In Part I of 'A Ride Through Faerie', 'The Felling of the Tree', Johnson describes a tree that is being destroyed by an 'axe of earthly metal',⁸ and how 'woodchips of silver luminescence fell / Like broken witch-stones'.⁹ This brutal attack on the tree reflects what scholarship labels 'ecophobia', or, as David Del Principe states, the 'fears stemming from humans' precarious relationship with all that is nonhuman'.¹⁰ These fears hark back to the 19th century, when there were prophesies about 'population, the food supply, and agriculture and the vehement reaffirmation of human primacy over nature and animals'.¹¹ In his poem, Johnson introduces an eco-Gothic trope by manifesting 'the role that the environment, species, and nonhumans play in the construction of monstrosity and fear', in this case the revenge nature will complete to re-establish the natural order.¹²

Nonetheless, in Johnson's first stanzas, nature is presented as vulnerable, and it succumbs to the industrialisation Lord Ortho embodies. In this opening confrontation it is the tree that is conquered and destroyed, silencing nature's music:

Babbling day & night like a noisome magpie
That murders the song of the nightingale,—
Nowhere near as clever—he silences
The living music that breathed for eternities¹³

Interestingly, the reader soon discovers that the harmed tree is not ordinary: it is magical. According to Richard Sugg, 'There were three central areas of the fairy landscape which posed special danger: These were fairy trees, fairy forts and fairy paths'.¹⁴ Disturbing any of this fairy landscape, especially to build a house, was considered perilous. Johnson's male character Ortho, the antagonist who parallels certain political leaders, is destroying this 'Fairy Tree' for just that reason: to build a house.

In his ninth stanza, Johnson uses the phrase 'mayflower blooms'¹⁵ which suggests that the tree is a hawthorn. In Gaelic folklore, the hawthorn is said to 'mark the entrance to the

otherworld', which later plays a significant role in Johnson's poem.¹⁶ Johnson thus echoes Donna L. Potts' analysis that 'proclamations about the fairies' revenge, ostensibly directed at anyone who cuts down their trees, underscore the historic significance of trees in Irish culture.'¹⁷ Potts develops her study by clarifying how 'the devastation of deforestation, as well as the Irish language and folklore suppressed in the course of colonization', strengthened 'ecological arguments grounded in the postcolonial desire' to reclaim land and culture.¹⁸ Johnson emphasises the environmental catastrophe and, as will be shown in the last section of this essay, also illustrates some of the Irish folk tales collected by Lady Wilde.

There is an Irish tradition of the *sídhe*, or fairies who dwell in the Otherworld as descendants of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, the Irish race of gods, yet Johnson focuses on the Fairy Queen as the sole avenger against the human Lord Ortho. By doing so, Johnson alludes to the medieval tradition of an enchantress who seduces a knight following the medieval trope the aforementioned Romantics were fond of, and it is no coincidence that the Fairy Queen embodies the destroyed hawthorn tree. As Susan S. Eberly explains, in medieval love allegory, the hawthorn is 'an inversion of the "fruitful tree" found in both the Old and New Testaments.'¹⁹ The hawthorn tree or *arbor cupiditatis*, particularly in the literature of the 15th century, was a 'consistent symbol of carnal love, as opposed to the spiritual love', a connotation of lustfulness which continued in later texts such as in Charlotte Brontë's Gothic *Jane Eyre* (1847).²⁰ Brontë's text is full of Irish fairy folklore, and one of the main settings, Thornfield Hall, 'can be interpreted as a reference to the hawthorn tree.'²¹ Moreover, Brontë compares Jane to a fairy several times as Rochester names Jane 'malicious elf', 'sprite' or 'changeling' among other pet names.²² In addition, Jane adopts a ground-breaking masculine role on some occasions, such as when she negotiates her inheritance or saves Rochester. As Carole G. Silver argues, 'by depicting fairy brides either as depraved and degraded, akin to female savages, or as idealized and etherealized beyond the realm of physical desire, folklorists brought female sexuality within the realm of Victorian comprehension.'²³ Jane is ethereal and needs to be 'tamed' in Rochester's view to fit in society, just like Johnson's Lord Ortho seems to desire this type of control over the Queen of the Faeries (as I will argue in the next section of my essay). Both Rochester and Lord Ortho are fragile when they manage to get closer to their 'fairy brides': Rochester depends on Jane as he is physically weakened by the end of the novel, and Lord Ortho discovers his rather fitting doom for cutting down a magic tree.

As I have argued so far, in Johnson's poem, the fact that Ortho destroys a hawthorn tree depicts this character's ecophobia, his sexual desire towards a beautiful woman, and, thus, references the medieval tradition of the hawthorn tree as an allegory for carnal love, with 'the Biblical metaphors for the alienation of humankind with God.'²⁴ (This is different from the common belief that Jesus's crown of thorns during the last trial was made of hawthorn and hence why the tree is considered sacred.)

Nevertheless, Johnson does not portray the hawthorn tree as holy in Christian terms, but as a means of connection with nature, which stems from pre-Christian beliefs such as

the above-mentioned Irish ones. The cutting down of this tree serves to outline his greedy and lustful character at odds with the quietness and natural harmony the landscape evokes.

The previous conception of carnal love and passion is highlighted by the encounter between Lord Ortho and the Fairy Queen in Johnson's second section of his poem, 'The Moonlight Meeting of Lord Ortho and Setareh'.

The Fairy Lover: The Moonlight Meeting

In Part II of 'A Ride Through Faerie', Johnson introduces the idea of the 'Fairy Lover' with the rendezvous between Ortho and Setareh. The poet's 'Fairy Lover' can be thought of as a sort of archetypal *femme fatale*, 'a womanly foil of the frail, lovely, and goodhearted Gothic heroine'.²⁵ Johnson, taking a more feminist approach to the subject, points out that the idea of the 'fatal woman' has long suffered 'unjust names'²⁶ such as Pandora, Aphrodite,²⁷ and 'child-eating Lamia' or 'Eve the snake-friend',²⁸ all of whom endure epithets of 'dangerous women', especially threatening towards men. Johnson names his character 'Setareh', Persian for 'star' or 'fate', introducing the consequences Lord Ortho may suffer as Setareh's hypnotising enchantment and absolute power over men are unquestionable. Like Keats in 'La Belle Dame sans Merci', Johnson uses the idea of being seduced by 'wild, wild eyes'.²⁹ The mortal man, especially one so 'artless'³⁰ as Ortho in Johnson's poem, has no hope of escape from such a gaze.

Johnson connects the enchanted forest present in Keats's poem to the tradition of seducing fairies that Patricia Monaghan describes:

Many stories of FAIRYLAND centered on this ravishingly beautiful woman —for it was almost always a woman — who stole away the most brilliant poet or the most handsome man from this world and made him her lover ... The [fairy] lover called to her chosen mate through dreams that haunted him until he sought her out ... Because time passed differently in fairyland than in our world, a single night with the fairy [lover] crept by pleasantly while centuries slipped away on this side of veil.³¹

Keats's 'Lamia' is another example of the fatal 'Fairy Lover', written shortly after 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'. In Greek mythology, Lamia was a child-eating serpent-woman, later turning into something akin to a vampire. In the folkloric beliefs of several European countries, the Orient, and the Malay peninsula, supernatural female creatures are 'models for the women vampires who have become an important part of the popular imagination – women who are aggressive, destructive, rebellious, and, at the same time, irresistibly sensual'.³² These female characters do not portray the maternal characteristics idealised by 19th-century society; on the contrary, they are blood-suckers who are a threat to men.

However, marriage is central in both Keats's 'Lamia' and Johnson's poem. Keeping with the theme of 'Fairy Lover', marriage is a way to possess the mortal man, to ensnare him with wedding bonds. Because the 'Fairy Lover' has already enchanted the mortal men with her eyes, a 'love trance'³³ in Keats's, 'glamoured by spell-craft'³⁴ in Johnson's, marriage is now what both men desire. Foreshadowing dark things to come, Ortho and Setareh marry while surrounded by Setareh's unseen 'creatures of night-life'³⁵ atop the ruin of the Fairy Tree that Ortho had recently destroyed.

In Keats's 'Lamia,' his 'Fairy Lover' somewhat plays the role of vampire, for during the wedding the true nature of the serpent-woman Lamia is revealed and the mortal man's arms become 'empty of delight' and, as if the prey of a vampire, his limbs are drained of life.³⁶ James Twitchell argues that through Keats's research of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) and elsewhere, one can see the poet's fascination with female vampires and how 'Lamia's physical description is strikingly similar to La Belle Dame's.'³⁷ Keats's 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' was written as a long journal letter in April 1819, the same month as Polidori's *The Vampyre* was published. Vampires being the rage of the period, it is thus not surprising to find similar features between Keats's female characters.

In 'La Belle Dame sans Merci', Keats's 'Fairy Lover' takes the mortal knight to her lair, her 'elfin grot' of Mother Nature.³⁸ According to Twitchell,

vampires prefer to work in the dark; hence one of the folklore protections is to build a fire near where one sleeps. Vampires don't fear the heat but are terrified by light. This may be partly why La Belle Dame takes the knight to the dark grotto.³⁹

Johnson reverses this in his poem. Instead, it is the 'Fairy Lover' that is taken to the mortal male's lair, 'Ortho's pretentious home'⁴⁰ which is 'tasteless', with 'wasted space',⁴¹ and an abomination of Nature. It also contains an invitation to allow the vampire in, a plot device present in other vampire texts such as Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Carmilla' (1872) or Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Lord Ortho's invitation, though, constitutes a double danger: apart from a vampire attack, the fairy is linked to the hawthorn tree. As Helen Frisby explains, according to British folklore, especially in England, "'to bring May in'" to the home was to invite death in.⁴² The 'May' refers to the common hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, which Johnson draws attention to in the aforementioned line of 'mayflower blooms'.⁴³

The poet depicts sympathy towards the fairy/vampire throughout his poem, as she is the victim of deforestation and the attack on the matriarchy that Mother Nature represents. Thus her attack on the human is justified. Lord Ortho's pompous house serves to promote artificiality versus the purity of the forest.

In both poems, the mortal men are both lulled to sleep and both of them dream. These are warning dreams of the 'Fairy Lover' who has ensnared them. The ghostly kings

and warriors in Keats's poem cry out, 'La Belle Dame sans Merci hath thee in thrall!'⁴⁴ The warning dream in Johnson's poem is more obscure, and it is clear that Ortho's dream is tintured with something more: opium nightmares.

Fairy Art: The Fragment of a Dream

In Part III of 'A Ride Through Faerie', Johnson gives us a glimpse into the 'poetry for artless dreams'⁴⁵ with which Setareh doses Ortho's tea in Part II. With the fairy's invitation to drink a poisoned beverage, Johnson echoes both the art of the British painter John Anster Fitzgerald (commonly nicknamed 'Fairy Fitzgerald') and several tales by the influential American Gothic author Edgar Allan Poe.

Johnson's lines, though colourful with 'emerald shadows'⁴⁶ and 'bluebells of changing sapphire',⁴⁷ are reminiscent of the nightmarish fairy paintings by Fitzgerald, likely born in 1819, the same year that Keats wrote both 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' and 'Lamia'. As Sugg writes, 'whether or not he himself took it, Fitzgerald certainly found this distinctive Victorian narcotic a potent source of subject-matter'.⁴⁸ In the first half of the 19th century in England, 'opium preparations were freely on sale to anyone who wanted to buy them, in any sort of shop'.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the situation changed when in 1868 the Pharmacy Act showed that there was a 'public health case of concern about the way in which opiates were used'.⁵⁰ This anxiety was triggered by, among other forces, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, which led to new types of employment and destroyed the landscape. This might explain why fairy paintings were so popular during the Victorian period, as they provided a means of escapism for the citizens.

Johnson absorbs Fitzgerald's essence, especially that of his painting *The Artist's Dream*, when he writes the following:

Then all busy life stopped,
And there was dead silence,
The air was cold and all eyes
Fixed upon the dreamer

All eyes were of emerald
Faceted with glamour,
They held dreams poetical
And visions phantasmal⁵¹

The hallucinatory atmosphere, with the opium-inspired sensations of 'mingling colors & music',⁵² echoes Jeremy Maas, who was honoured with a fairy painting exhibition after his death in 1997.⁵³ Maas wrote that 'opium dreams tended to intensify colours: reds became redder; darkening to maroons and blood crimsons . . . yellows became yellower and more luminescent'.⁵⁴

This delirious ambiance was mastered by Edgar Allan Poe, especially in his tales in which women returned from their deaths to seek revenge against male characters who had wronged them. 'While Fitzgerald might therefore be seen to have alchemized fairy glories from both the drugs of the East and the modern innovations of industry', there is a huge debate about the possible addictions Poe may have suffered.⁵⁵ From his alcoholic abuse to his alleged opium dependence, Poe's biography has gained the attention of some scholars; thus, 'George E. Woodberry's 1885 biography that claimed Poe "ate opium and drank liquor" resulted in a rebuttal from Poe's nemesis, Dr. Thomas Dunn English.'⁵⁶ Whatever the truth may be, Poe's horror stories 'Berenice' (1835), 'Morella' (1835), 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839), and 'Ligeia' (1838) depict disturbed narrators under the effects of drugs, and vampiric women who threaten them. I will focus on the latter tale in my comparison with Johnson's poem,

'Ligeia' is depicted as the opium-induced narration of a man in which he explains how his two wives, first Ligeia and then Lady Rowena, die. When the unfortunate second spouse expires, the unnamed narrator believes that she has returned from the dead but in the body of Ligeia. The narrator, who, after Ligeia's death had become 'a bounded slave in the trammels of opium,' and '[whose] labors and [whose] orders had taken a coloring from [his] dreams,' recalls her 'desire for life.'⁵⁷ As John R. Byers Jr describes it, 'as the fantasy corpse rises before him and the black hair falls free and the eyes open to reveal his new-found and vital Ligeia, the narrator shrieks, not because Ligeia has returned from the grave . . . but because Ligeia has never been dead at all.'⁵⁸ His horror at Ligeia's 'wild eyes' (also referred to before her death) when she revives, and the detailed attention to a specific room, namely the description of Ligeia's bride/death chamber, are alluded to in Johnson's poem.⁵⁹ Ligeia suffers a cataleptic seizure, which the narrator understands as her death, and he rapidly sends her to her grave. Likewise, Lord Ortho believes that his killing of the hawthorn tree will not bring about any consequences for him, and, like the unnamed narrator of 'Ligeia', comprehends the devastating significance of his misdeed only when it is too late.

In Poe's tale, the narrator idealises Ligeia; he 'lives tensely at the highest pitch of his passion and imagination.'⁶⁰ Lord Ortho similarly pursues an ethereal woman who ensnares him and who possesses vast knowledge, yet it is in his visions and delusions where he loses touch with his reality, again with allusions to opium. As James W. Gargano argues, 'in her effect upon her lover, Ligeia has the combined force of Keats's nightingale, Grecian urn, La Belle Dame Sans Merci or Lamia.'⁶¹ It is thus not surprising that Johnson also chooses to echo Poe in his poem, since all the male characters struggle to possess a female fairy/vampire who escapes them. Nevertheless, Johnson opts to give Lord Ortho the momentary bliss the knights of 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' and 'Lamia' experience, and not the brooding melancholy Poe's narrator suffers.

This short happiness ends when Ortho awakens, and Johnson's poem focuses on the Fairy Queen's retaliation. In the last section of my analysis, I will clarify how the fairy's revenge is clearly drawn from sources in Irish literature and folklore.

Fairy Revenge: Lord Ortho Awakens

In the final part of 'A Ride Through Faerie,' Setareh exacts on Ortho what can only be described as 'Fairy Revenge'. As I mentioned in the first part of my essay, Donna L. Potts considers environmentalism as connected to fairies and a sense of Irish identity. The conviction that fairies and their supernatural habitat exist persists nowadays, as Patricia Monaghan explains:

Belief in fairy trees has not entirely died out in Ireland. In 1999 a famous fairy thorn tree in County Clare gained worldwide attention when a local schoolmaster, Eddie Lenihan, waged a campaign to have a road redirected that would otherwise have been built over the grave of the tree.⁶²

One of the most famous writers who defended the real existence of fairies was William Butler Yeats. The poet, fascinated by Irish legends, fairy lore, mysticism and the occult, helped to promote both Ireland's Gaelic culture and the expansion of Irish nationalism. Yeats published *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, a collection of narratives from the 18th and 19th centuries, in 1888. Some years later, he was criticised for his volume *The Celtic Twilight* (1893), in which he collected instances of the oral tradition that Irish peasants had related to him about encounters with supernatural beings.

As Sinéad Garrigan Mattar argues, 'there is a remarkable consonance between Yeats's vision of human-fairy-environmental relation in the 1880s and 1890s and the recent redefinition of "animism" by social scientists.'⁶³ Edward Tylor coined the term 'animism' in his 1871 study *Primitive Culture* as 'the first stage in the development of religious thought: the stage at which "naturalism," an entirely materialist understanding of the world, was superseded by a stage in which souls and spirits were considered to play a part in the functioning of life.'⁶⁴ Tylor examined cultures in their ethnographic sense, including their morality; he analysed the development from 'primitive' societies to civilised states. For Yeats, folklore had a value not 'as a specimen or a "survival" of savage culture, but as a continually revivifying source', and by his use of comparative anthropology, he could verify the cultural authenticity of his studies.⁶⁵

Johnson introduces an awareness of ecophobia against the supernatural kingdom of the fairies when Lord Ortho awakens:

Yet his waking dream was not all a dream,
For his new wife is gone, and in her place
Slithers a sickly serpent, moon-cancer pale,
Uncoiling upon a severed bluebell

Consumed by fear & rage & embarrassment
He goes to find his axe to kill the serpent—
But when he returns the serpent has vanished
And the bluebell now has a stem of silver glass⁶⁶

In these lines, Johnson repeats the fact that Ortho intends an attack with an axe, thus echoing the beginning of the poem. By Setareh's abandoning the knight while he is drugged, the reader understands that she is planning her revenge. Johnson's final stanzas, which I will turn to shortly, depict her retribution in the folkloric tradition that Lady Jane Wilde, mother of Oscar Wilde, described in her book *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland* (1887).

In the piece 'Fairy Nature' from her collection, Wilde writes that fairies want

quiet possession of the rath and the hill and the ancient hawthorn
trees that have been theirs from time immemorial, and where
they lead a joyous life with music and dance, and charming little
suppers of the nectar of flowers, . . . lit by the diamonds that
stud the rocks.⁶⁷

In another tale, 'The Fairies' Revenge', Wilde describes the revenge the fairies take on a farmer named Johnstone for building a house on a fairy spot and 'cutting down the hawthorn bush'.⁶⁸ The fairies repossess their land, but only after the farmer 'ceased to mind his farm, and the crops went to ruin and the cattle died, and finally, before a year and a day were over, he was laid in the grave by the side of his little son; and the land passed into other hands, and as no one would live in the house it was pulled down'.⁶⁹ This story, which clearly exemplifies the fairies' vendetta against the mortal man, refers to the supernatural beings' 'ancient rights and possessions and privileges'.⁷⁰

Similarly, in Johnson's poem, the mortal Lord Ortho is seriously injured. Setareh's 'Fairy Revenge' is centuries in the making. Employing the idea that time passes differently in Fairie, Setareh crushes Ortho's spirit by showing him the ruin of his home that is now 'nature-taken by centuries of time'.⁷¹ Before Ortho 'withers away to bone-dust'⁷² and dies, she ironically asks him if he remembers the hawthorn tree that he destroyed, which has now grown back in full. Most fittingly, Johnson ends his poem with the 'Fairy Lover' Setareh's 'Fairy Revenge':

We were married two hundred years ago this very night,
Within my own moonlight, consumed by a single beam—
Haunted were the visions & shadows of your waking dream,
Though my names are many, kneel to me as your Faerie Queen.⁷³

With this ending, Johnson illustrates Elizabeth Parker's concept of the forest being 'sentient'. He encourages us to consider the interconnections between the 'human' and 'non-human' that Parker describes. While Lord Ortho embodies 'our exploitation of the Earth, using its forests for our own self-serving material and recreational desires', the Faerie Queen personifies a forest in pain, destroyed by humankind as was the Amazon rainforest in 2019.⁷⁴

Conclusion

In this essay, I have argued that Clay F. Johnson's poem, in his poem 'A Ride Through Faerie', has made use of ideas from and has been influenced by the concept of 'Gothic Faerie'. Much of this, as I have pointed out, stems from Johnson's interests in 19th-century authors and artists such as John Keats, Lady Wilde, Edgar Allan Poe, and John Anster Fitzgerald.

By analysing the four distinct parts of Johnson's poem, I have drawn attention to the fairy folklore, particularly in connection with the Irish tradition and mythology as it pertains to the magical belief system around the hawthorn tree, including the dire consequences suffered for cutting one down; the view of the fairy as a sort of vampire as it relates to the seductive and alluring 'Fairy Lover'; the use of a poisonous opium elixir to depict hallucinatory narrations and nightmarish dreamscapes; and the singular 'Fairy Revenge' from the Fairy Queen herself showing that, against the sublimity of nature, man will always lose.

Johnson's poem, enraged and inspired by the Amazon wildfires of 2019, emphasises the concept of 'Gothic Faerie', using tropes and ideas from Gothic literature and connecting them to a darker fairy realm of supernatural enchantment. The luring and glamouring of men, as in poems such as John Keats's 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' and 'Lamia,' is repurposed in Johnson's verse as a means to explore ecophobia and depict a feminist attitude towards the fairy/vampire. This poem is relevant, then, not only as adding to research in the concept of 'Gothic Faerie'; it is relevant to gender studies, and as a source for eco-Gothic scholarship of contemporary poetry. Much current eco-Gothic research tends to focus on contemporary novels and leaves poetry behind. Therefore, by analysing Johnson's poem, my objective is threefold: creating a link with the still new and budding scholarship of 'Gothic Faerie', pointing out the important connection in 'A Ride Through Faerie' to 19th-century authors and artists and their continued relevance in today's literary world, and, lastly, introducing contemporary poetry as a relevant and interesting subject as it pertains to eco-Gothic studies and related fields of research.

.....

Tatiana Fajardo

Notes

1. Clay F. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', in *Enchanted Conversation: A Fairy Tale Magazine*, 227-8, <https://www.fairytalemagazine.com/2019/09/poetry-showcase-ride-through-faerie-by.htm>, accessed 15 February 2021.
2. Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, no. 419 (1712), Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/12030/12030-h/SV3/Spectator3.html#section419>, accessed 15 July 2021.
3. Clay F. Johnson, 'A Brief Opening to Writings and Ramblings' (2019), Clay F. Johnson, <https://www.clayfjohnson.com/writings/opening-post>, accessed 20 February 2021.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. Fen Montaigne, 'Will Deforestation and Warming Push the Amazon to a Tipping Point?', *YaleEnvironment360*, 4 September 2019, <https://e360.yale.edu/features/will-deforestation-and-warming-push-the-amazon-to-a-tipping-point>, accessed 9 March 2021.
7. Elizabeth Parker, *The Forest and the EcoGothic: The Deep Dark Woods in the Popular Imagination* (London: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 71.
8. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 1.
9. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', lines 2-3.
10. David Del Principe, 'Introduction: The EcoGothic in the Long Nineteenth Century', *Gothic Studies* 16, no. 1 (2014): 1-8 (1).
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', lines 61-4.
14. Richard Sugg, *Fairies: A Dangerous History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2018), 138.
15. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 33.
16. Donna L. Potts, *Contemporary Irish Writing and Environmentalism: The Wearing of the Deep Green* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 1.
17. Potts, *Contemporary Irish Writing*, 5.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Susan S. Eberly, 'A Thorn among the Lilies: The Hawthorn in Medieval Love Allegory', *Folklore* 100, no. 1 (1989): 41-52 (41).
20. *Ibid.*
21. Grace Patrick-West, 'The Realm of Faeries: Queerness and Neurodivergence in Jane Eyre', *Central College* (2021), <https://central.edu/writing-anthology/2021/04/13/the-realm-of-faeries-queerness-and-neurodivergence-in-jane-eyre/>, accessed 17 July 2021.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Carole G. Silver, *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 102.
24. Susan S. Eberly, 'A Thorn among the Lilies: The Hawthorn in Medieval Love Allegory', *Folklore* 100, no. 1 (1989): 41-52 (46).
25. Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Encyclopedia of Gothic Literature* (New York: Facts on File, 2005), 120.
26. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 100.
27. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 102.
28. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 103.
29. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 104.
30. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 99.
31. Patricia Monaghan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore* (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 174.
32. Carol A. Senf, 'Daughters of Lilith: Women Vampires in Popular Literature', in *The Blood is the Life: Vampires in Literature*, ed. Leonard G. Heldreth and Mary Pharr (Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999), 199-216 (200).
33. John Keats, 'Lamia', in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt, 6th edn (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 798-813 (812), line 241.

34. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 143.
35. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 167.
36. Keats, 'Lamia', 813, line 307.
37. James Twitchell, 'La Belle Dame as Vampire', *CEA Critic* 37, no. 4 (1975): 31-3 (31).
38. John Keats, 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci: A Ballad', in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 787-8 (787)*, line 29.
39. Twitchell, 'La Belle Dame as Vampire', 32.
40. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 173.
41. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 174.
42. Helen Frisby, 'Them Owls Know': Portending Death in Later Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century England', *Folklore* 126, no. 2 (2015): 196-214 (203).
43. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 33; Frisby, 'Them Owls Know', 211.
44. Keats, 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci: A Ballad', lines 39-40.
45. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 180.
46. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', lines 193-4.
47. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 199.
48. Sugg, *Fairies: A Dangerous History*, 198.
49. Virginia Berridge, 'Victorian Opium Eating: Responses to Opiate Use in Nineteenth-Century England', *Victorian Studies* 21, no. 4 (1978): 437-61 (438).
50. Berridge, 'Victorian Opium Eating', 442.
51. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', lines 217-24.
52. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 188.
53. The English art dealer and historian was an expert in Victorian painting, and his gallery, the Maas Gallery, revived interest in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.
54. Jeremy Maas, quoted in Sugg, *Fairies: A Dangerous History*, 199.
55. Sugg, *Fairies*, 200.
56. Maria Nayef, 'Review', *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 14, no. 1 (2013): 79-90 (84).
57. Edgar Allan Poe, 'Ligeia', in *Edgar Allan Poe: Selected Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 26-39 (33, 31).
58. John R. Byers, 'The Opium Chronology of Poe's "Ligeia"', *South Atlantic Bulletin* 45, no. 1 (1980): 40-6 (44).
59. Poe, 'Ligeia', 39.
60. James W. Gargano, 'Poe's "Ligeia": Dream and Destruction', *College English* 23, no. 5 (1962): 337-42 (339).
61. *Ibid.*
62. Monaghan, *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore*, 179.
63. Sinéad Garrigan Mattar, 'Yeats, Fairies, and the New Animism', *New Literary History* 43, no. 1 (2012): 137-57 (138).
64. *Ibid.*
65. Mattar, 'Yeats, Fairies, and the New Animism', 144, 146.
66. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', lines 250-7.
67. Lady Wilde, 'Fairy Nature', in *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms & Superstitions of Ireland* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1919), 142, Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/61436/61436-h/61436-h.htm>, accessed 13 March 2021.
68. Wilde, 'The Fairies' Revenge', in *Ancient Legends*, 46.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.*
71. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 294.
72. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', line 301.
73. Johnson, 'A Ride Through Faerie', lines 310-14.
74. Parker, *The Forest and the EcoGothic*, 73.