



Carl Friedrich Hampe,  
'Knight's Castle in the Moonlight' (1817).

# Fairies in Ann Radcliffe's 'The Glow-worm': The communal aspect of art

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**T**he present paper focuses on the fairies in the poem 'The Glow-worm' in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). The novel abounds in poems; their presence in the subtitle *A Romance, Interspersed With Some Pieces of Poetry* suggests their importance and their integral role in the entirety of the novel, yet the main body of literary criticism omits them from the analysis of the novel. I approach 'The Glow-worm' from the perspective of Radcliffe's ideas on the supernatural as detailed in her posthumous dialogue, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' (1826). In the dialogue, Mr W expresses the notion that people who are characterised by sensibility are able to communicate with each other through their works of art and form a community. Ingrid Horrocks noticed that a similar notion is present in the way Radcliffe's heroines compose poems, by drawing from a shared consciousness which includes past and present British literary figures and the nature that they are all part of.<sup>1</sup>

In this essay I argue that the fairies in the poem 'The Glow-worm' are depicted as a community of artists and their dance as an active creation and appreciation of art. I will build on Mr W's ideas to show how the poem associates sensibility with poetic affinity and the ability to experience the supernatural in the metaphorical discussion of the fairies in the dialogue which introduces the poem, and in the character of the fairies themselves in the poem. I will also demonstrate how the poem expresses Emily's own anxieties about becoming and being accepted as a poet.

## The posthumous dialogue

'On the Supernatural in Poetry' was published three years after Radcliffe's death, in 1826 in the *New Monthly Magazine*, and consists of a dialogue between two characters from the frame narrative of Radcliffe's novel *Gaston de Blondville* (1826). The title was given to the text by the *Magazine*, as is explained in the footnote:

Having been permitted to extract the above eloquent passages from the manuscripts of the author of the 'Mysteries of Udolpho,' we have given this title to them, though certainly they were not

intended by the writer to be offered as a formal or deliberate essay, under this, or any other denomination. They were, originally, part of an INTRODUCTION, to the Romance, or Phantasie, which is about to appear. The discussion is supposed to be carried on by two travellers in Shakspeare's native county, Warwickshire.<sup>2</sup>

This discussion is not repeated in the novel; instead, the following words mark its absence: 'Here ensued a conversation on illusions of the imagination and on the various powers of exciting them, shown by English poets, especially by Shakespeare and Milton, which it is unnecessary to repeat in this place.'<sup>3</sup> The decision to extract the more theoretical part of the introduction was probably made by Henry Colburn, publisher of the novel *Gaston de Blondeville* and co-founder of the *New Monthly Magazine*. According to Radcliffe's biographer Thomas Noon Talfourd, the novel was likely written during the winter of 1802, after Radcliffe's visit to Kenilworth Castle, which serves as the location of both the frame narrative and the body of the novel itself.<sup>4</sup> If we accept Talfourd's estimation, that constitutes a five-year gap between her last published novel *The Italian* (1797) and the composition of *Gaston de Blondeville* with the dialogue in its Introduction. This gap is longer than Radcliffe's usual maximum of three years between publishing her novels, but it still puts her dialogue in a context closer to the novels published in her lifetime, in contrast to the year 1826 in which *Gaston* was published.

The discussion in 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' was therefore not intended as a philosophical treatise. It is characterised by a free association of ideas, expressed by Mr W (in the novel, Mr Willoughton) to his friend. Mr W has a vast knowledge of literature and regards himself as an expert on taste, and he talks about English literary figures whose works he admires. He speaks about literature to his friend Mr S (in the novel, Mr Simpson), who is, in contrast, represented as a man who is usually more interested in dinner than in literature. Both Mr W's opinion in the extracted dialogue and his behaviour illustrate his expertise, which serves as a model on how to receive the body of the novel. Nevertheless, as it was removed from the novel, in the reception of Radcliffe it has been treated as a separate work. In David Sandner's 2004 edited collection, it is included among such works as 'The Fairy Way of Writing' (1712) by Joseph Addison and 'On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition' (1827) by Walter Scott.<sup>5</sup> It is regarded as Radcliffe's *ars poetica* by many scholars, such as Dale Townshend, who makes assumptions about Radcliffe's ideas on Shakespeare based on 'On the Supernatural in Poetry'.<sup>6</sup> Angela Wright points out that the 'attendant circumstances'<sup>7</sup> that Mr W talks about in the dialogue, where Radcliffe is retrospectively articulating her artistic principles, are already present in the supernatural scenes in novels written earlier such as *The Italian* (1797).<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Nelson C. Smith looks to the dialogue as a source to learn more about Radcliffe's attitude towards sensibility.<sup>9</sup> Robert Miles calls the dialogue the aesthetic justification of Radcliffe's art, and relies on

Mr W's distinction between terror and horror in the dialogue to differentiate between Radcliffe's and Matthew Lewis's Gothic styles.<sup>10</sup> I agree that Mr W's views articulate an aesthetic which she employed in the earlier novels, including *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). More specifically, I will show how the poem 'The Glow-worm' illustrates one of the key points Mr W also makes.

Speaking of Shakespeare, Mr W raises an elaborate rhetorical question to start off his literary musings:

'Where is now the undying spirit,' said he, 'that could so exquisitely perceive and feel?—that could inspire itself with the various characters of this world, and create worlds of its own; to which the grand and the beautiful, the gloomy and the sublime of visible Nature, up-called not only corresponding feelings, but passions'.<sup>11</sup>

Even though Mr W talks about a literary figure, he uses the vocabulary of religion to express Shakespeare's superiority over the common people and even other poets. Shakespeare is thus removed from the field of literature and held up as an embodiment of a system of beliefs. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson note that in the 18th century, Shakespeare's name was the focal point of an emerging aesthetic which favoured genius and imagination. Edward Young, Horace Walpole, and Richard Hurd all offered a distinctively 18th-century perspective of Shakespeare's work, thus establishing a new aesthetic.<sup>12</sup> Mr W talks about Shakespeare's 'undying spirit' and he endows Shakespeare with a creative power similar to that of God. Radcliffe's choice of words when talking about Shakespeare was characteristic of the period.<sup>13</sup> Pope called Shakespeare 'divine', and Samuel Johnson used the word 'immortal'.<sup>14</sup> In his *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809), William Godwin also toys with the idea that long-dead literary figures such as Shakespeare or Milton are emancipated from mortality.<sup>15</sup>

Terry Castle demonstrates that, during the Enlightenment, ghosts became internalised; they were absorbed into the world of thought.<sup>16</sup> Writing about Radcliffe's most famous novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, she draws attention to the emotional power of the novel to show that it results in displacing the supernatural into everyday life.<sup>17</sup> Through sensibility, the mental image or spiritual essence of a person becomes more important than the corporeal reality, so both living and dead people can be unchangingly preserved in one's imagination.<sup>18</sup>

As Castle points out, this phenomenon is conveyed by the very language of the novel; she gives the example of Emily's and Valancourt's wedding, which takes place in an 'enchanted palace'.<sup>19</sup> A similar method is used in the essay 'On the Supernatural in Poetry': using the rhetoric of religion, Radcliffe makes a connection between poetic creativity and the supernatural. Later in the dialogue, Radcliffe makes this connection more explicit:

'I am speaking of the only real witch—the witch of the poet; and all our notions and feelings connected with terror accord with his.'<sup>20</sup> Here, Mr W links poetic creativity to the supernatural and also associates both with the feeling of terror, which Edmund Burke had identified as the key component of the sublime.<sup>21</sup> Mr W attributes great prestige to this kind of literature:

all these are circumstances which the deepest sensibility only could have suggested, and which, if you read them a thousand times, still continue to affect you almost as much as at first. I thrill with delightful awe, even while I recollect and mention them, as instances of the exquisite art of the poet.<sup>22</sup>

Sensibility was a broad term in the 18th century; its meaning included a belief in natural goodness and compassion and was associated with the cult of feeling.<sup>23</sup> In Radcliffe's novels, sensibility is closely linked with poetic creativity, especially in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, in which the heroine Emily composes many poems that serve as signs of her exquisite sensibility. Mr W also makes this connection in the dialogue: the greatness of the ghost scene in *Hamlet* is evidence of Shakespeare's own 'deepest sensibility', and it is this sensibility which enables him to produce such high-quality literature that can be read with pleasure over and over again.

Sensibility also enables people to establish emotional connections with each other. Mr W implies that those who possess sensibility can both produce valuable literature and enjoy such literary works, and so they share a valuable aesthetic experience through literature. Mr W refers to this understanding between poets and readers later as well: when speaking of the importance of the attendant circumstances, he remarks that 'this must immediately be understood by those who have bowed the willing soul to the poet.'<sup>24</sup>

Through such a deep experience of literary works, the reader may feel a connection with the author that is both voluntary and overwhelming ('bowed the willing soul to the poet'). According to Mr W, a poet himself is characterised by 'the soul of poetry',<sup>25</sup> which he finds difficult to define, but it seems to entail the ability to have a lasting effect on the reader. The readers who possess sensibility can fully understand such a poet's works, and so they can join him in the aesthetic experience. The supernatural aspect of this inference is that great poets who are deceased can still communicate through their writings (Mr W lists Shakespeare, Milton, Thomas Gray, William Collins, and James Thomson). This connection might seem one-sided, yet Mr W's choice of words (such as 'undying spirit') and his enthusiasm imply the continuing existence of the author and thus the possibility of a more active connection between author and reader.

In her dialogue, Radcliffe uses the words 'poets' and 'poetry', but their meaning is extended to other forms of art: her chief examples are Shakespeare's dramas, but she applies very similar notions to reflect on her own novels as well. Music can also be included

in this discussion, as there are plenty of examples in Radcliffe's works which emphasise the power of music to affect the listener, such as the seduction scene in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), or Radcliffe's posthumously published long poem *Salisbury Plains* (1826), in which a druid triumphs over an evil wizard through the power of music.<sup>26</sup> A shared understanding between poets and readers is also indicated in the poem 'The Glow-worm', which itself is highly musical, having 'a sort of tripping measure', as Emily says before she recites it to St Aubert. Indeed, St Aubert's words on fairies and glow-worms may be taken as foreshadowing the interdependence of words and music in the poem: 'The Glow-worm lends his light, and they in return charm him with music, and the dance.'<sup>27</sup> Artist and audience are also bound together by a 'charm': the poem is introduced through Emily's conversation with St Aubert, a true man of sensibility, whose fanciful ideas seem to have been 'anticipated' by her in the poem ('I have anticipated you' – she tells him before the recital), and who sinks into a deep reverie after hearing it.<sup>28</sup>

Sensibility enables people to properly appreciate works of art through emotional connection and common understanding with the author. Moreover, sensibility also enables people to produce art which is appreciated by others who possess sensibility as well, forming a community. Mr W's idea of the connection between poets and readers embodies a community of artists.

### The reception of Radcliffe's poetry

In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Emily composes many poems which are included in the novel, along with those composed by her suitor Valancourt, and during their travels they spend much time reading poetry together. In *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline catches the eye of her future suitor Theodore when she is reciting poetry and Theodore makes a favourable impression on Adeline by appreciating the poem. Nathaniel Paradise notes that, beginning with Charlotte Smith, there was a tendency in the final decade of the 18th century to include poems in novels. He also remarks that in all these works poetic creativity is a sign of the heroine's sensibility and so of her worth in the world of the novel.<sup>29</sup> Poetry shows that the heroine would be deemed worthy by Mr W to join in the community of artists.

As with her novels, Radcliffe's poems often featured the supernatural by invoking the same kind of atmosphere that Mr W values so much in Shakespeare's plays. The following stanza is from *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), from a poem titled 'Evening', which describes the change from day to night:

Still through the deep'ning gloom of bow'ry shades  
To Fancy's eye fantastic forms appear;  
Low whispering echoes steal along the glades  
And thrill the ear with wildly-pleasing fear.<sup>30</sup>

Here, the twilight creates an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere, in which a personified Fancy is identified as the source of the supernatural. Fear constitutes an important element of this atmosphere and receives the adjunct 'wildly-pleasing'. Charlotte Smith invokes a similar atmosphere in her *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784), for example in 'Sonnet XXXII To Melancholy'. In this poem, the speaker takes on the role of the literary genius and meets the ghost of the poet and dramatist Thomas Otway.<sup>31</sup> In 'The Glow-worm', Radcliffe portrays the supernatural as an aesthetic expression of poetic genius.

The communal aspect of Radcliffe's poetry is noticed by Horrocks, who writes that, in her novels, reading and quoting poetry constitute a form of communication, linking the minds of the reader and the poet.<sup>32</sup> This concept echoes Mr W's description of the connection between author and reader: Horrocks also emphasises the emotional aspect of this connection: in experiencing poetry the reader believed that they experienced the same feelings as the poet. This touches upon some of the central issues of the philosophy of sensibility as developed earlier in the 18th century. In his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), David Hume establishes both the individuality and the social nature of human emotions. He also claims that feelings are trans-subjective entities that pass between people, almost as if by contagion, calling the movement of feeling between people 'sympathy'.<sup>33</sup>

Horrocks also argues that, when the heroine Emily composes a poem, it is described as involving a lack of agency on her part, whereby instead 'her ideas arranged themselves'. This indicates a way of composition in which Emily draws from a shared consciousness she is part of.<sup>34</sup> Horrocks interprets the frequency of the quotations in certain parts of the novel as Radcliffe's own practice of drawing from a shared consciousness.<sup>35</sup> The idea that the source of poetic inspiration is something greater than the poet themselves, or that it even originated in dreams, was popular around the same time. This is how Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) – which is regarded as the first Gothic novel – was said to have been written and this is also how Samuel Taylor Coleridge claimed to have composed his *Kubla Khan* (1797; published 1816).

Nathaniel Paradise draws attention to the solitary nature of experiencing poetry. He points out that, in *Udolpho*, poems are written in solitude and in response to emotional stimuli as a natural product of the meditation of the poetic soul.<sup>36</sup> Bearing this in mind, the poetic experience seems to be characterised by both a sense of solitude and a sense of community. This duality is present in 'The Glow-worm' as well. Community is provided by shared understanding with literary figures – both long deceased and contemporary but absent. Deidre Lynch connects this sense of community to the then emerging nationalism as well as sentimentalism: mourning and loving long-dead British literary figures strengthened national unity, which in consequence brought the sense of community.<sup>37</sup> The reverence towards the dead authors appealed to the need for melancholy, which was characteristic of sentimentalism.

### The fairies in 'The Glow-worm'

The poem 'The Glow-worm' appears early in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, in the very first chapter. The heroine Emily is still living with her parents in La Vallée, and Radcliffe dedicates a great length of the first volume to the introduction of her character, her poem contributing to this purpose. 'The Glow-worm' is composed by Emily, and it serves to demonstrate her poetic creativity and thus her sensibility, similarly to the practice noticed by Paradise in Charlotte Smith.<sup>38</sup>

This poem is the very first of the many poems written by Emily in the novel. She is unsure of her poetic skills, and shows the poem to her father, asking for his opinion. In this scene, before mentioning the poem, Emily and her father are walking in the woods, and nature inspires them to experience aesthetic pleasure, which entails intimations of the supernatural:

'The evening gloom of woods was always delightful to me,' said St. Aubert ... 'in my youth this gloom used to call forth to my fancy a thousand fairy visions, and romantic images; and, I own, I am not yet wholly insensible of that high enthusiasm, which wakes the poet's dream.

'O my dear father, ... how exactly you describe what I have felt so often, and which I thought nobody had ever felt but myself! ... Now the breeze swells again. It is like the voice of some supernatural being — the voice of the spirit of the woods, that watches over them by night. Ah! what light is yonder? But it is gone. And now it gleams again, near the root of that large chestnut: look, sir!'

'Are you such an admirer of nature,' said St. Aubert, 'and so little acquainted with her appearances as not to know that for the glow-worm? But come,' added he gaily, 'step a little further, and we shall see fairies, perhaps; they are often companions. The glow-worm lends his light, and they in return charm him with music, and the dance. Do you see nothing tripping yonder?'<sup>39</sup>

The passage confirms Terry Castle's point that Radcliffe incorporated the supernatural into the everyday world of the characters.<sup>40</sup> Emily and her father hear the breeze and see the light of the glow-worm, and they are aware that they are part of the natural world, yet they choose to experience them as if they were supernatural for an aesthetic purpose. Their behaviour mirrors that of Mr W in 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' in making a connection between the supernatural and the aesthetic experience



of poetry. This connection is also present in Joseph Addison's term (borrowed from John Dryden) 'the fairy way of writing', denoting literature which includes the supernatural and gives it prestige through its connection to the creative imagination.<sup>41</sup> The fairies themselves are literally invoked by St Aubert, who finds the evening woods a fitting place for them.

This is the first time Emily shows somebody a poem that she has written and she is anxious for her father's opinion. Before she starts the recital, her father says, 'let us hear what vagaries fancy has been playing in your mind. If she has given you one of her spells, you need not envy those of the fairies.' St Aubert's comment is meant both as a reassurance and a joke. He encourages Emily not to be afraid to show him her poem and does this by referring to the idea (as described by Horrocks) that in the process of composition the role of the poet might well be negligible. If fancy has given Emily 'one of her spells' (that is, if Emily is a true poet), then she does not need to fear criticism because the poetic inspiration will guarantee the quality of the poem. This need not be serious work, but something in keeping with the nature of fancy herself, who 'has been playing in [her] mind'. Even though he jokes about the fairies (there are no real fairies in the novel, except for the ones in Emily's poem), the phrasing evokes a version of the supernatural, exemplifying Mr W's association between poetic creativity and the preternatural in 'On the Supernatural in Poetry'.

The poem itself is long, and even though it is predominantly lyrical, it narrates the story of the glow-worm and the fairies. The details are rather vague and the focus is on the subjective feelings of the characters and the relationships between them. It builds on the legend mentioned by St Aubert that fairies dance their enchanting dance in a ring by the light of a glow-worm. According to legend, humans can also observe the fairies' dance, and sometimes they can even join them.<sup>42</sup> Radcliffe adopts the legend as the basis of her narrative but presents it with a strong focus on emotions and artistic creativity. In her poem, the traveller is lost, and the glow-worm wishes to guide him to the fairies. The poem also evokes Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the drama, just as in the poem, the magical world of the faeries coexists with the everyday world of people, and the fairies have the ability to charm people.

The fairies are described as preternatural creatures who spend their time dancing to a magical music. The description signals both how attuned they are to nature and how desirable their world is:

But sweeter, sweeter still, when the sun sinks to rest,  
And twilight comes on, with the fairies so gay  
Tripping through the forest-walk, where flow'rs, unprest,  
Bow not their tall heads beneath their frolic play.  
To music's softest sounds they dance away the hour.<sup>43</sup>

The scene is a forest in the evening, the same as the one Emily and St Aubert are in when Emily is reciting her poem to her father. During their talk, Emily and St Aubert associated the scene with fairies as an expression of their own desire of experiencing aesthetic pleasure. In the poem, the aesthetic potential is realised in a supernatural phenomenon, as the fairies appear in the forest. In the poem, the pleasure of observing their dance is a possibility for the traveller; as the fairies spend their time dancing in the forest, one only needs to look for them. At the same time, they hide from humans, so the traveller in the poem has as little chance of finding them as Emily and St Aubert in the novel.

The dance of the fairies is a community of artists. Even though the fairies are not poets or novelists, their existence and mode of life are the embodiment of art. By dancing together to the same music, they are receivers of art and they also perform the art of dancing. They sympathetically feel the feelings inspired by the music and express themselves through movement. Those who pass Mr W's test of sensibility can appreciate their dance as a form of art. Moreover, as there are many of them, they form a community, which is desirable for the lone artist.

In the poem, the glow-worm is the narrator who introduces the fairies to the reader. The glow-worm displays both sympathy and an affinity for sensibility because it is able to appreciate the fairies' dance. According to the legend, it takes part in the dance of the fairies by giving them light. The glow-worm emphasises how much the fairies need its light when the sky is dark:

When, down among the mountains, sinks the ev'ning star,  
And the changing moon forsakes this shadowy sphere,  
How cheerless would they be, tho' they fairies are,  
If I, with my pale light, came not near!<sup>44</sup>

The poem focuses on the disagreement between the fairies and the glow-worm and its emotional consequences for the title character. The glow-worm is an advocate of community and it wants others to share in the experience, and so it leads people to the fairies. However, the fairies want to hide from the people and, to achieve this, they exclude even the glow-worm from their circle. The fairies are motivated by the same sympathy that urges the glow-worm to include people in the experience, but they feel sympathy towards the nightingale when they hear her song:

Then no more they dance, till her sad song is done,  
But, silent as the night, to her mourning attend;  
And often as her dying notes their pity have won,  
They vow all her sacred haunts from mortals to defend.<sup>45</sup>

The melodious song of the nightingale has been praised by many poets, among them Charlotte Smith, Coleridge and John Keats. Milton called it the 'most musical' and the 'most melancholy'. In ancient Greek and Roman poetry, it was regarded as the symbol of elegy.<sup>46</sup> Through the Philomela myth, it has been associated with the expression of female suffering. Radcliffe leaves the details of the nightingale's song vague, but judging from the reaction of the fairies, the song is so beautiful that they stop dancing to better be able to listen to it. The nightingale sings about sorrow, and thus wins the sympathy of the fairies. They decide not to let people into their charmed circle in order to protect the nightingale and help relieve her pain. The artistic representation of the nightingale's sadness affects them as much as their own dance affects the glow-worm and the people. In emphasising the importance of the experience itself, Radcliffe may have been influenced by Charlotte Smith's poetry. Smith describes the impression of listening to its song in the woods to demonstrate the superiority of the individual aesthetic experience.<sup>47</sup>

People who were unable to appreciate the magical world of the evening forest disrupted its order and caused harm to the nightingale. Consequently, the fairies decided to hide from the people. As they still dance during the nights, the possibility of finding them still exists. The challenge of finding the fairies gives people an opportunity to prove that they are worthy of joining their circle again: only those who pass the test of sensibility will be able to find the fairies and enjoy their dance.

As the glow-worm continues to lead people to the fairies, they put a spell on it to lead people astray instead and the fairy queen also excludes it from their circle. Even if the glow-worm is near the fairies, it will be unable to perceive their music and their dance: 'If I creep near yonder oak she will wave her fairy wand, / And to me the dance will cease, and the music all be mute.'<sup>48</sup> The fairy queen has the power to charm the audience of their dance, and she can also withdraw that charm. She has the power to decide how much effect she wants to have on the observers. In this aspect, she is similar to Emily who wishes to affect the reader with her poem. Talking about 'fancy', St Aubert tells her: 'If she has given you one of her spells, you need not envy those of the fairies.'<sup>49</sup> Emily wishes to possess the ability the fairy queen has: to be able to make an effect with her art.

What dominates the poem is the glow-worm's yearning, both for company and to be admitted into the community of artists. Paradise draws a parallel between the glow-worm and Emily: both have an innate power which is linked to sympathy.<sup>50</sup> Later in *Udolpho*, Emily chooses to help her aunt even though she did little to deserve it, and this selfless act of kindness defines Emily's character. Similarly, the glow-worm wishes to guide the travellers to the fairies to let them share the experience and suffers the fairy queen's displeasure for it. Another parallel is that both Emily and the glow-worm experience a temporary inability to appreciate art. In *Udolpho*, Emily's distress reaches a level which makes her unable to appreciate and find consolation in art and poetry.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, the glow-worm cannot perceive the fairies' dance while under the Fairy Queen's spell of expulsion.

The glow-worm is also a representation of Emily's poetic ambitions. As this is the first poem Emily shows somebody, it embodies her own wish to join the community of artists. Just as the glow-worm yearns for acceptance and inclusion into the fairies' circle, Emily yearns to be accepted as a poet. She chooses the world of the fairies as a frame in which she can express both her wish and her anxieties. Emily is equivalent to a traveller who is searching for the fairies in the forest – if she finds them, she will have proved her sensibility and that she can be called a poet. The difficulty of finding the fairies ensures that if Emily succeeds, her talent will not be questioned.

The poem ends on a hopeful note, with the possibility of the glow-worm's joining the fairies again. The lines describing their interdependence are repeated with a slight variation:

But soon the VAPOUR OF THE WOODS will wander afar,  
And the fickle moon will fade, and the stars disappear,  
Then, cheerless will they be, tho' they fairies are,  
If I, with my pale light, come not near!<sup>52</sup>

The fairies need the glow-worm's light for their dance, and the glow-worm wishes to join them by giving them its light. Compared to the light of the moon, the glow-worm's light is pale, but it comes from within, and it is able to substitute the moonlight. In a sense, it stands for the glow-worm's own poetic creativity.

Even though it suffers the Fairy Queen's injustice, the glow-worm still wishes to make it possible for them to dance. It is shown not as an outsider, but as someone who is inherently part of the community of artists and who has the capacity to meaningfully contribute to the art they perform. Similarly, Emily's poetic skills are not questioned in the novel, and they help her endure the hardships of her Gothic adventures.

## Conclusion

In her posthumous dialogue 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', Radcliffe invokes a communication between poets and readers through the act of reading and reciting poetry, and this communication is associated with the supernatural. Mr W believes that people who have sensibility have a poetic affinity as well, referred to as 'the soul of poetry'. Such people can communicate and exchange feelings with each other through the art they create. This communication between artists is also present in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, as Horrocks shows in her essay.

The poem 'The Glow-worm' is Emily's first poem in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and it is an important step in Emily's progress to become a poet. It builds on the legend of fairies dancing in a ring by the light of the glow-worm, and people finding and joining them. The fairies in the poem stand for the active creators and receivers of art. It describes the

fairies' dance as a community of artists which is desirable for the people and for the glow-worm as well. In the past people who did not possess sensibility were able to find the fairies, which is why they decided to hide from humans.

The glow-worm disagrees with the fairies' decision; it wants to share the aesthetic experience of the fairies' dance with the people, and so it leads travellers to the fairies. Consequently, the fairy queen excludes it from their circle. The glow-worm's unsatisfied yearning for the community of artists is depicted in the poem, with the hope of joining them in the future. The relationship between the glow-worm and the fairies is based on the similarity of their nature in possessing sensibility and on their mutual need for each other in order to perform the dance. The glow-worm's pain and yearning can stand for Emily's own in her ambition to become a poet.

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### Notes

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2. Ann Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', *New Monthly Magazine* (1826), 145-51 (145).
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5. David Sandner (ed.), *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004).
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7. Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', 7.
8. Angela Wright, 'In search of Arden: Ann Radcliffe's William Shakespeare', in *Gothic Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis and Dale Townshend (New York: Routledge, 2008), 111-30 (118).
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11. Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry', 145.
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16. Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 171.
17. Castle, *The Female Thermometer*, 124-5.
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