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Racism in the Works of H. P. Lovecraft

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Abstract

In recent years with the newly formed civil rights movement "Black Lives Matter", American society expressed a high interest in reviewing literature and other genres for instances of racism. This thesis explores the development of racial theories and theories of racism, examines the works of H. P. Lovecraft for racist occurrences, and tries to find their source in Lovecraft's life and historical events. The thesis aims to bring an overview of the theory of racism and racial theory and their development throughout the history of the USA, list examples of racism occurring in Lovecraft's work and present different views and opinions of critics and researchers on the matter. The research is conducted by a close reading of Lovecraft's works - short stories and poems, and works and essays of researchers on Lovecraft and racism. The research showed there are many instances of racism suggesting the inferiority of racial minorities and Lovecraft's fear of miscegenation, therefore degradation of the white race. Many examples can be linked to general views in the American society of the early 20th century and Lovecraft's formed views.

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Introduction

In recent years, racism has become quite a popular and widely discussed topic in the USA. Since the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, many authors of literature, famous historical figures and important landmarks have gone through a thorough inspection by the public for expressing or entailing racist attitudes, features or symbolism. Because of that, the research of racism in the works of H. P. Lovecraft represents an instructive and still relevant topic.

Lovecraft's life and works have been studied and researched for decades. He became famous thanks to the dedication of his friends and fellow authors who stood behind compiling and releasing Lovecraft's short stories and poems. Since then, many critics and researchers started analysing Lovecraft's life, short stories, poems and private letters to understand him fully. Among the researchers, one who stands out is S. T. Joshi, who dedicated his life to the matter, and has been writing and revising one of the most comprehensive biographies of Lovecraft. Other significant researchers are Michel Houellebecq and Frank Belknap Long. Long knew Lovecraft personally and was even considered a friend of Lovecraft.

The main aim of the thesis is to analyse racism in H. P. Lovecraft's works. To analyse and understand the racism occurring in his short stories and poems, the main objectives are

- 1) to explain theories of racism and its development throughout the history of the USA,
- 2) analyse important events in Lovecraft's life, mainly during his childhood that might have been a source of the racism manifesting in his works, and in the end,
- 3) provide and examine examples of different kinds of racist occurrences in Lovecraft's short stories.

The thesis is divided into three major parts. The first part covers development of theories of racism and the history of racial discrimination of various minorities in the USA; the second part is dedicated to Lovecraft's childhood and what possibly influenced him and formed his racial opinions. The third part explores and provides information on examples

of racism occurring in Lovecraft's short stories while trying to put them into historical context.

1 Racism

1.1 Theory of racism

According to Bowser (2017, p. 572-573), the term “racism” first appeared in the early 20th century and gained popularity in the 1930s and later in the 1960s in connection with the civil rights movement. The initial concept of racism, at that time, was defined as “cultural, institutional and individual”, but the attempt of creating a theory containing all three aspects failed. Even the effort to substantiate racism on empirical data struggled (ibid., p. 574).

Feagin (2001, p. 3) provides a more specific definition of racism as “...a system of oppression of African Americans and other people of color by white Europeans and white Americans”, but further states that white people “are a social construct” (ibid., p. 2).

The activist theory created in the 1960s that introduced three levels of racism - cultural, institutional and individual, shows how hard it is to deal with the racism ingrained in the US society. Bowser (2007, p. 581-582) explains that the cultural level contains ideas of racial hierarchy and white supremacy that are maintained and put in motion on the institutional level through various institutions and organisations. The institutional level then strengthens the racial beliefs of individuals. Bowser (2007, p. 584) sees institutional and individual levels as being fueled by the cultural level, so in order to deal with racism, society should focus on dealing with the cultural level and the ideas of white supremacy and racial hierarchy.

However, the theory trying to connect the three levels together was never developed. What remains are theories addressing specific instances of racism that are believed to be “...constructs that offer one-dimensional and reductionist explanations of race relations” (Bowser, 2017, p. 574). There have been four major theories trying to deal with specific racist instances and describe the racial relations:

The declining significance of race

Since the activist movement in the 1960s, racism seemed to decline. However, according to Friedman (in Bowser, 2017, p. 575), overt racism was only replaced by covert one, so the idea of declination is wrong. Schools, for example, introduced admission of students based on living conditions, making it more difficult for black students to be accepted (Johnson in Bowser, 2017, p. 575).

Symbolic racism

According to Bowser (2017, p. 576), white Americans believe in equality for black people but are against applying principles to achieve said equality.

Colour-blind racism

The idea of colour-blindness was to stop making differences between people based on their race. The effort resulted in passing a law prohibiting "...the use of race, sex, or ethnicity in public life" (Bowser, 2017, p. 576-577), but Bowser claims that racial discrimination is still being carried out by people who apply the colour-blindness.

Unconscious racism

Psychological research showed that people unconsciously act on racial stereotypes when white people associate black individuals more likely with crimes while lighter-skinned individuals are perceived as good and kind (Bowser, 2007, p. 577).

1.2 Racial theory

Physical and external differences of various races have been studied since the 18th century as the first researchers focused on "racial differences and problems of biological descent", and so the "research was limited to the use of biological or pseudo-biological methods" (Reuter, 1945, p. 453).

For example, Bleek (p. iv), a German linguist, who researched language development among African tribes, states that the black race "have remained, down to the present day, at the lowest stage of human development, and made the smallest advance beyond the ape" and further produces examples of similar features of apes supporting his claim.

Racial theories focused on biological differences served as a way to hierarchise races into superior/inferior relations, justifying different treatment. In the mid-19th century, Arthur Gobineau's study presented the superiority of European races over other races, giving them the right to rule over the minorities (Reuter, 1945, p. 453).

Reuter (1945, p. 453-454) states that the situation in America was not much different as any racial discussions were concentrated on black people that were subject to political debate rather than any scientific research, which led to no progress in the field of racial relations.

The pseudo-scientific research remained focused on physical traits until the mid-20th century when the biologically based research was found obsolete and the focus slowly shifted towards examining races in terms of social and political relations (Reuter, 1945, p. 455). According to Winant (2000, p. 172), biological differences of humans are "imprecise if not completely arbitrary" to assume that members of a certain racial group share the same characteristics.

1.3 History of racism in the USA

Racism in the USA is usually associated with black people and slavery, but it also includes Native Americans, Asian people, and Hispanics. The idea that racism is solely white people against black people stems from history. Black people were the first whom white Americans systematically exploited, and later, the immigrants of different colour were recognized as inferior and fell into the same category as black people (Feagin, 2001, p. 5).

1.3.1 The struggle of black people

The first act of slavery of black people in North America can be seen in 1619 when several black people were brought there and sold to Virginian settlers. They were used as workers on tobacco plantations that white English workers had worked on so far. The difference between them was that the white workers were bound to work there for a set number of years after which they were free, while the black workers were there for the rest of their

lives (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 14-15). Slavery at that time was not something new. The black slaves were brought to America from Africa, where slavery existed for a long time prior to bringing them into America but in a different form. The slaves had certain rights and, at least in some places, were treated as part of the owner's family. Treating slaves as property and not human beings came with European colonization of Africa and exporting slaves into the world (History of Slavery in Gambia, 2022).

Over the years, the black slaves grew in number and were used as a workforce on cotton and tobacco plantations in the Southern colonies suitable for such crops for their hot climate (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 21). Nevertheless, owning a slave was not exclusive to Southerners; people in the North owned slaves too, but each owner had only a few. The work in the North was also different from one in the South. The plantations were much smaller, grew a variety of crops, and the slaves filled many other jobs like tending cattle, fishing, or working in a factory (Clinton 2022, p. 35). In contrast, the southern slaves mainly worked on large plantations focusing on one particular crop. In the beginning, the plantations grew tobacco or rice, but after the invention of the cotton gin, cotton replaced most of the crops (ibid., p. 41-45).

After the Declaration of Independence, the US became divided regarding slavery. The people of the Northern states also owned black slaves but were not dependent on them as the Southern states, so the negotiation about the fate of slavery began between the South and the North. At that time, around 17 per cent of the US population were black slaves (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 44-45). The negotiations resulted in some states becoming "free states" while others were able to keep slavery. In addition, a Fugitive Slave Act was passed to punish slaves who would escape their owners and anyone helping them. It led to the formation of bounty hunters who hunted down escaped slaves for money, and the establishment of a complex system called the 'Underground Railroad' helping the escaped slaves get transported to a free state (ibid., p. 45-47). However, living in a free state did not provide black slaves much freedom when the Supreme Court decided in the case of Dred Scott that black people were not US citizens, meaning they had no rights (Sambol-Tosco, 2004).

The tension between North and South climaxed when Abraham Lincoln became the US president in 1861. Lincoln, a member of a newly formed Republican Party opposing slavery, wanted to keep slavery in states where it already existed. The decision resulted in the American Civil War (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 48).

Although Lincoln's goal was to abolish slavery, at least in the North and new territories, his aim was not to give black people the same rights white citizens had. He still, like many others, was convinced of the white-race superiority. Lincoln only saw that slavery was not mandatory for US citizens, for he never owned any slave. His idea was to leave them "alone" (Joshi, 2020, p. 252-253).

After four years, The North became a victor and slavery was officially abolished in all of the US states by the 13th Amendment (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 52). A promise of a bright future seemed to be forming for black people, but it was still far from true.

Although the North won the Civil War and declared all black people to be free, black people's rights did not change much in the South. They were still not considered citizens, so the southern states made laws restricting their lives and freedom. To stop black people's rights from being violated, Congress introduced the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the 14th amendment and gave them citizenship. Most southern states were against it, so Congress dissolved their governments and created new ones called the "Reconstruction" governments, which included black people and white northerners (O'Callaghan, 1990. 54-56).

However, the "Reconstruction" governments did not last long. In 1877, seven years after their set-up, white southerners won back the power in those states and continued discriminating black people (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 57). At that time, black people had a right to vote, but other laws were passed to make it impossible for most black people to vote in southern states. They were required to undergo literacy tests and pay high taxes to vote, which many black people did not meet (Brown, 2015). Along with the right to vote, more laws were passed introducing segregation of black people in the South.

The segregation laws discriminating black people were known as "Jim Crow laws", and their legitimacy was additionally supported in 1896 by the Supreme Court. The

segregation affected most public places, from trains to restaurants and universities (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 57).

Since the 1940s, black people from the South started migrating to North states for the promise of better living conditions. During the 1950s, many protests against segregation resulted in the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, illegalizing segregation in public places (Brown, 2015). Nevertheless, desegregation was a slow process, and in some southern states, it took many years to achieve it fully (ibid.).

1.3.2 Native Americans

The Native Americans, whose ancestors are believed to have come to America from Asia during the Ice Age (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 4), were one of the first oppressed races in the US history.

In the late 18th century, many people were crossing the Appalachian Mountains to settle in new territories because the land in the colonies was becoming limited. However, the new territories found already belonged to the Native Americans, who defended their land and raided the settlers' new settlements. To calm the situation, the government made peace with the Natives but soon changed its mind and adopted the Indian Removal Act, which ordered the Natives to move west of the Mississippi River into the so-called Indian Territory (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 36).

The Removal Act set in motion the gradual relocation of the Native Americans further west. Some Natives became Christianized and culturally assimilated with the settlers, but even those were eventually moved out. An event that became known as "The Trail of Tears" caused the death of about twenty-five per cent of the whole Cherokee population (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 36-38).

1.3.3 Asian, Latino and European immigrants

In the middle of the 19th century, the rate of immigration increased. Most immigrants were from Great Britain, Germany, and Ireland, but more people from other parts of

Europe were coming to the US at the end of the century. In order to deal with the increasing immigration, Ellis Island was opened, a place where immigrants were medically examined and were either allowed or denied entry to the country (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 76-77).

With the increasing immigration, American people started seeing the immigrants as a threat to the American culture and the way of life. The Chinese were especially discriminated based on their physical difference and language. The hostility led to limiting the immigration of Asians and, later in the 1920s, banning their entry to the US. Also, a new system of immigration was introduced, favouring nationalities most represented in the US while restricting eastern and southern Europeans (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 79).

2 Life of H. P. Lovecraft

2.1 Growing up in Providence

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born in 1890 in Providence, Rhode Island, to Winfield Scott Lovecraft and Sarah Susan Lovecraft. Circumstances in which his parents had met have not been known since his father was believed to work as a salesman in New York while Susan lived with her parents in Providence. Susan's father, Whipple Phillips, was a successful businessman who, after a financial collapse in 1870, moved to Providence in order to recover. There, Whipple owned a factory, and his family was considered aristocratic in Providence's social circles (Joshi, 2013, p. 7-12).

Although Howard was born in Providence, the family spent only a short time there, around three months. As his father was a salesman, they moved a lot. In 1892 they resided in Auburndale, where they lived with a writer Louise Imogen Guiney for a short period of time. Howard became close to Guiney, who taught him to recite poetry (Joshi, 2013, p. 18-20).

In 1893, Howard's father became mentally ill and spent most of the following years in a hospital in Providence. He then died in 1898 of "general paralysis", which was later believed to have been caused by syphilis. Right after his father's admittance, in 1893, Howard and his mother moved to Providence to live with Whipple, Howard's grandfather, to be closer to the father (Joshi, 2013, p. 21-25). Whipple had a significant influence on little Howard. Thanks to his grandfather, Howard was told scary stories, taught about art and was introduced to Roman culture through many antiquities his grandfather brought him from his travels (ibid., p. 28). Lovecraft's fondness for Roman culture can be seen in many of his stories. Apart from Roman culture, residing with his grandfather gave Howard access to a library containing books that had a major impact on his literary works and even brought him to become a writer. Introduced to literature by Grimm's Fairy Tales at 4, by the age of 7, he had already read an impressive amount of poetry and prose from the late 17th century to early 19th century, including Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner or The Age of Fable by Thomas Bulfinch (ibid., p. 32-38). At the age of 8, he discovered the

works of Edgar Allan Poe, for Lovecraft, probably the most influential literary writer (ibid., p. 44).

The year Lovecraft discovered E. A. Poe was significant because he started going to school and got interested in many scientific areas - mainly astronomy, chemistry, and psychology (Joshi, 2013, p. 58-61). The astronomy also led him later to write and self-publish his own periodicals. Many of the issues survived to this day (ibid., p. 82-83). The school attendance brought Lovecraft new friends because up until then, activities he had done were individualistic or included only his family members (ibid., p. 68). Despite the intellectual gap between Lovecraft and his classmates, Long (1975, p. 24) suggests he was not harassed in any way. He even engaged in many playful activities (Joshi, 2013, p. 89-90). Still, it was not easy for Lovecraft making new friends, even later in his life, but when he did, the friendships were long-lasting (ibid., p. 95).

At the age of 14, Lovecraft's idyllic life at Angell Street came to an end when his grandfather died. Prior to this event, the family struggled economically because of the grandfather's business, so when Whipple died, Lovecraft and his mother were forced to move to a flat nearby. At that time, Lovecraft was, for the first time, thinking about committing suicide because he was not able to deal with the change (Lovecraft, Joshi, 2019, p. 57-58). Although the flat they moved in was not far, and for two people quite large, it meant for Lovecraft a loss of childhood (Joshi, 2013, p. 96), the place he had known, and the grandfather who essentially substituted his father.

The year 1921 was of considerable changes for Lovecraft. First, his mother died in May after surgery, which was very tough for him. However, after a few weeks, when, in order to continue his life, Lovecraft attended a convention for amateur journalists in Boston, he met Sonia Greene (Joshi, 2013, p. 390, 400), who later became his wife. Sonia was older than Lovecraft and already had a grown-up daughter, but Long (1975, p. 30) suggests she was quite beautiful and her age did not matter much because, as he writes: "... a stunningly beautiful woman has always seemed ageless."

2.2 Writing career

The most striking fact is that Lovecraft knew he wanted to become a writer when he was no more than 6 or 7 years old. At that time, he wrote his first poem called “The Young Folk’s Ulysses”, which was published as part of Harper’s half hour series (Joshi, 2013, p. 39-41).

Lovecraft wrote numerous short stories and poems throughout his life, but he never really aspired to become a professional writer (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 38). As he considered himself a gentleman, it was not suitable for a gentleman to write for public and commercial use, so the only right way for him was to keep it as a hobby (ibid., p. 92). Although his works were being published, it was never his priority to write for money. Money was not that important for Lovecraft. With no deadlines and expectations to meet, he got a certain amount of freedom to write when and what he wanted. At the age of 35, he even considered not writing at all, but eventually continued (ibid., p. 38-39). The disinterest in money is best expressed when he first submitted several of his short stories to *Weird Tales* - he specifically asked them not to do any changes and corrections; otherwise, they should not print them at all (ibid., p.93).

However, there was one time in Lovecraft’s life when he began being concerned about money; it was when he moved to New York to live with his wife, Sonia. This period made Lovecraft more sociable. He even started to think about becoming a professional writer. However, in the end, Lovecraft could not find any job, even a simple one, and slowly sank into poverty. At that time, his hatred for immigrants arose when he watched them get adapted to society more easily than Lovecraft. Not being able to secure himself a job, Lovecraft was forced to move back from New York to Providence to live with his aunt (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 99-102). Despite such a negative experience, according to Long (1975, p. 18), the time spent in New York had a positive impact on Lovecraft, for he kept the sociability acquired in New York.

2.3 Lovecraft and racism

In order to better understand the reason behind so many racist remarks serving seemingly no real purpose, it is essential to understand, or at least know, certain events that happened to Lovecraft. He was not, until his adulthood, particularly racist; his views of racial minorities were that of an average white American citizen (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 105). According to Houellebecq (2008, p. 106), the breaking point that changed Lovecraft's opinions of minorities came when he moved to New York, where he lived in an area inhabited by immigrants. While in New York, Lovecraft was, for the first time in his life, in need of money to secure his wife Sonia after she had lost her job. Lovecraft wrote to many employers with no success. He was not even able to find any menial job. At that time, he "began to feel bitterness toward immigrants of diverse origins, who he saw blending easily into the swirling *melting pot*" (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 102). Lovecraft's repulsion against immigrants grew stronger over time to the extent that he started theorising how to deal with them - whether to isolate them or even kill them (ibid., p. 106-108).

This fear of immigrants and people of different nationalities or races manifested in Lovecraft's stories, poems and letters. The public release of the letters, thousands of them, helped understand Lovecraft's works and his life.

Miéville (in Simmons, 2013, p. 4) suggests that Lovecraft's horror "is above all horror of 'inferior races,' miscegenation, and cultural decline". Simmons (2013, p. 15-16) suggests that the anxiety of other races and nationalities was common and widespread at the beginning of the 20th century and that Lovecraft only "incorporates contemporary racist theories ... into his more famous short fiction". He further supports the claim by mentioning the Immigration Act passed in 1924 (Simmons, 2013, p. 15-16), limiting the number of immigrants allowed into the USA.

Long (1975, p. 158) defends Lovecraft that labelling him as racist "is not only false, but highly misleading", presenting several reasons why. One reason was that many of the assumptions were based on Lovecraft's private letters to family members, which were misinterpreted, stating that he "likely ... appeared to his aunts as they wished him to be, that some of his 'racist' statements were made, not out of deep conviction, but out of a

desire to be congenial with the views held by others" (Long, 1975, p. 158-159). Another reason was Lovecraft's behaviour that never exhibited a sign of any physical or verbal discrimination, and, according to Long, "it is the behaviour that counts", further stating that his wife was Jewish (Long, 1975, p. 158).

Houellebecq (2008, p. 105) suggests that "Lovecraft had in fact always been a racist", but also states that after his stay in New York, Lovecraft's hatred was not toward a specific race, but that "he hated them all and was incapable of any greater specificity" (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 107).

Whisker (in Simmons, 2013, p. 32-34) explores the role of female characters in Lovecraft's works, suggesting them being the source of the miscegenation and alien monsters. Therefore, linking Lovecraft's anxiety and fear of racial degradation and invasion of other races to women and their sexual activity. The depiction of women in the stories further suggests Lovecraft's misogynistic views.

2.4 Opinions and worldview

Lovecraft was a unique person, quite different from the majority of people. For example, he did not care about money, detested democracy and had a low opinion of freedom (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 39). All of those things could be associated with the American dream. However, one thing that Lovecraft shared with many other Americans was his racist views.

2.4.1 Foreigners in general

Lovecraft's racist opinions were not only limited to African Americans, American Indians, Asians or Hispanics, but to all foreigners who came to the US - Jews, Italians, Poles, and others, who were not of Anglo-Saxon blood. In Lovecraft's eyes, foreigners were a cause of the decay of New England. According to Joshi (2013, p. 341), his short story "The Street" is an excellent example of such a view. A once beautiful and idyllic street with waves of newcomers was being destroyed and slowly losing its soul.

Lovecraft exhibited his hostility to foreigners at the early age of 14, when he went to a high school with a large presence of Jewish students. By some, he was even considered anti-semitic, though the reason for such a label is not known (Joshi, 2013, p. 112).

Lovecraft held a view that Anglo-Saxons were a superior race to other races (Joshi, 2013, p. 213); he even praised England and showed his affection in his poem "An American to Mother England":

England! My England! Can the surging sea
That lies between us tear my heart from thee? (Lovecraft, 2020, p. 29)

At the end of the poem, Lovecraft identifies himself with an Anglo-Saxon race:

Let not the wide Atlantic's wildest wave
Burst the blest bonds that fav'ring Nature gave:
Connecting surges 'twixt the nations run,
Our Saxon souls dissolving into one! (Lovecraft, 2020, p. 30)

2.4.2 Black people

Lovecraft was convinced that the inferiority of black people was due to biology that was, at that time, "scientifically" proven. The rebuttal of such a theory was only being slowly recognised. Nevertheless, the inferiority was supported by many influential figures like Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. For example, Lincoln could not imagine people of the black race ever being equal to white people (Joshi, 2013, p. 112).

Lovecraft also held a feeling of nostalgia for the pre-Civil war South. In his youth, he read quite a lot of white racist literature, including Thomas Dixon, Jr, Jack London and Frank Norris, who propagated the idea of black people's inferiority (Joshi, 2013, p. 113). This kind of literature is believed to be one of the possible sources of Lovecraft's racist views.

2.4.3 Lovecraft's self-image

Throughout his life, Lovecraft considered himself a gentleman. It was, for example, one of the reasons he did not become a professional writer. The idea of a gentleman, or

specifically "an old gentleman" as Lovecraft used to call himself, formed in his mind in his 20s. At 30, he considered himself quite old and used to call his close friends, with whom he corresponded a lot, his sons and grandsons, even though some were even older than Lovecraft (Long, 1975, p. 27).

Lovecraft expressed this feeling of being old in the short story "A Reminiscence of Dr. Samuel Johnson". The narrator, with whom Lovecraft probably identified himself, for they both were born in 1890, states that, in reality, he was born much earlier, in the 17th century:

"Be it then known that I was born on the family Estate in *Devonshire*, on the 10th day of August, 1690..." (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 30)

Through the narrator, Lovecraft shows his admiration and love of England and the 18th century in which the story is set. Long (1975, p. 63) suggests that Lovecraft would have perfectly fitted in the society of the 18th century.

2.5 Lovecraft's legacy

Despite having several followers who admired his work, Lovecraft never became widely recognised as a writer during his life. His works found their way to a broad audience of readers only after his death, thanks to his closest friends, who devoted their lives to collecting and publishing all of Lovecraft's works (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 38-40).

Many years after his death, Lovecraft's works were being rediscovered by young readers creating almost cult-like circles in collages (Long, 1975, p. 9). Finally, Lovecraft got the attention he rightly deserved. The rise in fame was caused by releasing the short stories in book form around 1970, and since then, his stories have been translated into many languages around the world, and new studies and criticisms have come out (Joshi in Simmons, 2013, p. xiv-xv). To this day, his stories, themes, memorable characters, and monsters are being immortalised in movies, video games and works of other writers. According to Joshi (in Simmons, 2013, p. xv), no other writer, not even Edgar Allan Poe, has been so widely popularised to this day.

Lovecraft is probably mostly acknowledged for creating completely new mythology (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 35) and a pantheon of gods, generally known as “Cthulhu mythos”. The term itself is attributed to August Derleth, who expanded the mythos with his own writing (Joshi in Simmons, 2013, p. xiii).

3 Lovecraft's works

Most of Lovecraft's stories can be described as weird tales featuring supernatural elements. Many of them are set in the past, some even in ancient times (Joshi, 2013, p. 31). This fascination with weird and ancient Lovecraft took up when he was little. The first books he read were Grimm's Fairy Tales and the Arabian Nights, and one book in particular that probably affected his early works was Rime of the Ancient Mariner, which Lovecraft read when he was only six years old (ibid., p. 31-33).

Since childhood, Lovecraft was enchanted by antique objects like old colonial houses in Massachusetts, where many of his stories fictionally occurred (Joshi, 2013, p. 29-30). His passion for things of old began when he discovered a library in the attic of their house, where most of the books were from the late 17th to early 19th century (ibid, p. 35-36).

3.1 Features of racism

H. P. Lovecraft wrote in his life more than 60 short stories, three short novels, and many poems whose exact number is unknown (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 40). While none of the stories can be said to feature a racist theme overtly, many of them contain either a symbol that could be understood, in reference to the history of the USA, as racist or mention an apparent negative reference to an American racial minority or different race usually other than white American.

3.1.1 Characters

When reading Lovecraft's stories, one thing that stands out is the characters appearing in them. With some exceptions, the main characters of most stories are usually white male Americans resembling Lovecraft himself (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 109). While not usually explicitly expressed, the main characters, who frequently serve as narrators, can be assumed to be white, considering Lovecraft's negative opinion of other races. On the other hand, almost every villain, criminal or fiend is either of a different race (Native American,

African American, Mexican, Inuit, Asian) or bears specific negative characteristics of those minorities that are today considered racial stereotypes.

3.1.2 Depiction of Cthulhu and other entities

Several stories share the same theme, that of the Cthulhu mythos. A pantheon of "Old Ones" who came from stars before humans existed. When describing the Old Ones, their minions and other monsters, Lovecraft showed extraordinary imagination. The monsters were depicted in a very passionate way.

A regular reader may see nothing wrong with such a description. However, knowing Lovecraft, these characteristics are not unlike those Lovecraft used in his letters to describe immigrants with whom he came in contact during his stay in New York (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 107).

In one of his letters, Lovecraft expresses his opinions of immigrants as "... monstrous and nebulous adumbrations of the pithecanthropoid and amoebal; vaguely moulded from some stinking viscous slime of earth's corruption, and slithering and oozing in and on the filthy streets or in and out of windows and doorways in a fashion suggestive of nothing but infesting worms or deep-sea unnamabilities" (Houellebecq, 2008, p. 106). This description would perfectly fit some of the monstrous fiends in Lovecraft's stories.

3.1.3 African Americans and the Cthulhu cultists

An excellent example of the typical good and evil characters of Lovecraft's stories is the short story 'The Call of Cthulhu'.

The good characters of the story feature the narrator, a grand nephew of Professor Angell, who continues the investigation of an unknown cult after the sudden death of his grand-uncle. Another is Anthony Wilcox, a student who created a sculpture of Cthulhu he had seen in his dreams, and inspector Legrasse investigating dark cults. All of those characters appear to be white and well-educated.

On the other hand, evil characters of the story are either African American or mixed race. African Americans are, in Lovecraft's stories, called "negros", a term that is today considered racist, but at the beginning of the 20th century, the term was not loaded and was widely used in American society.

The beginning of the story describes the death of professor Angell as "falling suddenly, as witnesses said, after having been jostled by a nautical-looking negro who had come from one of the queer dark courts" (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 382). Later, the individual responsible for the professor's death is considered a member of the cult of Cthulhu. The cult is discovered by inspector Legrasse who, organising a raid on a supposed voodoo gathering in New Orleans, uncovered a strange cult "infinitely more diabolic than even the blackest of the African voodoo circles" (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 388).

The idea of an organised raid on voodoo cults in New Orleans serves as a reminder of the US history. In the 19th century, voodoo practices grew in popularity in New Orleans due to the increasing number of slaves being brought to Louisiana (Touchstone, 1972, p. 374). In 1868 the police raided a voodoo gathering and detained several people. Since then, as Touchstone (1972, p. 375-376) states, the events of such raids repeated over the years, so voodoo had to be practised more secretly.

3.1.4 A yellow threat

Several stories feature tribes of Inuits which are portrayed in a negative way as an inferior race and a threat to society.

In the short story "Polaris", there is a city called Olathöe, which has been threatened by yellow creatures the author calls "Inutos" and "Esquimaux". He describes them as "squat, hellish, yellow fiends who five years ago appeared out of the unknown west to ravage the confines of our kingdoms" and "squad yellow creatures ... whom they call 'Esquimaux'" (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 36-37). The reference might be connected to history, as described in section 1.3.3, when people of the USA felt threatened by immigrants from Asia, mainly by their different look, which ultimately led to banning their entrance to the USA.

In "Call of Cthulhu", Inuits are encountered by one of the characters during research in Greenland and Iceland. The character similarly describes them as "a singular tribe or cult of degenerate Esquimaux whose religion, a curious form of devil-worship, chilled him with its deliberate bloodthirstiness and repulsiveness" (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 389).

3.1.5 Native Americans

Native Americans are mentioned in a number of Lovecraft's short stories. Some occurrences are neutral without derogatory remarks, while others have a negative connotation. Still, as it is common for Lovecraft, no primary character in any short story has Native American origin. So, as minor characters, they often serve as an indication of wisdom or something ancient.

The short story "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" describes the main character, Joe Slater, as "white trash", a primitive peasant of an isolated community that lacks moral standards and is below any native American (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 40). It only indicates that Lovecraft's view of Native Americans was not very positive.

Another short story, "The Nameless City", uses the term 'Indian' as a label for a Native American (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 171). Historically, 'Indian' was a name given to the natives by European colonists who initially thought they had landed in India (O'Callaghan, 1990, p. 4). In the 1960s, it was replaced by the more neutral term "Native American" and later by "Indigenous people", which has been used since the official use by the UN in the early 2000s (source?). Though the term "Indian" may not seem racist, it reminds many Native Americans the suffering of their ancestors (Raypole, 2022).

Therefore, since the commonly used term for a Native American during Lovecraft's life was "Indian", it should not be perceived, the term alone, as negative or racist. However, today it is considered wrong and outdated, possibly racist.

3.1.6 Poorly educated Mexicans

In the story "The Transition of Juan Romero", the narrator, a white American gold miner, describes his co-worker, Juan Romero of Mexican origin, as "One of a large herd of unkempt Mexicans...", his features as "vastly unlike those of the average 'Greaser'" and further as "ignorant and dirty" and "at home amongst the other brown-skinned Mexicans" (Lovecraft, 2016, p.58). With this derogatory description, the author suggests the stereotype of Mexican people - that a typical Mexican is dirty and poorly educated and further degrades them to animals using the word "herd", which is commonly used for a group of animals.

3.1.7 Symbols of white supremacy

Apart from explicit occurrences of racism, some ideas are expressed implicitly through certain symbols like typical architecture that has been linked to white supremacy.

In the short story 'Polaris', the narrator falls asleep and awakens in a strange land near a town of marble walls, towers, streets and statues (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 35). The vision was initially a dream Lovecraft had and described in one of his letters (Joshi, 2013, p. 256). In another short story, 'The Temple', the main protagonist, a German soldier, descends to the ocean floor in a submarine where he discovers the ancient city of Atlantis. The city is described as a bunch of buildings that: "Most appeared to be of marble, gleaming whitely in the rays of the searchlight." (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 116-117)

These marble cities and columns were most likely inspired by the Ancient Rome architecture that Lovecraft had been very fond of since childhood (Joshi, 2013, p. 37-38). Since the late 18th century, Ancient Greek and Roman architecture saw its revival in what became known as neoclassical architecture featuring marble structures and columns. The most iconic example is probably the US Capitol which Thomas Jefferson wanted in a style of ancient Roman architecture (Neoclassical, n. d.). According to Monteiro (2020), these structures have served as symbols of white supremacy and a reminder of the oppression of black people. Monteiro further labels these buildings and structures as power structures because they were being built by only white men who were slave-owners. For example,

Thomas Jefferson, in his life, was the owner of more than six hundred slaves (Slavery FAQs - Property, n. d.).

3.1.8 The decline of the white race

Lovecraft's racial opinions and theories were not limited only to races like African Americans, Native Americans, Asians, or immigrants but also to the white race. He shared an ideology of racial purity that mixing races would lead to inferiority and, therefore, the race's decline. The idea of an outcome of miscegenation is expressed in some of Lovecraft's short stories.

A good example is Arthur Jermyn in "Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family", who committed suicide by setting himself on fire after learning his ancestor, Wade Jermyn, served as a God to an African tribe after marrying an ape-like princess (Ralickas, 2007, p. 370). However, the story also shows the idea of the superiority of the white race when a white man is taken for a God by a tribe of ape-like beings.

An additional instance of racial decline manifests itself in "The Shadow over Innsmouth", where the citizens of Innsmouth mingled over generations with sea creatures. The narrator describes his first acquaintance with such a person:

Just what foreign blood was in him I could not even guess. His oddities certainly did not look Asiatic, Polynesian, Levantine, or negroid, yet I could see why the people found him alien. I myself would have thought of biological degeneration rather than alienage. (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 875-876)

According to Ralickas (2007, p. 371), every human, regardless of race, is, in Lovecraft's eyes, susceptible to primeval instincts. However, other characters of different races than white are more susceptible and more frequently depicted as such, which makes them, in Lovecraft's stories, look inferior to ideal white Anglo-Saxons.

In the short story "The Rats in the Walls", the main character, a descendant of a once noble family, discovers the fate of his ancestors, who had become cannibalistic, and upon finding the fact, he also succumbs to the same impulse (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 272-273).

Another result of miscegenation and slow degeneration occurs in "The Lurking Fear", where the narrator investigates attacks of unknown creatures in an area surrounding the Martense mansion. The narrator manages to kill one such ape-like creature only to realise it was, in fact, a descendant of the Martense family, who was "the ultimate product of mammalian degeneration; the frightful outcome of isolated spawning, multiplication, and cannibal nutrition above and below the ground" (Lovecraft, 2016, p. 256).

Conclusions

The purpose of the thesis was to analyse racism in H. P. Lovecraft's works. Without a doubt, Lovecraft's short stories contain quite a number of racist references, some clearly visible, while others are symbolic and sometimes hidden to the average reader.

Racism is an issue that has been difficult to define, and researchers have struggled to provide a complex theory. Racism cannot be measured and is ever-evolving with changes in society. In the USA, racism has been present since the first slaves were brought to its shores from Africa. The struggle of African Americans was joined by Native Americans who were being pushed out of their territories and their numbers diminished. In the following centuries, other minorities, mainly based on their different appearance, were discriminated against and regarded as inferior, for American society was run mostly by descendants of white Europeans whose sense of superiority and the belief in their right to control other races was supported by racial theories for a long time.

Most researchers agree that Lovecraft shared such ideas of white race superiority, and he put the ideas into his stories. However, the ideas of superior and inferior races were not uncommon in American society, so Lovecraft could be considered an average American of his time. There might have been several possible sources of racism for Lovecraft. One of the sources could have been his family, specifically his grandfather and his aunts. The other influences could have been the books he read – mostly by white racist men like Thomas Dixon, Jr. Later in his life, the hatred towards racial minorities was expanded by different kinds of immigrants and intensified when Lovecraft could not find a suitable job in New York while feeling that the immigrants more easily fitted into society than himself.

In his works, Lovecraft reflected the racial opinions toward African Americans, Native Americans, Asians and Latinos, who were almost always depicted in a negative way. However, not even the “superior” white race escaped Lovecraft's criticism. He was afraid of miscegenation and interbreeding that might lead to degradation and degeneration of a once superior race, as seen in some of his stories.

Lovecraft's works became famous and widely read only after his death, thanks to the dedication of his friends and fellow authors. Since then, many researchers and critics have

analysed his short stories, poems and private letters to better understand Lovecraft's mind and life. In the end, it seems that the quality and originality overshadowed the racism because Lovecraft's weird fiction has been influencing music, movies, literature, video games and pop culture in general to this day.

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Anotace

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Název práce:	Rasismus v díle H. P. Lovecrafta
Název práce v angličtině:	Racism in the Works of H. P. Lovecraft
Anotace práce:	Bakalářská práce „Rasismus v díle H. P. Lovecrafta“ se zabývá vývojem rasismu v USA a zkoumá výskyty rasismu v povídkách H. P. Lovecrafta. Práce poskytuje přehled názorů kritiků na problematiku rasismu a rasistických odkazů v Lovecraftově díle. Cílem práce je identifikovat výskyty rasismu a nalézt jejich zdroj v událostech Lovecraftova života a společnosti na počátku dvacátého století.
Klíčová slova:	Lovecraft, teorie rasismu, rasová teorie, rasismus, rasové menšiny
Anotace v angličtině:	The bachelor's thesis "Racism in the works of H. P. Lovecraft" explores the development of racism in the USA and racist occurrences in H. P. Lovecraft's short stories. The work provides an overview of critics' opinions and views on the matter of racism and racist references in Lovecraft's works. The thesis aims to identify the racist occurrences and find their source in events of Lovecraft's life and the society of the early 20 th century.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Lovecraft, theory of racism, racial theory, racism, racial minorities
Přílohy vázané v práci:	-
Rozsah práce:	35 stran
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