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Introduction

“Ah,” said Sanderson gently, “but there *is* 'God' in the trees. God in a very subtle aspect and sometimes—I have known the trees express it too—that which is *not* God—dark and terrible” (Blackwood, 225)

Is there an element of the divine in nature? Something that manifests either as a collective consciousness that permeates all life or as an unknowable force, alien and potentially dangerous as it reaches out toward humanity. This is the central conflict in Algernon Blackwood’s “The Man Whom the Trees Loved”. The story’s title gives the reader a clue as to the strange relationship that the story focuses on. What makes it so uncanny is that the trees respond to the protagonist, David Bittacy’s, attention and care. With an unknown agency and consciousness, they reach out for him, with a desire to make him a part of them.

Algernon Blackwood’s short story “The Man Whom the Trees Loved” is about man’s complex relationship with nature. On one hand, it is a supernatural story, which presents nature as something uncanny and threatening, and on the other hand, it is as much a story about mysticism, and the desire for a deeper, more intimate relationship with nature. This essay will look at how the uncanny becomes a metaphor for Blackwood to discuss mystical ideas and man’s relationship with nature. The essay’s title is chosen from a passage in the story’s first chapter, revealing to the reader the strange elements of the tale, as well as hinting at the conflicting views of the couple which becomes the central part of the story: “It was long after marriage, during his months of loneliness spent with trees and forests in India, his wife waiting at home in the Bungalow, that his other, deeper side had developed the strange passion that she could not understand” (217). It is this element of strange passion that makes the story so interesting. This represents not only the contrasting views between Mr. Bittacy

and his wife but also shows the underlying strangeness of his relationship with the trees. Throughout the story's nine chapters, a third-person narrator brings the reader into the curious conflict between David Bittacy and his wife, Sophia, before focusing on her perspective of the ensuing events. Her viewpoint throughout the rest of the story establishes the uncanny situations that unfold and gives the reader a critical look at the process they both go through in their encounter with the agency of the trees.

Through the two protagonists' reactions to the story's uncanny situations, the reader is presented with two different viewpoints of man's relationship with nature. Mrs. Bittacy holds a practical view, where the Bible has placed man as master of the natural world, while Mr. Bittacy holds a more complex and mystical view that believes the trees have a consciousness of their own, which it seeks to merge with man. The uncanny arises from her view of the trees as something alien that stands far away from man, with an awareness that cannot be comprehended, and becomes even more frightening as her husband actively seeks a more intimate understanding of the trees and ultimately desires to merge with their consciousness. This essay will further show that "The Man Whom the Trees Loved" is infused with autobiographical elements, dealing with Blackwood's view of nature and mysticism. It will also look at his essay "The Psychology of Places" to show how Blackwood presented similar ideas a couple of years before the short story was written. Critical essays will provide further context and depth into the themes and ideas that Blackwood presents in the short story. Some of these essays focus on another of Blackwood's short stories, "The Willows", which also deals with the presence of uncanny trees and nature. These critical readings have been used as they overlap with "The Man Whom the Trees Loved", as both stories present similar ideas and the fact that there is a relatively small amount of research done on the latter story.

Algernon Blackwood's "The Man Whom the Trees Loved" revolves around Mr. Bittacy who's been working for the forestry, caring for trees in India before his retirement, where he developed a special bond with them. He seems to be aware of a consciousness that permeates the forest near their small house in Kent, England. His wife views his affection for the trees as something slightly uncanny, conflicting with her dogmatic Christian worldview. The couple is visited by Sanderson, a painter who specializes in capturing the personality of trees, and as he and Mr. Bittacy begin to bond over their devotion to the trees, it becomes clear to them that the trees are responding in kind to their attention. The trees seem to be aware of the couple; reciprocating Mr. Bittacy's love for them, and tries to prevent his wife from interfering with this relationship. It is evident that Mr. Bittacy will gladly give himself

over to the consciousness of the trees. By the end of the story, Mrs. Bittacy realizes that she cannot stand against the vast awareness of the trees, and slowly loses her husband, her belief in God, and finally her sanity in her attempts to come to terms with what is happening to them.

British author Algernon Blackwood (1869-1951) was a prolific writer of short stories, novels, and plays, best known in his time for his supernatural fiction. His collection of occult detective stories featuring the sleuth, John Silence, became a bestseller when it was published in 1908 (Joshi, 88). Blackwood was also a self-declared mystic and a member of several spiritual and occult orders (Joshi, ix). Much like his contemporary, Arthur Machen, who also wrote similar tales of mysticism and horror, Blackwood used his supernatural tales to explore mystical ideas. These can be summed up as a sort of nature worship or closeness to nature which leads to an altered perception, expanded consciousness, and eventually a merging of man and nature. Despite his popularity in his own time, and praise from his peer H.P. Lovecraft, who in his essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature”, described Blackwood as “...the one absolute and unquestioned master of weird atmosphere...” (Lovecraft, 66), placing his work within the subgenre weird fiction. Lovecraft defined the weird tale as a story rooted in scientific ideas about humanity’s insignificance when faced with an unknown, uncaring cosmos, and placed Blackwood among “the modern masters” of his time, alongside Arthur Machen, M.R. James, and Lord Dunsany (Luckhurst, 1043). Blackwood’s work however moves beyond Lovecraft’s inherent materialist view of a cold, uncaring universe, and turned instead to nature and mysticism in order to define his philosophy of man’s relationship with the cosmos. Despite this praise, Blackwood has remained largely forgotten compared to his peers Arthur Machen, and M.R. James.

Mysticism and nature

As S.T. Joshi points out in his introduction to *Ancient Sorceries and Other Weird Stories*, Blackwood often included autobiographical elements in his stories and novels. These would range from his descriptions of places drawn from his vast experience as a traveller around the globe to the mystical ideas that formed the basis of his worldview (vii). Some of his ideas surrounding nature have their basis in Blackwood’s experimentation with mystical philosophies such as Buddhism, and the western esoteric groups The Theosophical Society and The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The latter two were formed in the late 1800s

and the initial aim behind these societies lends further insight into Blackwood's ideas surrounding man in relation to nature:

Somewhat crudely, esotericism can be described as a Western form of spirituality that stresses the importance of the individual effort to gain spiritual knowledge, or gnosis, whereby man is confronted with the divine aspect of existence. Furthermore, there usually is a strong holistic trait in esotericism where the godhead is considered manifest in the natural world— a world interconnected by so-called correspondences. (Bogdan, 5)

However, none of these esoteric societies proved wholly satisfactory to further Blackwood's insight into what he was most drawn to: Nature (ix). Joshi further notes that "Nature subsumed or incorporated all his other interests in occultism and spiritualism; for all these were merely vehicles toward the achieving of an "extended or expanded consciousness" (viii). This concept, Joshi points out in his essay "Algernon Blackwood: The Expansion of Consciousness", recurs throughout his body of work, which can often be interpreted as reflecting Blackwood's own mystical philosophies (90). In other words, Blackwood's view of nature can be understood as something akin to religious worship, where expanded consciousness means a merging between man and nature, similar to what Mr. Bittacy is hoping to achieve in "The Man Whom the Trees Loved."

In his essay, Joshi draws attention to one of the central aspects of how Blackwood views nature in his stories: "...Blackwood's nature is eternally and unstably balanced between the metaphysical and the real – between nature as the unity of all things and nature as the great outdoors" (Joshi, 104). This division of nature also lies at the heart of "The Man Whom the Trees Loved" as represented by the dynamics of Mr. and Mrs. Bittacy's relationship with the trees that surround them and their relationship with each other. Blackwood also explored these ideas in his essay "The Psychology of Places" published in 1910; it is a short, yet effective piece that renders the psychological perception of nature into something uncanny and vaguely hostile:

For a threshold is ever the critical frontier that invites adventure and therefore possible disaster. The frontier, the entrance, the gateway, of course, sets the line between two opposing things, and may mean passing toward an attack from the unknown conditions that lie beyond. (123)

These ideas would become recurring in Blackwood's work, and he'd already written "The Willows" in 1907, and would delve further into these with his 1912 short story "The Man Whom the Trees Loved", which can be read as an extension of these concepts. It is interesting to note that the "line between two opposing things" can be interpreted in "The Man Whom the Trees Loved" as metaphysical nature versus "real" nature, as well as the opposing views of the Bittacy's. It can also be understood as a reflection of wild versus domesticated nature in the story, where a small cedar tree on the couple's lawn works as a sentinel to ward off the vast forest that lies on the edge of their property. They both come to see it as a guardian. When this is pointed out to them by Sanderson: "That cedar will protect you here, though, because you both have humanized it by your thinking so lovingly of its presence (227)", they both view it as something that keeps the vast body of the forest at bay, but for wholly different reasons. When the small cedar is suddenly destroyed in a summer gale in chapter V, the couple reacts to its destruction quite differently:

This incident of the cedar's breaking up was actually so unimportant, and yet her husband's attitude towards it made it so significant. There was nothing that he said in particular, or did, or left undone that frightened, her, but his general air of earnestness seemed so unwarranted. She felt that he deemed the thing important. He was so exercised about it. This evidence of sudden concern and interest, buried all the summer from her sight and knowledge, she realized now had been buried purposely, he had kept it intentionally concealed. Deeply submerged in him there ran this tide of other thoughts, desires, hopes. What were they? Whither did they lead? The accident to the tree betrayed it most unpleasantly, and, doubtless, more than he was aware.
(242)

The cedar's destruction breaks down a barrier between the wild forest and the couple's now unguarded home. Mr. Bittacy's attempt to conceal his concern about the incident can also be understood as his own anxiety and fantasies of what will happen to them when the forest can move freely towards their home. In chapter VI, Mr. Bittacy comes into the house, his appearance now becoming more and more treelike in the eyes of his wife. He proceeds to hand her a handful of faded yellow beech leaves that he has gathered out in the forest. The narrator describes the interaction, focusing on Mrs. Bittacy: "...She took the spray of leaves mechanically with a smile and murmured 'thank you, dear,' as though he had unknowingly put into her hands the weapon for her own destruction and she had accepted it" (256). The leaves become the symbolic act of the forest penetrating their home; that Mr. Bittacy

willingly invites it into their domestic space, making their home a part of the forest's territory. The narrator describes Mrs. Bittacy as fully aware of what this symbolic act means, not only for her husband, but also for herself and her eventual fate. She is described as accepting of this fate, noting that at this point in the narrative, she has resigned any notion of further struggle against the woods and her husband. Furthermore, the "line between two opposing things" mentioned in "The Psychology of Places", is perhaps most evident in how Mrs. Bittacy experiences her husband's mysticism and passion for the trees from a Christian point of view, which the narrator presents as quite a narrow outlook towards the world around her:

This passion of his for trees was of old a bone of contention, though very mild contention. It frightened her. That was the truth. The Bible, her Baedeker for earth and heaven, did not mention it. Her husband, while humouring her, could never alter that instinctive dread she had. He soothed, but never changed her. She liked the woods, perhaps as spots for shade and picnics, but she could not, as he did, love them. (217)

The above citation is from the story's opening chapter and shows Mrs. Bittacy's perception of her husband's relationship with the trees. She is afraid of her husband's growing interest in the trees, as it represents something the Bible does not mention, ergo it is unknown to her, unnatural. Her view of nature is summed up at the end of the citation as something practical, for man to use but that is as far as she is able to go. It is also interesting to note that Blackwood here refers to the Bible as her "Baedeker", which means guidebook, from which we can infer she uses the Bible as a guideline of her view of the world around her ("Baedeker").

In the second chapter, the painter Sanderson visits the old couple, and his dialogue with Mr. Bittacy shows how the two of them share a view of nature as something far more mystical, something that is aware of their passion towards it and wants to reciprocate this with a desire to unite with Mr. Bittacy:

‘Made them, yes,’—he paused a moment, then added,— “made them *aware of your presence*; aware of a force outside themselves that deliberately seeks their welfare, don't you see? ”

“By Jove, Sanderson—!” This put into plain language actual sensations he had felt, yet had never dared to phrase in words before. “They get into touch with me, as it were?” he ventured, laughing at his own sentence, yet laughing only with his lips.

‘Exactly,’ was the quick, emphatic reply. “They seek to blend with something they feel instinctively to be good for them, helpful to their essential beings, encouraging to their best expression—their life’. (226)

The trees can now be understood as representing something far more than passive objects; they have become something more metaphysical that wants a merging of their “awareness” or consciousness with Mr. Bittacy’s. For Sanderson and Mr. Bittacy, nature turns into something that transcends reality and offers a chance to be a part of something larger than themselves, much like a religious experience. For the reader, this curious dialogue becomes uncanny, not only due to the fact that the trees cease to be static objects but also because there is implied a joyous expectation towards this merging with the trees. A joy that is presented as a stark contrast to the vague fear that Mrs. Bittacy has for her husband’s passionate interest in the trees.

The Uncanny Agency of the Trees

According to Elizabeth Parker in her essay “‘What if it’s the Trees?’: The Living Forest.” the uncanny can be defined through our conception of a forest:

“Amongst its many delineations, the uncanny denotes anything that ‘should’ be alive, but seems not to be, or anything that ‘should’ be inanimate, but seems to be living: descriptions that fit our confused and contradictory conceptions of the forest all too well.” (72)

It is in the perceived “life” of the trees they become uncanny subjects, as this gives a notion of awareness, of agency. The trees want something with Mr. Bittacy, the small cedar on their lawn works as a sentinel, perceiving the old couple and the vast body of the forest that lurks on the edge of their property. These ideas are presented very early in the story’s first chapter, where the narrator describes Sanderson’s paintings: “It was quite arresting, this way he had of making a tree look almost like a being – alive. It approached the uncanny” (Blackwood, 211). And then describes the painting of the small cedar tree, which occupies the couple’s lawn as having “this uncanny reality of life” (211). Comparing man and tree, hinting that the

otherwise immobile object is somehow imbued with life, is the crux of what Blackwood presents to the reader as uncanny. Throughout the narrative, the uncanny situations have a deteriorating effect on the relationship of the couple, due to the conflicting ways they respond to the agency of the trees.

Parker explains in her essay the paradoxical nature of the trees, which is one of the reasons they are perceived as uncanny:

“However, on some level, we know that the natural world is more alive than we tend to consciously recognize. It is this underlying knowledge, this dual, contradictory awareness that the *life* of plants is at once obvious and mundane, yet totally strange, that makes them thoroughly uncanny-and such fitting Gothic subjects.” (72)

Herein lies much of the contradictory nature of Mrs. Bittacy’s fear of the trees: To her, they are mundane, yet completely alien at the same time; their agency and rapport with her husband force her to slowly admit to herself that their presence is not something she can readily dismiss. From her viewpoint of the world, which the narrator presents within a Christian framework, she cannot reconcile the life within the trees with what she perceives to be true about the world. In contrast, Mr. Bittacy’s view of the trees is presented as passionate, and longing, which can also be interpreted as uncanny for the reader, as this positive outlook is in such sharp contrast with his wife’s point of view, and is contrary to how most readers would identify the situation and the agency of the trees.

Parker also draws our attention to the fact that we tend to perceive landscape as something static, as a lifeless background in stories (69). She refers to the importance of texts like “The Man Whom the Trees Loved”, which lends itself to an EcoGothic reading, where nature refuses to be reduced to the background. Blackwood’s story is a perfect example of this, where nature “comes instead violently into the foreground” (70), acting upon the protagonists of the story. The agency of the trees cannot be ignored, as they reach out for the old couple, responding to Mr. Bittacy’s care and attention towards them.

In chapter two, Sophia discovers that her husband has begun to talk and walk in his sleep, something she considers to be frightening and abnormal: “To her, sleep-talking was uncanny to the point of horror; it was like the talking of the dead, mere parody of a living voice, unnatural” (237). The choice of the word “unnatural” is worth noticing, as her husband is in fact communicating with the forest outside their window, which becomes another element in his union with it. This can also be understood as an extension of the trees’

uncanniness, that sleep-talking somehow violates the natural order of things. It is interesting to observe the progression of this throughout the story as these incidents become more prevalent in chapters IV and VII, before her husband is finally able to sleep in the story's final chapter, even urging his frightened wife to join him in sleep (269-270). This can be understood as his resignation to the agency of the trees and a symptom of their ongoing amalgamation with him. It can also be interpreted as the slow eroding of their domestic setting by the forest, which encroaches further into their home through Mr. Bittacy. This indicates that the forest's agency slowly becomes a presence within their home, blurring the boundary between their domestic space and the wild forest.

Mr. Bittacy finds evidence for his beliefs not only in the paintings and ideas of Sanderson but also in evolutionary science. In chapter one, he comes across a brief notice from Francis Darwin in the newspaper describing the ideas that there might be consciousness within the vegetable kingdom: “ ‘If we accept this point of view,’ he continued ‘we must believe that in plants there exists a faint copy of what we know as consciousness in ourselves’ ” (218). For Mr. Bittacy, this becomes a confirmation of his mystical beliefs, a way for him to further rationalize his ideas about the awareness of the trees. Arguably the newspaper does a similar thing for his wife: It concretises her fears, that her husband's theories might have some basis in reality after all. Marianne Gunderson in her essay “Decentering the Human in Weird Horror” comments on how an engagement with the unknown would impact our anthropocentric worldview:

“The persistent drawn-out engagement with the unknowability of other life-forms and the natural world, creates an opportunity to question what would become of the human subject if it was no longer able to place itself at the center of its universe, and no longer imagined to be separate from its others.” (Gunderson, p. 19)

Gunderson's comments can give us further insight into what is happening to both Mr. and Mrs. Bittacy in the story. He, of course, understands that he is to be united with the trees and become one with them somehow. But what becomes more interesting is how we can interpret Mrs. Bittacy's experience as she begins to gain an insight into what is happening to her husband, and how the trees view her persistent attempts to interfere with their union.

An Extension of the Divine - The Story's Turning Point

The story's turning point is presented to us in chapter VIII as a flash of insight for Mrs. Bittacy as she follows her husband into the forest one day. She is struck with the sudden realisation that the trees are not evil, merely something alien and unknown to mankind. It is also important to note that with this realisation she also comes to understand that her notion of God is somehow involved in all of this, but in a way that is impossible for her to accept:

The failure—or unwillingness, as she preferred to state it—of her God to interfere and help, that also she came in a measure to understand. For here, she found it more and more possible to imagine, was perhaps no positive evil at work, but only something that usually stands away from humankind, something alien and not commonly recognized. There *was* a gulf fixed between the two, and Mr. Sanderson *had* bridged it, by his talk, his explanations, his attitude of mind. Through these her husband had found the way into it. His temperament and natural passion for the woods had prepared the soul in him, and the moment he saw the way to go he took it—the line of least resistance. Life was, of course, open to all, and her husband had the right to choose it where he would. He had chosen it—away from her, away from other men, but not necessarily away from God. This was an enormous concession that she skirted, never really faced; it was too revolutionary to face. But its possibility peeped into her bewildered mind. It might delay his progress, or it might advance it. Who could know? And why should God, who ordered all things with such magnificent detail, from the pathway of a sun to the falling of a sparrow, object to his free choice, or interfere to hinder him and stop? (265)

In the story's turning point, she understands that union with the trees also means a union with something divine, yet it is too far removed from her ability to coalesce her idea of God with her husband's. This results in her resignation, a loss of faith and ultimately she is merely waiting for the inevitable outcome of her husband's union with the trees. It becomes clear to the reader and to herself that this union will result in the loss of her sanity as well. "And so the thought that she was the one to go remained and grew. It was, perhaps, the first sign of that weakening of the mind which indicated the singular manner of her going" (266). This citation opens Chapter IX of the story, where the narrator presents Mrs. Bittacy as someone who has given up, and come to terms with what her end will be. If the agency of the trees represents an extension of the divine, then it is implied that her view of the world and her

place in it crumbles apart. She is in fact unable to do much else than observe her husband's amalgamation with the trees as well as her own descent into madness.

“Their number was a host with endless reinforcements, and once it realized its passion was returned the power increased.... Her husband loved the trees.... They had become aware of it.... They would take him from her in the end....” (255)

As Gunderson extrapolates from Keltner and Hait, the reaction of awe, which can be seen as a response to the uncanny in “The Man Whom the Trees Loved”, is not only transformative (in several aspects in Blackwood's story) but the “understanding” that the couple reaches throughout their interaction with the trees, is for them both enlightening and terrifying.

... Keltner and Hait (ibid.) posits that whether or not one manages to reach a new understanding may constitute the difference between terrifying and enlightening experiences of awe. They further argue that when awe culminates in understanding, it can have profoundly transformative effects, reorienting people's lives, values, and goals. (Gunderson, 20)

The story presents Mrs. Bittacy's enlightenment as having this “profoundly transformative effect” on her. It is the moment when she finally understands what is happening, she also realizes the futility of trying to interfere with the process her husband is going through, and resigns herself to her tragic fate. A fate that becomes even more tragic when the reader knows that her husband seems to be oblivious to this, and in fact is going towards something he perceives as beautiful and ecstatic.

Throughout the story, leading up to Mrs. Bittacy's enlightenment, the narrator consistently uses a capitalized “F” when describing the forest near the old couple's house. This can also be seen whenever Sanderson and Mr. Bittacy refer to the forest in their dialogue, this becomes, as Elizabeth Parker points out, a reflection of their divine view of the forest:

The reader, as the narrative progresses, has little choice but to firmly re-evaluate the idea of a 'passive' Nature. Such thinking is reflected in the subtle, but delicate choice to move from descriptions of the '*forest*' to evocations of the '*Forest*', therein construing this landscape in terms of the Divine, capitalised in accordance with the Christian '*God*'. (90)

In chapter III, the Bittacy's and Sanderson are sitting in front of the open living room window in the evening and despite David Bittacy's best efforts at steering the conversation towards something else, the consciousness of the forest becomes the topic. It is in this moment that Mrs. Bittacy reacts in sheer terror to something she perceives outside the window, something moving towards them from the forest: "There... now you see it going round upon itself again – going back, thank God!... going back to the Forest" (232). Her dialogue here refers for the first time in the story to the forest with a capitalized "F". We can then infer from Mrs. Bittacy's exclamation, when she inadvertently refers to the forest thusly, that it is her fear that makes her do it. She believes in this moment that the forest is moving in on them, and in her terror seems to perceive the agency and will of the trees. Yet it can also be understood as a foreshadowing of her enlightenment in the story's turning point, where she is actually able to see the divine aspect of the forest for herself.

Conclusion

"The Man Whom the Trees Loved" is not a typical horror story, something pointed out by Greg Conley in his essay "The Uncrossable Evolutionary Gulfs of Algernon Blackwood", where he mentions that critics have viewed the story as a diatribe against people who do not like nature (437). It is not a typical horror story due to Mr. Bittacy's ecstatic view of what is happening to him, but his wife's view of the situation makes the story uncanny and eerie. It is in their dichotomy that Blackwood creates room to discuss his ideas of a mystical nature and a consciousness beyond our own. Without the scepticism and fear of Mrs. Bittacy, the story would present a one-sided view of a merging of man and nature, something that is a far too simple viewpoint into what Blackwood is trying to discuss in his story. The fact that we are presented with opposing views shows us that our view of nature is not a given, and that a closeness or merging of consciousness with nature can be a deeply unsettling process for those who are stuck in a fixed worldview. The mysticism of the story arises from the characters' interaction with nature, and how this interaction is perceived vastly different by the two characters. The domestic setting of the story further emphasises the uncanny atmosphere, as much of the story takes place within the living room of the Bittacys. It is at its core, a story about jealousy and a couple's inability to communicate with each other; something that makes the story relatable, and the strange occurrences feel even more unnerving as they are rooted in a premise of reality. In this lack of communication, the domestic setting slowly begins to dissolve, and in chapter six, when David brings the spray of

leaves into their home, the forest is actively trying to break apart their domesticity. A close reading of the various critics used in this essay has allowed for a deeper understanding of the many themes and metaphors prevalent in the story. To define the uncanny as it is perceived throughout the story in order to understand the character's responses to these strange situations, as well as the process of "decentring" or losing themselves when faced with the utter otherness that the consciousness of the trees represents. This happens either through the process of amalgamating with the trees for Mr. Bittacy or through resignation for his wife, who through the story's turning point, understands that the situation opens for a definition of reality she is not able to acknowledge.

It is the contrasting opinions of the story, the uncanny and the mystical, that opens up a reading beyond the mere supernatural short story. These elements provide ample room for a more modern discussion of man's relationship with nature in the Anthropocene. How we interact with nature has become a crucial issue for coming generations, and today we can see more clearly that nature shows a distinct response to how humans interact with it. Algernon Blackwood presents these ideas in the form of a dichotomy between the couple, instead of just giving us Mr. Bittacy's ecstatic view of the situation. If the story was presented to the reader as one-sided, it would be much less uncanny, and the reading of the story would open up a less nuanced view of the mystical ideas that Blackwood wished to convey here. It is in the discussion of the two opposing sides of this story there becomes a greater room for explanation and exploration of these ideas. And fiction arguably opens up for an emotional aspect of the discussion which becomes a vital part of Blackwood's argument. If the same were presented as an essay, it would lose some of its original intent and impact.

This essay has attempted to show how Blackwood's short story highlights man's complex relationship with nature and the world around him. The uncanny opens for discussions around how man approaches the unknown, and new ideas. Blackwood's nature mysticism sheds light on transformative ideas about man and nature, and how the two might be closer linked than we imagine. Jack Sullivan notes in his entry on Blackwood in *The Penguin Encyclopaedia of Horror and the Supernatural* that he's "A curiously neglected author, yet intensely admired by genre enthusiasts" (38), arguably a notion that still holds as true today as it did in 1986. There is surprisingly little research done on his work besides his most well-known story, "The Willows". His body of work opens up further avenues of research, particularly into his other ecologically and mystically themed short stories and novels, which delve further into the subjects that have been discussed in this essay.

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