

THE WITCH AND THE DISSOLUTION OF THE HUMAN– NATURE DIVIDE: NARRATIVE ECOLOGIES AND THE FICTIONAL UNCANNY IN OTTESSA MOSHFEGH’S *LAPVONA*¹

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes *Lapvona* (2022) by Ottessa Moshfegh from the perspective of narrative ecologies and the field of the fictional uncanny. Through the character of Ina—accused of witchcraft and recognized for her embodied knowledge of plants, animals, and bodies—the study examines how the novel destabilizes the modern divide between humans and nature. Rather than presenting the uncanny as a supernatural intrusion, *Lapvona* articulates it as a perceptual intensification that reveals the material continuity among organisms, landscapes, and more-than-human forms of life. The analysis focuses on three dimensions: the materiality of bodies and fluids, abjection as a pathway to knowledge, and multisensoriality as a perceptual practice. Finally, the article argues that the figure of the witch functions as a narrative device that reinscribes the sacred within the shared materiality of the living world.

Keywords: Contemporary literature; eco-anxiety; horror, narrative ecologies; more-than-human relations; witchcraft.

LA BRUJA Y LA DISOLUCIÓN DE LA DIVISIÓN ENTRE HUMANO Y NATURALEZA: ECOLOGÍAS NARRATIVAS Y LO INSÓLITO FICCIONAL EN *LAPVONA*, DE OTTESSA MOSHFEGH

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza *Lapvona* (2022), de Ottessa Moshfegh, desde la perspectiva de las ecologías narrativas y del campo de lo insólito ficcional. A través del personaje de Ina —acusada de brujería y reconocida por sus saberes encarnados sobre plantas, animales y cuerpos— el estudio examina cómo la novela desestabiliza la división moderna entre lo humano y la naturaleza. En lugar de presentar lo insólito como una irrupción sobrenatural, *Lapvona* lo articula como una intensificación perceptiva que revela la continuidad material entre organismos, paisajes y formas de vida más-que-humanas. El análisis se concentra en tres dimensiones: la materialidad de los cuerpos y los fluidos, la abyección como vía de conocimiento y la multisensorialidad como práctica perceptiva. Finalmente,

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se argumenta que la figura de la bruja funciona como un dispositivo narrativo que reinscribe lo sagrado en la materialidad compartida del mundo vivo.

Palabras clave: Literatura contemporánea; eco-ansiedad; horror; ecologías narrativas; relaciones más-que-humanas; brujería.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a 2022 review published in *World Literature Today*, literary and cultural studies scholar Ashmita Chatterjee discusses Ottessa Moshfegh's novel *Lapvona* (2022). Reflecting on Ina, one of the novel's central characters, Chatterjee writes: "Ina, the eerie and supernaturally gifted village seer, shares a turbulent relationship with animals, which deteriorates from nurturing into terrifying" (59). In this article, I argue that, through this character, what initially appears uncanny may ultimately reveal itself as profoundly mundane. This reading suggests that it is precisely the fragile, intimate, and often overlooked relations of everyday life that sustain the fabric of life. Three aspects of Ina's character are particularly revealing: the accusations of witchcraft directed at her, the temporary recovery of her sight after episodes in which she drinks her own milk, and her knowledge of the natural world. The novel recounts that she lost her sight at the age of seventeen; however, around the age of forty, she began to produce milk and, by drinking it, was able to temporarily regain her vision.

This article argues that the witchcraft attributed to Ina in several passages of the novel is less a matter of the supernatural than an expression of a form of knowledge that reconnects with the natural world. Such knowledge calls into question the separation between humans and nature that modern science has sought to legitimize—not only through epistemic frameworks but also through forms of political and cultural violence. In this sense, the figure of the witch becomes a particularly productive entry point for thinking about the narrative ecology of *Lapvona*. In contemporary narratives of the uncanny, traditional figures from the marvelous imaginary—particularly the witch—have undergone a notable shift. Rather than embodying radical forms of alterity associated with the malign or the supernatural, they increasingly function as sites for ontological, perceptual, and affective exploration (Purkiss 2). This shift can also be understood in relation to a broader reconfiguration of the uncanny itself. Rather than appearing as the sudden intrusion of the strange, the uncanny comes closer to what Mark Fisher describes

as the eerie: a disturbance in the conditions of reality that renders visible what had previously remained hidden (61).

Lapvona offers fertile ground for reconsidering these transformations. By situating Ina within modes of relation where the human and the nonhuman do not appear as separate domains but as zones of contact, friction, and mutual implication, the novel resonates with contemporary perspectives that emphasize distributed agency and the co-constitution of the living. Because *Lapvona* was only recently published, the body of academic scholarship on the novel remains relatively limited. Nevertheless, a growing number of publications provide a useful overview of the principal interpretations that have emerged to date. Most of this literature, however, consists of critical reviews published in cultural magazines, newspapers, and specialized websites rather than sustained scholarly analyses of the novel as a whole or of its individual themes. As a result, many of these texts are not indexed in major academic databases, although they can still be located through academic search engines and specialized indexing services.

A search of JSTOR conducted in July 2026 yielded only five records, all of which proved to be duplicate entries of the same review by Ashmita Chatterjee rather than distinct publications. Beyond these results, one of the few references to *Lapvona* in the scholarly literature appears in Rhiannon Graybill's 2025 article, "A Cannibal Reading of the Hebrew Prophets," published in the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. Graybill examines sadism through what she calls the "prophetic corpus," focusing primarily on the Book of Jeremiah. Within this discussion, *Lapvona* is cited alongside several contemporary literary and cinematic works that employ cannibalism as a vehicle for horror and voyeuristic fascination with the suffering of others (297). These same concerns—cannibalism and religiosity—also dominate the existing reviews of the novel, which frequently highlight the significance of its medieval setting and Gothic atmosphere.

Instead of functioning as a symbolic residue of the medieval imaginary or as a contemporary reworking of the ecofeminist archetype, Ina destabilizes established categories and instead opens a field of intensities in which perception, matter, and vitality exceed the limits of modern subjectivity. Building on recent work on the uncanny across aesthetics, ecocriticism, and multispecies studies (Andersen 859; Fernando 569; Windsor 59), I use the term "fictional uncanny" to refer to a narrative mode that unsettles the ontological categories through which reality is conventionally organized. Rather than merely staging supernatural events or moments of cognitive hesitation, it reconfigures the

conditions under which agency, vitality, and relationality become intelligible, rendering perceptible forms of coexistence that exceed anthropocentric and secular understandings of the world. In doing so, it destabilizes modern distinctions such as human/nonhuman, natural/supernatural, and possible/impossible, opening narrative spaces in which heterogeneous forms of life participate in the production of meaning (Fernando 569). While Windsor locates the uncanny in the anxious uncertainty produced when an apparent impossibility unsettles the criteria through which reality itself is recognized (60), Andersen shows that its literary force resides less in isolated uncanny phenomena than in the transformation of an entire horizon of experience (860), allowing fiction to disclose otherwise imperceptible modes of being-in-the-world.

Taken together, these perspectives allow the fictional uncanny to be understood not as an escape from reality but as an alternative mode of world-disclosure capable of intensifying our perception of the relations that sustain the world. Without introducing ontologically separate realities, it redistributes agency across human and more-than-human actors, making ecological relations perceptible while remaining grounded in the reality of the represented world. In this sense, the fictional uncanny functions as a narrative regime through which agency, meaning, and vitality emerge as effects of broader networks of co-implication rather than as attributes of autonomous human subjects.

This article examines the figure of the witch through a relational, more-than-human ontology, focusing on the performative and sensorial dimensions that constitute Ina's character. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing discussions about the reinterpretation of the marvelous imaginary within the field of the fictional uncanny, particularly regarding the resignification of figures such as the witch in contemporary contexts. The article approaches her as a point of inflection from which the instability of the categories that organize modern experience becomes visible. In this sense, Ina not only lifts the veil for the characters of *Lapvona* but also for readers, confronting us with the possibility that what appears strange, indistinguishable, or even repulsive may in fact constitute the very fabric of our existence. The sacred no longer stands in opposition to the profane but instead emerges as its most intimate condition: a shared materiality—viscous and porous—through which life continues to assert itself across multiple forms of relation.

2. MATERIALITY, AGENCY, AND EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE

Published in 2022, *Lapvona* is set in a fictional medieval village marked by precarity, violence, and an oppressive religiosity that structures the everyday lives of its inhabitants. The village exists as an isolated territory ruled by the feudal lord Villiam and spiritually mediated by Father Barnabas, a priest whose authority rests as much on fear as on the promise of redemption. Within this setting, the novel unfolds a network of relationships shaped by inequality and by forms of both physical and spiritual suffering. The narrative centers on several characters, most notably Marek, a boy whose physical deformity shapes his way of inhabiting the world; his father Jude, a shepherd whose relationship to the land oscillates between devotion and severity; and, most centrally for this reading, Ina, a marginal woman who lives on the edges of the village and whose presence destabilizes the categories through which the community attempts to order its reality. Ina has served as a wet nurse² for many of the villagers and is known both for her knowledge of medicinal plants and for a distinctive form of perception that places her in an ambiguous position between wisdom and suspicion.

For the purposes of this analysis, a fourth character must also be considered: Grigor, a villager who lives with his family and becomes a direct victim of the violence that pervades *Lapvona*. This elderly man develops a relationship with Ina that undergoes significant transformations over the course of the novel and proves crucial for understanding how the hyper-rationalizing, anthropocentric logics the text calls into question are both reproduced and eventually destabilized. The contrast between Ina and Grigor confronts the reader with two ontological ways of understanding the human relationship with nature. Yet, rather than merely staging this tension, the novel points toward the space where categorical separations and the idea of absolute control over nature begin to give way.

As the following sections show, one of the novel's most striking features is its insistence on materiality. Bodily fluids, processes of decomposition, and practices of care and violence are presented without restraint, creating a world in which the repulsive and

² In the context of *Lapvona*, a “wet nurse” refers to a woman who breastfeeds and cares for other people's children—a practice that in the village appears less as an individual choice than as a form of collectively organized care. In Ina's case, although the reasons for her designation are never fully explained, her body becomes a point of mediation between the human and the forces that sustain it. More than the milk itself, it is lactation that takes on particular significance: not as an isolated biological function, but as a relational practice that foregrounds co-dependence and mutual implication. In this passage, the vulnerability of infancy reveals, on an intimate scale, the nutritive function of the earth itself—a function that, far from remaining stable, finds its counterpart in the drought and famine that haunt the community of Lapvona.

the vital coexist inseparably. This material dimension intertwines with a form of religiosity that, far from offering consolation, reinforces hierarchies and legitimizes suffering. The result is a persistent tension between institutionalized forms of the sacred and those that emerge from direct encounters with the earth, bodies, and their transformations.³

2.1. MATERIALITY AS AN ECOLOGICAL NODE

Theories of the Anthropocene⁴ have challenged the idea of the human as the center of agency and meaning, proposing instead an understanding of the world as a network of distributed agencies (Bennett 21). In line with Karen Barad's concept of agential realism, the living is not organized hierarchically or explained through preexisting entities; rather, it emerges through intra-actions among multiple forces—human and nonhuman—that co-constitute reality (815). In *Lapvona*, this redistribution of agency is embodied most clearly in the figure of Ina. She:

[P]icked herbs and listened to the lessons of the birds in how to identify the medicinal qualities of each flower and grass and shrub and fruit. She experimented on babies who had colic or rashes or fever or lameness. She also practiced eating certain plants—calendula and comfrey, catnip, fennel—to see how the infusions into her milk could affect the babes' moods. She developed a tincture for herself that enhanced her vision. It was Euphrasia and mint. She ate valerian to keep the babes asleep longer. (Moshfegh 39)

Ina's knowledge of medicinal plants does not emerge from abstract reasoning but from forms of ecological learning in which animals and plants appear as active collaborators in the production of knowledge. She experiments directly on herself, ingesting plants in order to observe their effects and turning her own body into a kind of laboratory in which nutritive processes are no longer understood merely as biological

³ The sacred does not refer to a body of religious doctrine or to a supernatural realm separate from the world. Rather, it names a dimension of experience in which one encounters an otherness that simultaneously evokes fear, fascination, wonder, and mystery (Marsden 3). Gothic literature is one of the most distinctive aesthetic expressions of this affective experience.

⁴ At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer proposed the Anthropocene hypothesis to describe the growing impact of human activity on the Earth's climate system. Their proposal also pointed to the limits of the temporal and spatial scales through which Earth system sciences had traditionally understood planetary processes. From this perspective, the Anthropocene does not designate only a new geological epoch—one in which geological time becomes entangled with the time of anthropogenic activity. It also describes a framework in which events occurring in one place can generate unpredictable global effects, while planetary-scale phenomena acquire local materiality and reshape everyday life (17). Paradoxically, despite containing in its root the term *anthropos* (referring to the human), the concept highlights the need to attend to the ways nonhuman forces erupt into the world and compel humanity to adapt.

functions. The scene invites us to think of the body as an ecological node traversed by material flows that blur the boundaries between inside and outside. Rather than a clear separation between interiority and exteriority, what emerges is a form of visceral integration in which ingestion functions as a mediating process between these two domains. This dynamic becomes especially visible when the narrative recounts the moment in which Ina decides to move into the forest after having been confined in a convent:

Better to live wild in the woods than to be enslaved by the nuns, she believed. A few people taking their midnight constitutionals saw her stumbling and feeling her way through the village, but they didn't bother her. They simply got out of her way as she staggered with her arms out toward the woods. (Moshfegh 34-35)

The image of Ina entering the forest can be read as the emergence of another mode of relating to the living world. Throughout the novel, several scenes suggest a movement in which the boundaries between inside and outside become increasingly blurred: between what takes place within the body and what unfolds beyond it, between the space of the forest and what lies outside it, and between what remains beneath the earth and what emerges at its surface. This sense of porosity becomes especially visible in the passages in which Marek visits the grave of his mother, Agata, in the forest. There, the surface of the ground appears to transform into an uncertain threshold between what is apparently alive and what is dead:

It was Marek's custom to lie down on his mother's grave, placing his body crosswise as though he were a babe in her dead arms through the dirt. He had always felt that the ground below him was charged with a sense of belonging. He would lie there and gaze up at the swaying branches of the poplar tree and listen for a birdsong. A bee-eater or an oriole might tweet a few happy notes. Marek would take this as his mother singing down to him from heaven. Now, standing by the grave, he heard a magpie song. It was angry and harsh, raspy chatter like an old lady scolding him from her window. (Moshfegh 17-18)

The earth's entrails, like those of the body, form an assemblage of forces and materials that work together through processes of decomposition that are profoundly regenerative. Through these literary images of regeneration, the breakdown of compounds creates opportunities for new forms of connection and suggests a renewed ecosemiotics, in which life emerges through death and decay rather than in spite of them.

2.2. ABJECTION AS A PATHWAY TO KNOWLEDGE AND INTERCONNECTION

Milk, blood, and other bodily fluids function as vectors linking bodies and beings. As a wet nurse, Ina has “fed half the population” with her milk, placing her quite literally as a conduit through which life circulates (Moshfegh 9). Milk thus appears not only as nourishment but also as a substance that activates a broader logic of fertility that exceeds simple reproduction. Through it, the wet nurse becomes a figure of relations that extend beyond conventional family structures, recreating deeper—perhaps even ancestral—bonds. In this sense, Ina’s milk, understood as a vital substance, flows across generations and gives rise to a kind of ecological memory of identity. Later in the novel, this logic is radicalized through the presentation of fluids that alter perception:

A puddle of water was stained with rust, and he kneeled to drink from it. He slurped voraciously, his thirst finally relieved after ten handfuls of brown water. Now his vision cleared and his head cooled enough to assay his surroundings with more certain intelligence. There was an iron gate at the end of the passageway. Thank God. He could climb over it. He cupped his hand and dipped it into the puddle again, but now the water was not brown but red. Blood dripped from his hand. (Moshfegh 89)

This moment occurs at the beginning of summer, when Jude, Marek’s father, dreams that he is trying to escape a labyrinth. In the dream, “[t]he sun was high and strong, and sweat dripped into his eyes. Bright white lights eclipsed his vision” (Moshfegh 89), and he manages to see clearly only after filling his cupped hands ten times with that brown water. In this context, blood functions not only as a sign of violence but also as a form of clairvoyance and a pathway toward access to an intensified dimension of reality (Bessière 55)—one that, as in the dream world, always remains beyond the human protagonists’ reach. Putrefaction, moreover, is not reduced to inert or unproductive matter; rather, it signals ongoing processes of transformation. Even in the most extreme moments—such as the appearance of “maggots, the lowest of God’s monsters” (Moshfegh 93)—biological decomposition emerges as one of the conditions through which vital forces attempt to reaffirm themselves, rather than simply marking the end of life. By this point in the narrative, it is already July, and the famine caused by the drought that began at the start of summer has taken hold:

[T]hose who had fed were too ashamed of what they’d put in their mouths to speak of it. Dead bees, bats, vermin, worms, dirt, and even old, desiccated cakes of animal dung had filled their bellies. Jude had stopped eating almost completely after the lambs had died. He lost his appetite out of sorrow, and then their rotting flesh attracted flies, which he found cruel and stupid. (Moshfegh 92-93)

Later in the novel, social collapse reaches an extreme point, and Jude himself resorts to cannibalism. Ina does not recoil from these processes; on the contrary, she incorporates them into her practice. Her use of bodily substances—such as “the distilled yellow liquid of her own boiled urine” (Moshfegh 189) to produce a medicinal oil—reveals an epistemology that does not separate purity from impurity but instead integrates them within the same matrix of transformation, access, and continuity in the world.

From a theoretical perspective, this insistence on fluids, decomposition, and bodily matter can be read in light of the notion of abjection developed by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*. For Kristeva, the abject does not refer only to what provokes repulsion but to a limit experience in which the boundaries that sustain the subject’s identity become unstable (3). Bodily fluids, residues, and decomposing matter are abject precisely because they disrupt the boundary between inside and outside—between the body and that which must remain external to it. The proliferation of substances in the novel does more than construct an aesthetic of the grotesque; it reveals a material ontology in which life is traversed by processes of exchange and mutual implication.

This field of material interdependencies, where life is sustained precisely by what culture typically seeks to expel, suggests a mode of relating to the living that does not depend on the exclusion of the impure. On the contrary, it opens new possibilities for thinking about the repulsive as a material force that destabilizes the normative boundaries of the body and of life itself (Küpers 295). The abject can also be understood as a point of inflection from which regimes of corporeality that seek to stabilize the human through the expulsion of what exceeds it come into question. From this perspective, bodily deformity may appear not as an anomaly but as one of the many conditions through which life becomes possible.

In this sense, Marek’s physical malformation—“such was the turning of his body against nature” (Moshfegh 19)—should not be read as a failure but as the expression of another mode of relating to the living and to its multiple openings onto the world. It is therefore no coincidence that Ina recognizes in him a certain affinity: “maybe Marek was something like her, attuned to a different nature” (40). Bodily difference, far from being a defect, thus appears as an index of a non-normative nature open to other forms of existence.

2.3. AN ONTOLOGY OF THE SENSIBLE

An ontology of the sensible refers to an understanding of being in which reality is constituted through embodied, multisensory, and relational modes of perception. Rather than treating sensation as the subjective reception of an already constituted world, it understands the sensible as the very medium through which bodies, environments, and more-than-human agencies become mutually disclosed. In this sense, perception is not epistemologically secondary to ontology; it is one of the processes through which the world continually comes into being as a field of relations. Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's later phenomenology, an ontology of the sensible does not conceive perception as the representation of an external reality but as participation in the very flesh of the world (147). Because perceiver and perceived belong to the same ontological fabric, sensing becomes a relational event through which beings emerge in reciprocal exposure rather than as self-contained entities.

Although scholars such as Ronald Hutton (2) have shown how witchcraft has historically been constructed as a cultural category, in *Lapvona* this figure shifts toward an ontological practice grounded in the living world itself. Ina is perceived as a witch by the villagers—“[s]ome called her a witch because she was blind and yet she was industrious” (Moshfegh 9)—yet this designation reveals more about the community's mistrust and incomprehension than about Ina herself. Indeed, the novel insists that “[h]er science wasn't faulty: she really did know how to cure maladies with herbs and tinctures” (Moshfegh 193).

Blindness, far from limiting her, reconfigures her mode of perception: “[e]ventually, she understood the world through sounds and echoes” (Moshfegh 35). This sensory orientation thus becomes key to understanding Ina's immersion in the vitality of the more-than-human landscapes depicted in the novel. When Ina is labeled a witch, what is actually being named—albeit in a distorted way—is a restorative mode of knowledge in which knowing does not imply observing from a distance but inhabiting the world through multiple sensory registers. This mode of relating to the living can be placed in dialogue with the ecological phenomenology developed by David Abram. In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, Abram introduces the notion of the “more-than-human” in order to challenge conceptions that radically separate human beings from the rest of the natural and sensory world (8).

Rather than emphasizing boundaries between humans, other living organisms, and nonliving elements, this perspective foregrounds relations of reciprocity and interdependence. Within this framework, the “nonhuman” ceases to be conceived as a passive backdrop to human activity or as an inert environment devoid of agency and vitality. The notion of the “more-than-human” thus operates as a critique of anthropocentrism, seeking to account for the richness of a sensuous and expressive natural world whose modes of existence exceed human consciousness, social structures, and cultural frameworks. This sensory dimension becomes particularly significant when we consider that perceptual relations with the natural world have not only been reshaped by historical processes of rationalization but continue to erode under the conditions of late modernity. Tim Ingold observes that contemporary societies experience a progressive degradation of sensory experience as natural stimuli are increasingly replaced by artificial and technologically mediated signals (244). In this context, direct engagement with the environment—the smells of landscapes, the sounds of animals, climatic variations, or the rhythms of bodily movement—is gradually substituted by controlled environments, synthetic stimuli, and commercial simulations of nature.

In dialogue with Abram’s ecological phenomenology and Ingold’s ecology of perception, Simon Gottschalk suggests that this transformation of the contemporary sensorium not only impoverishes bodily experience but also weakens the cognitive and linguistic capacities that emerge through interaction with living landscapes (Gottschalk 71). David Abram himself warns that as biotic diversity diminishes, human language loses part of its evocative power, since the richness of sensory perception has always been nourished by the multiplicity of voices and rhythms of the natural world.

The persecution of witches in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—which led to the execution of tens of thousands of women, many of them herbalists or midwives of peasant origin—can be interpreted as an attempt to eradicate forms of knowledge rooted in direct and participatory engagement with plants, animals, and elemental forces. To the extent that these practices sustained a sensuous and animated relation with the natural world, their suppression helped clear the way for an increasingly mechanistic and objectifying vision—or what might be called a form of perceptual myopia—characteristic of modern scientism. These events cannot be understood merely as a moral or religious sanction. In this regard, the work of Silvia Federici is crucial. In *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women* (2018), Federici interprets the witch hunts as a

constitutive process of modernity, closely linked to the reorganization of labor, the expropriation of bodily knowledge, and the subordination of situated forms of knowledge tied to the reproduction of life (27).

From this perspective, the figure of the witch does not simply refer to a symbolic construction of superstition but to the persecution of material practices and embodied knowledges through which bodies, territories, and modes of subsistence were interconnected. Within this framework, organic modes of relating to the planet are repeatedly cast as obstacles to the logics of power and exploitation. One of the most suggestive moves in Ottessa Moshfegh's *Lapvona* is the presentation of this organicity as a radical reconfiguration of the sacred, one that departs from the traditional association of the witch with a supposedly anti-modern paganism. In *Lapvona*, the sacred is not located in a transcendent realm but in the materiality of life itself and in the proximity among beings. This becomes explicit when Grigor, after his encounter with Ina and the transformation of his understanding of the world, recognizes that "the land was God itself, the sun and moon and rain, that it was all God [...] The life in their seeds of wheat, the manure from the cow, that was God" (Moshfegh 229).

Ina thus appears as the embodiment of a form of lived sacrality: "[t]here was something sacred still. [...] [T]he sacred thing had been Ina herself" (Moshfegh 302). In this narrative shift, the power of the uncanny cannot be understood as a residue of magical thinking (Todorov 24); rather, it reveals modes of relating to the world that do not depend on institutionalized rituals or moralizing frameworks. The theoretical framework developed in this section highlights how Ina's healing abilities arise from ways of relating to the Earth that exceed both the divine—and even the mystical—within a religious register, as well as the supernatural or mere superstition within a secular one. Instead, her use of herbs and tinctures emerges from an intimate relationship with the living world. Within this mode of relation, the binary distinctions that separate nature from culture lose their force. Nor is there an exclusively human realm. Rather, care unfolds through a web of relationships oriented toward those who suffer or stand in need.

This knowledge is not portrayed as an incomplete or inferior form of science but as the product of direct experience and an intimate engagement with the world. Nature is therefore not approached as an object to be mastered but as a living reality with which one creates. Ina's blindness similarly unsettles conventional ways of inhabiting the Earth. Indeed, it anticipates an anti-ableist perspective: one need not rely on sight to make the

world perceptible. Knowledge is not ocularcentric but multisensory, emerging through the body's attunement to vibrations, changes in temperature, the contours of the landscape, and the sounds of the forest. If making the world visible means learning to perceive through other senses—or, more precisely, without depending on vision—knowledge becomes an inherently unfinished practice, always open to experimentation. Ina is, above all, an apprentice rather than a teacher. She navigates the world through continuous multisensory experimentation, discovering new ways of relating and new possibilities for embodiment. From this perspective, she recalls the phenomenology developed by David Abram. The sensations that move through her body are not simply the effects of physical contact with the environment; they are expressions of the living world itself, experienced as an expanded corporeality. This is why the fluids that flow from her body possess the same restorative power as the herbs and other elements of the landscape.

Yet this way of inhabiting the world extends beyond Ina's singular experience. The novel also explores how her sensibility transforms those who enter into relation with her. Grigor becomes especially significant in this regard, demonstrating that this relational ontology is not an exceptional condition but a shared possibility. Here Moshfegh poses a central question: are readers capable of perceiving these reciprocal entanglements? Grigor serves as a crucial mediator. He renders intelligible forms of relationality that, in Ina, might otherwise seem inseparable from the natural world. He embodies those who are only beginning to attune themselves to the voices of nature whispering: Come; after all, you, too, belong to the world. Although he might initially appear to become an apprentice to Ina's supposed magical knowledge, his narrative function is quite different. He demonstrates that this mode of coexistence is possible—that one can become part of this web of relations, be shaped by it, and yet retain an irreducible singularity.

The expression “it was all God” thus acquires its fullest significance. Rather than advancing a theological claim, it reveals the many forms of co-dependence that sustain existence. Within this recognition, humility ceases to function as a moral virtue and instead becomes an ontological disposition—perhaps the novel's deepest insight. The categories of the human, the nonhuman, and the more-than-human gradually lose their explanatory force, giving way to a community of beings constituted through affective relations and continually open to transformation.

3. THE WITCH AND THE ECO-AFFECTIVE SOCIO-MATERIALITY OF THE NATURAL WORLD

Essentialist strands of ecofeminism have often posited an intrinsic relationship between women and nature, grounded in attributes considered “proper” to the feminine, such as reproductive capacity or care for others. While these perspectives have played an important role in highlighting the intertwined exploitation of bodies and territories, they have also been criticized for their tendency to naturalize these associations and to reinforce binary categories (woman/nature versus man/culture) that reproduce the very logics they seek to challenge (Gaard 29). In contrast, more recent perspectives in ecocriticism and posthumanist thought propose understanding these relationships not as fixed essences but as historical, material, and relational configurations open to multiple forms of articulation beyond stable identities (Iovino 56). From this perspective, this section explores how the reinterpretation of the witch within the field of the fictional uncanny allows this figure to be situated within the eco-affective socio-materiality of the natural world.

Building on posthumanist socio-material approaches that understand bodies, matter, discourse, and agency as relational effects rather than pre-existing entities, together with affect theories that conceive affect as a productive force circulating across heterogeneous assemblages (Kalan 3), I use the term eco-affective socio-materiality to designate the relational ecology through which bodies, material substances, affects, and more-than-human agencies continually co-constitute one another (Gherardi 53; Introna 317). Rather than conceiving ecological relations as interactions among autonomous entities, eco-affective socio-materiality understands life as an ongoing process of ecological becoming in which materiality and affect circulate together across human and more-than-human bodies. Within this field, vitality does not reside in discrete organisms or subjects but emerges through the continuous co-implication of bodies, environments, and material processes. Matter is therefore understood not as passive substance but as a generative force, while affects are not reducible to human emotions but operate as ecological intensities that traverse heterogeneous forms of existence, shaping capacities to perceive, act, and transform.

The ecological dimension of the concept extends socio-material theory beyond organizational or technological assemblages toward the more-than-human dynamics of the living world. In this sense, soils, plants, bodily fluids, animals, atmospheres, microbes,

and human bodies do not function as separate entities interacting across fixed boundaries but as mutually constitutive participants in ongoing processes of perception, transformation, and coexistence. What connects them is not external interaction but their constitutive entanglement within a shared ecological field. This eco-affective socio-materiality is therefore less an assemblage of independent elements than a viscous ecology in which material substances and affective forces continuously permeate one another, generating the conditions through which life becomes perceptible as relational, processual, and fundamentally more-than-human.

3.1. THE VISCOSITY OF THE LIVING

Far from presenting stable structures or fixed identities, *Lapvona* constructs an ecology in which life is defined by its capacity to circulate, seep, and transform. Ina's medicinal practices reinforce this logic of circulation, in which bodies appear as membranous surfaces open to contact. The blood that Jude drinks in his dream, discussed in the previous section, becomes associated with forms of perceptual intensification, while the distilled liquid of boiled urine points to ontologies in which bodies function as sites of exchange rather than merely as providers or recipients of resources. Milk, for its part, functions in the narrative as a reversal of the maternal role traditionally associated with breastfeeding. Nursing does not respond solely to a reproductive imperative. Rather than remaining a narrowly defined biological function, breastfeeding appears as an extension of the relational vitality of the world. What is reproduced through this act is not only life in the linear terms of kinship—from mother to child—but the very conditions that enable the ongoing renewal of the world.

This is not merely an epistemological question but one grounded in the materiality of these substances and in their capacity to interact with others, generating new processes. Within this framework, not only milk but also other bodily fluids, such as urine, may fulfil functions of nourishment, healing, or the restoration of fragile vitality resulting from illness or adverse environmental conditions. If the burning of witches represented a dismemberment of the world (Haraway 5), Ina's task becomes one of recomposition and re-knotting: a recovery of the web of relations that extends beyond the family and even beyond the species itself:

She had a hundred years of experience keeping herself alive. That was worthy of some payment, wasn't it? She walked home through the woods, whistling back and forth to the birds who were gossiping about their approaching migration. She said she'd miss them,

but she was only appeasing them. Now that she could see, she had little interest in the birds. They were alarmists, she felt, and she'd grown weak in her abilities to navigate the human world the more she had depended on them. They knew nothing of being an old woman, or a new woman. All they knew were their patterns and instincts. Ina herself wanted new patterns, new instincts. Since she had survived the famine and regained her eyesight, she felt she'd been reborn. (Moshfegh 193)

It is useful to think of *Lapvona* as a viscous ecology, one in which bodies do not end in themselves but extend through porous membranes that enable multiple forms of exchange. Ina's interactions with the nonhuman environment, as illustrated in the passage above, make this logic particularly visible. Unlike other characters, who relate to nature instrumentally, Ina does not simply "use" the natural world; instead, she allows herself to be affected by it, entering into dynamics of co-agency. Viscosity, in this sense, is not only a material quality but also a mode of relationality—one that prevents clear boundaries from solidifying and invites us to think of life as a process of continuous contact. In one of the most evocative passages, the novel notes that, in the face of illness, "the birds had dropped herbs, shat seeds, sang her songs to cure her" (Moshfegh 124).

From this perspective, the references to Ina as an "inhuman" being also acquire a different meaning. They reveal—perhaps from a fissure within modern conceptions of "the human"—the affective proximity to the natural world that her character embodies. As the distinction between subject and environment becomes destabilized, the zones of convergence between the cultural and the natural lose any fixed center and open toward multiple lines of transformation. The inhuman thus appears as profoundly human, insofar as it expresses another way of understanding ourselves as part of more-than-human processes, in which living is no longer a technique applied to the world but a practice of coexistence. Ina "liked to believe on some level that she was inhuman" (Moshfegh 43), a perception that suggests not monstrosity but a form of disidentification with normative categories. In this sense, the inhuman is not the opposite of the human but that which exceeds it, placing the human in relation with other forms of life and matter. Ina also liked to believe that "God had granted her life after death" (Moshfegh 43), an idea that further unsettles the dichotomy that separates life and death as ontologically distinct processes. These displacements allow the witch to be understood not as a deviation but as a perceptive practitioner who emerges precisely at the edges where modern categories begin to lose their coherence.

The notion of the “inhuman” thus introduces a series of tensions in relation to normative conceptions of the human that are not only ontological but also material. The “anomalous” or “deviant” bodies that the novel presents—such as Marek’s physical malformation—become socio-material nodes for thinking about an expressive and undomesticated nature that resists reduction to stable forms. From this perspective, another interpretive path also opens, one that gestures—at a metatextual level—toward the transformations associated with climate change: how might such events inscribe themselves in our own corporeality? This deeply contemporary question opens the possibility of a radical imagination capable of expanding the limits of the living, even hinting at a queer futurity (Muñoz 26) in which the fluids that compose us cease to be understood as threats and instead become the conditions for a regenerative contamination in the face of a deteriorating planet.

Marek’s case is particularly revealing. His body, described as twisted and vulnerable, does not conform to normative parameters of bodily integrity; yet, it is precisely this difference that enables his bond with Ina. It is, therefore, no coincidence that she recognizes in him an affinity, a belonging to “a different nature,” which becomes a horizon of possibility from which not only they can inhabit the world differently but also allow themselves to be inhabited by it in another way. Malformation thus ceases to appear as a defect and instead emerges as an excess of nature—a manifestation of life in its most open and indeterminate dimension. Such a reading subverts the modern idea of nature as order and equilibrium, revealing instead a nature traversed by variation, overflow, and ongoing transformation.

Lapvona can be read as a profoundly ecological novel because its narrative organization resists determinism and destabilizes ontological rigidity. Taking the viscosity of the living as its central interpretive lens, this reading argues that the novel’s characters are not fashioned to reproduce Gothic conventions but to explore ambivalent modes of relating to that which unsettles the category of the human. In this sense, the medieval setting and its atmosphere of repressive religiosity do more than provide a familiar Gothic backdrop. They establish the conditions through which the novel dismantles the idea of nature as an inert setting or passive scenery. From its opening pages, the environment actively participates in the production of narrative meaning, continually reconfiguring the relationships among the characters. Accordingly, the hostile events that unfold throughout the village function not simply as episodes of moral

degradation or existential collapse. Rather, the narrative repeatedly demonstrates that the contingency of the living world expands the characters' possibilities for action as much as it constrains them. The seepages, mixtures, and transformations that permeate the novel are not merely recurring images but narrative mechanisms through which Moshfegh reconceives human fragility as a relational rather than an individual condition. Decisions that, from a modern perspective, might appear savage, uncivilized, or grotesque therefore cease to operate exclusively within moral categories and instead become intelligible within an ecology in which survival depends upon the capacity to adapt to a world in continual transformation.

From this perspective, what initially appears hidden gradually becomes a form of revelation. Rather than uncovering a concealed truth, the novel redirects secrecy toward a different regime of visibility, inviting readers to perceive a vitality that has always existed but remains imperceptible to those who insist on a radical separation between humans and their surroundings. Ina's movements through the forest, her knowledge of plants, and her intimate engagement with bodily fluids all participate in this reorganization of perception by rendering visible a mode of knowing grounded in attentiveness, contact, and material continuity with the living world. Biological fluids constitute one of the novel's principal means of producing this continuity. Blood, milk, urine, and other bodily secretions cease to function primarily as signs of contamination or danger; instead, they become media of exchange, care, and belonging. Rather than symbolizing a pre-existing community, these fluids materially generate relationships that exceed the limits of biological kinship and individual identity. The bonds Ina forms with Marek and Grigor thus depart from conventional familial models, giving shape to alternative forms of kinship sustained through practices of proximity, dependency, and material circulation.

Viewed from this perspective, the novel displaces genealogy as the privileged basis of belonging and proposes instead a relational logic grounded in encounters between human and more-than-human bodies. Although this interpretation may seem to echo familiar currents within contemporary ecocriticism, the episode in which Ina enters the forest demonstrates that such proximity is not merely a theoretical proposition but a carefully orchestrated narrative strategy. Here, the forest ceases to function as a hostile setting and instead emerges as a presence that shelters, transforms, and demands other forms of attentiveness.

3.2. BLINDNESS, PERCEPTION, AND KNOWLEDGE

Ina's blindness does not signify absence but displacement. Rather than situating her within a regime of deficiency, the novel places her within a perceptual field that exceeds modern ocularcentrism, transforming knowledge into an embodied, distributed, and multisensory practice. Ina does not see—or at least not in the terms through which modernity has privileged vision as a dominant and ableist mode of access to the world—but she knows. And this knowledge is not merely compensatory; it is qualitatively different.

As the narrative notes, Ina relied on sounds and echoes “to find berries, where to dig for truffles or wild carrots or potatoes, where to find shelter from a storm” (Moshfegh 35). This passage is crucial because the world does not appear as a collection of objects available to the gaze but as a web of vibrations, resonances, and textures that unfold through listening. In this sense, knowing does not mean representing the world but orienting oneself within a sensory ecology. This mode of perception not only reconfigures the relationship between subject and environment but also offers a critique of the forms of dwelling characteristic of modern societies, where the primacy of vision is tied to practices of control, extraction, and distance. Ina's perceptual practice, by contrast, is grounded in proximity, exposure, and affective openness.

It is no coincidence that her knowledge takes shape through practices associated with witchcraft. Yet rather than referring to the occult in an esoteric sense, these practices appear linked to those who allow themselves to be affected by their environment—those who do not seek to dominate the world but to enter into relation with it. In this sense, Ina's blindness does not limit her experience but expands it, inviting us to reconsider what it means to know in a world traversed by multiple forms of life that do not manifest themselves within human categories. Significantly, it is Grigor who expresses the astonishment provoked by this possibility:

He could change now, like he wanted to change. He felt there was more to learn from Ina, and he was afraid to return to his son's home, where he wasn't really wanted anyway. Vuna and Jon were not free. Their idea of life was to work the land and worship, and to have another child who could work the land and worship when they were gone. Their only anxiety was in what the land would produce for them. [...] The priest had nothing to do with it. Grigor could see that now. Ina had cleared his vision. (Moshfegh 228-229)

The multisensory mode through which Ina—and later Grigor—come to know the world raises a question that extends beyond the narrative itself: how might we learn to

coexist with beings that do not share our way of appearing in the world? More broadly, how might we expand the spectrum of the sensible in order to make room for presences that exceed our perceptual categories?

3.3. GRIGOR: BECOMING ATTUNED AT THE MARGINS OF THE HUMAN

Grigor is initially presented as a character shaped by a strongly normative moral framework. However, several critical readings suggest that his trajectory does not remain fixed within this initial position but gradually unfolds into a process of transformation (Doyle). He is the first character to conceive of Ina as a witch, referring to her from a position marked by fear of an imminent threat:

And now the old milk lady was promising miracles? She was a witch, Grigor thought. Out to trick them deeper into hell. It pained him to imagine Vuna becoming pregnant again. He didn't believe she could carry a child to term. She was too old—already twenty-eight—and too frail. Losing another child would be too much for any of them to bear. (Moshfegh 192)

In a later scene, Grigor confesses this suspicion to a priest, associating Ina's behavior with indecency and deceit: "'I suspect there's a witch in Lapvona,' Grigor said. [...] Bent on indecency" (Moshfegh 206-207). This unease seems to arise not only from what she does but from what her very existence calls into question: an ontology structured by separation. For this reason, the disturbance persists, manifesting itself as a form of discomfort in the face of what cannot be fully categorized. Grigor's attitude toward Ina begins to shift when the priest advises him to visit her and spend time with her in order to dispel his suspicions:

'Then bring a gift to the old lady and she will relieve you of your anger. And in so doing, you will relieve yourself of your suspicion. Do it before tomorrow so that you can enjoy the wedding.' Grigor found the advice clever. If Ina was a witch, she could cure him of his uneasiness. If she was not, he had nothing to worry about. He agreed that he would do as he was told. He thanked the priest for his ear and counsel and left the confessional. (Moshfegh 207)

Grigor's relationship with Ina unfolds as a gradual destabilization of his own certainties. In this shift, the figure of the witch appears not only as an alterity but also as a force capable of transforming those who attempt to confine her within normative frameworks (Semprich 24). From this perspective, Grigor can be read as an apprentice in eco-pedagogies, for whom the uncanny reconfigures the very conditions of perception.

According to the Reading Project, Moshfegh's characters function as explorations of states of consciousness within hostile environments. Within this framework, Grigor emerges as a transitional figure whose trajectory reveals the possibility of a different form of sensibility—one more open to materiality and to the more-than-human. His transformation culminates in a radical reformulation of the divine. As seen in the passage cited earlier, Grigor declares that God is the earth, the sun, and the moon: "Didn't they know that the land was God itself, the sun and moon and rain, that it was all God?" (Moshfegh 229). This shift represents not merely a change in belief but a reconfiguration of his perceptual experience of the world. God ceases to appear as a transcendent and immaterial authority and instead becomes an immanent presence embedded in the materiality of the living.

The novel emphasizes that this shift does not occur at an abstract level. Grigor transforms his relationship with the environment, reconnecting with plants and with forms of attention he had long abandoned. "He had missed being in touch with what grew from the dirt. The herbs were all wild. Picking them was not like harvesting the crops of his farm, but like a discovery of nature's magic" (Moshfegh 241). Relations with the land thus become not only productive (harvesting) but also perceptual (discovering): an eco-affective mode of inhabiting the world. Nature no longer appears merely as a resource but instead becomes a field of experience. The care with which he gathers the plants—"like jewels" (Moshfegh 241)—signals a reconfiguration of desire: what was once oriented toward utility now turns toward care, curiosity, and contemplation.

4. NARRATIVE ECOLOGIES AND THE FICTIONAL UNCANNY

Narrative ecologies entail an onto-epistemic shift within literary theory and, more specifically, within ecocriticism, insofar as they recognize that territories, practices, and the ways they are narrated are not organized exclusively by human agency (Muecke et al. 522). Although these authors do not offer a formal definition of narrative ecologies, their discussion suggests that the term refers to relational configurations through which literary works organize the interactions among bodies, materialities, species, affects, and spaces. Narrative thus operates not as a representation of an already constituted world but as a practice of ontological composition. Narrative ecologies make possible the emergence of relations among heterogeneous forms of life, revealing narrated worlds as the contingent

outcome of ongoing processes of interaction, interdependence, and transformation rather than as the expression of discrete entities or pre-constituted identities.

Instead, these ecologies emerge from socio-material assemblages in which multiple vitalities participate in the production of meaning and are reconfigured through more horizontal inter-agential relations (Molloy Murphy et al. 383). Within this framework, the nonhuman no longer functions as a mere backdrop but becomes an active component of the narrative scene. In this context, the articulation with the field of the fictional uncanny becomes particularly productive. As studies of the marvelous and the fairy tale have shown, this narrative register opens spaces in which the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman become porous, allowing relational configurations to emerge that exceed an anthropocentric framework.

At this point, it is useful to recall Max Lüthi's analysis of the form of the fairy tale. According to Lüthi, the world of the Märchen is characterized by a continuity of levels between the human and the supernatural, both belonging to the same narrative dimension (6). Animals, objects, and environmental forces do not appear as mere decorative elements but as functional components of the narrative action. The fairy tale thus constructs a universe in which different forms of life participate within a shared relational field. Reading *Lapvona* from this perspective allows us to understand the character of Ina as a key figure in the reconfiguration of the uncanny. Traditionally, the uncanny has been understood as the irruption of the strange or the supernatural that destabilizes the rational order. In Ottessa Moshfegh's novel, however, this shift occurs not through the introduction of an element external to the narrative world but through a transformation in the very conditions of perception. Ina does not simply embody an anomaly within the universe of *Lapvona*; rather, she makes visible a web of relations that was already present but had been denied or marginalized by modern forms of knowledge.

In this sense, Ina's figure becomes unsettling not because of her distance from reality but because of her excessive proximity to it: "They distrusted Ina because of her wisdom, while they still made use of it" (Moshfegh 9). The suspicion provoked by her knowledge reflects the difficulty of integrating forms of relating to the world that do not conform to dominant epistemic categories. As Nicole Fernández Bravo has noted, the uncanny emerges through figures of doubling that disturb stable boundaries between self and other, familiar and unfamiliar, producing a narrative space in which ordinary reality becomes permeable to forms of alterity (345). It is worth recalling that during the Middle

Ages such narratives were not perceived as implausible but rather as part of a horizon of experience considered credible. Accordingly, the knowledge embodied by Ina does not introduce a supernatural element; instead, it reactivates a mode of relating to the world in which the modern separation between the human and the nonhuman loses its apparent self-evidence.

Within this framework, birds acquire a significant role. At various moments they “speak” with Ina and participate in a network of relations that exceeds the human domain, introducing a dimension of interspecies communication that displaces anthropocentric centrality and opens questions about other possible ways of inhabiting the earth. A particularly revealing counterpoint appears in the figure of Jude, Marek’s father, who forbids Marek to speak to the sheep and their lambs. This prohibition does not simply reflect a behavioral rule but rather the need to preserve an ontological hierarchy in which the human occupies a central position. Speaking with animals would imply recognizing them as interlocutors—that is, as agents capable of communication and of intervening in the world:

The ewes would bleat and snort and grunt if Marek came around. Jude understood that the sheep knew that Marek was a baby in his own way, that he would steal their milk for himself if he could, that he would suck the motherhood from them because he was so starving for it. ‘Stay away,’ they told him. ‘Baaaa.’ Marek did nurse the ewes when Jude wasn’t looking. He pushed the babes away and put his mouth to the sheep’s teat and sucked until he felt sick. He felt this was his right as a child of God. He was a lamb himself. (Moshfegh 22)

This passage also introduces a revealing ontological contrast: Marek understands himself as the child of a supernatural being while simultaneously identifying with a subhuman creature—the lamb. What is at stake here is not the plausibility of communication between species, which appears entirely ordinary within the novel’s narrative logic, but its disruptive potential in relation to the order of beliefs that Jude seeks to preserve. Jude’s reaction can be read in light of what anthropologist Anna Tsing has described as the myth of human exceptionalism: the modern narrative according to which humans exist apart from the ecological webs that sustain life (19). The possibility of interspecies communication thus threatens not only a religious belief but the very fiction of human autonomy on which this onto-political regime depends.

From this perspective, the uncanny in Lapvona does not introduce a supernatural world so much as it displaces the human monopoly over language and meaning-making.

Toward the end of the novel, Marek offers a final indication of this symbolic inversion when birds themselves become associated with the divine:

‘Don’t worry,’ Marek said. ‘Death is not the end. You shall rise. What are the birds but angels? You will never have to walk among the monsters. It’s much better up there. You’ll see, you’ll see. You will be so happy and free, you’ll sing.’ (Moshfegh 304)

5. CONCLUSION

By lifting the veil of the mundane, Ina does not reveal a hidden secret but makes perceptible the continuity among bodies, materials, and forms of life that anthropocentric rationality has learned to separate. The agency of animals, the vitality of matter, and the porosity among organisms therefore cease to appear as anomalies and instead emerge as ordinary conditions of existence. From this perspective, *Lapvona* does not construct the uncanny as an exception within the order of the real but as a perceptual intensification that renders visible what had long been relegated by modern epistemic hierarchies. When Marek lies down on his mother’s grave, he senses that the ground is “charged with a sense of belonging,” (Moshfegh 17) while the sounds of birds mingle with this experience as presences that seem to move through the earth itself. In this seemingly simple gesture lies one of the novel’s central insights: what we perceive as strange or extraordinary does not necessarily arise from a supernatural intrusion but from a shift in our modes of attention.

Throughout this article, *Lapvona* has been read not simply as a narrative set in a medieval past but as a critical device capable of interrogating contemporary conditions of life. Through the figure of Ina, the novel displaces the categories that have structured modern experience—nature and culture, body and knowledge, human and nonhuman—showing that these separations are not only unstable but have also been sustained through forms of perceptual exclusion. In this context, the figure of the witch no longer appears as a residue of the fantastic imaginary but instead emerges as a situated form of knowledge: an epistemology of the sensible that brings body, matter, and environment into the same relational web. This shift becomes especially visible in the central role that fluids, processes of decomposition, and other forms of materiality assume throughout the novel. Milk, blood, and secretions do not function merely as narrative details but as material vectors that challenge the idea of the body as a closed entity. In their place emerges an ontology of porosity and interdependence, in which what initially appears repulsive reveals itself as one of the conditions that make life possible. Within this

framework, the sacred no longer resides in a transcendent realm but instead becomes anchored in the shared materiality of the living.

The counterpoint introduced by Grigor makes this transformation visible as a lived process. His passage from a normative religiosity to an embodied experience of the world not only reveals the instability of the categories that once structured his perception but also underscores the transformative force of Ina's presence. The witch does not merely represent a radical alterity; she operates as a threshold—a point of inflection from which the terms of reality are reorganized for those who encounter her. It is at this intersection that the connection between narrative ecologies and the fictional uncanny reveals its full potential. *Lapvona* allows it to be conceived as a narrative regime capable of intensifying our perception of the relations that sustain the world. This shift does not introduce alternative worlds but instead reconfigures our relationship with other living beings, showing that agency, meaning, and vitality are not exclusively human attributes but effects of broader networks of co-implication.

Ultimately, what *Lapvona* brings into view—and what the figure of Ina renders perceptible—is that what we have learned to separate was never truly separate. The human and the nonhuman, the living and the nonliving, the pure and the impure, the sacred and the profane are all traversed by the same relational logic. The claim that runs throughout this analysis functions not as a metaphor but as a recognition: the sacred is the mundane.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

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