

A Schopenhauerian Reading of Lovecraft's Fiction: The Will, the Intellect, and Never-Ending Struggle of Life in Cosmic Horror

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Abstract:

This essay aims to explore how Lovecraft applies Schopenhauer's theory of the will. Lovecraft's works reflect Schopenhauerian Will, wherein Schopenhauer underscores the service of the intellect to the will. Yet Lovecraft develops his cosmic horror by reiterating the vanishing of humanism into an unknown amorphous form of life due to the influence of a monstrous force within the will. The first section of the essay involves the explication of the will in Schopenhauerian ideas: the will itself is immanent, undifferentiated, and indifferent to the existence of an individual while it maintains the existence of the species. The second section provides a discussion of Lovecraft's worldview. The significant notion in Lovecraft's view of the world as something sad parallels Schopenhauer's theory regarding the will and immeasurable sufferings in the world of phenomenon. However, the horror presented in Lovecraft's fiction might be more frightening than the blind force of the will in Schopenhauer's ideas: Lovecraft's creatures regress to amorphous beings manipulated by the monstrous force of the will. Finally, the essay focuses on Lovecraft's fiction, including *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* and *At the Mountains of Madness*, tracing the extraterrestrial beings as representations of an indefatigable and despotic will.

Keywords: Schopenhauer, Lovecraft, the will to live, cosmic horror, amorphous form

Introduction

Lovecraft's fiction has been posited as a straightforward reflection of the author's fantasy, with no basis in reality, as there are so many phantasmagoria combined with incredible events. One of the most impressive scenes in Lovecraft's fiction is the one depicting the insanity of Danforth in *At the Mountains of Madness* (as Danforth and his professor William Dyer are escaping from the mountains of the Antarctic, Danforth continues to whisper "bizarre conceptions" that recall a mysterious book, *the Necronomicon*). Other strange things include an unknown color that disturbs the mental state in "The Colour Out of Space" and the mental breakdown of the narrator in *The Shadow*

over *Innsmouth* before his assimilation into a world of an alien being. Given his apparent lack of interest in writing about “ordinary people,” we might believe that the writings of Lovecraft have nothing to do with reality. However, we cannot deny that many of his stories are inspired by real world locations. It is undeniable that Lovecraft writes about the truth: through his weird settings and characters, he reveals a world not as one linked to enlightenment, but as one linked to darkness and horror. As Morgan remarks in “Cosmic Errors: The Peculiar legacy of H. P. Lovecraft,” Lovecraft’s protagonists are “verbal wind-up toys subjected to whatever universal unknowns his stories throw at them” (Morgan 2017). Lovecraft writes of his own reality, a painful and disappointing life, in many ways integrating Schopenhauer’s philosophy of the will into his stories.

Schopenhauer’s Will: immanence, un-differentiation, and its relationship with the world

Schopenhauer, in *The World as Will and Representation*, expatiates on the will and its relationship with the world of phenomenon. Schopenhauer recognizes the will as a blind force of the desire to live which exists immanently within each and every living organism: “the hitherto infallible certainty and regularity with which the will worked in inorganic and merely vegetative nature, rested on the fact that it alone in its original inner being was active as blind urge, as will, without assistance, but also without interruption” (1:150).¹ The will “in itself is absolutely free and entirely self-determining, and for it there is no law” (Schopenhauer Volume I 1966, 285). Moreover, he posits through his works that the will “is only a blind, irresistible urge, as we see it appear in inorganic and vegetable nature and in their laws, and also in the vegetative part of our own life” (275). Further, the will itself is undifferentiated and inaccessible. A variety of differentiated objects we see is not the will itself, but merely objects within the phenomena of the world which stand as representations of the will. The will, as it manifests itself in such a variety of ways in the world as representation, is objectified in the hierarchy of beings. All objects in the world as representation execute the same will: “all things in the world are the objectivity of one and the same will” (144). Human beings are identified as higher grades of phenomena of the objectification of will, while chemicals and mechanical forces such as gravity function as lower grades. Other animals and plants rank between humans and simple chemistry within this hierarchy. Each phenomenon of the will strives for higher grades of objectification. As such, conflicts occur between the lower grades of the objectification of the will. As the lower grades are subsumed, higher grades of the objectification of the will are produced: “from the contest of lower phenomena the higher one arises, swallowing up all of them, but also realizing in the higher degree the tendency of them all” (145). However, as these higher grades of the objectification of the will are produced, striving to exist among each lower grade is incessant: “Although these lower Ideas have been brought into subjection, they still constantly strive to reach an independent and complete expression of their inner nature” (146). Those subdued lower

grades strive to win their way back when the higher grades decline and die. Thus, what every individual manifests is the will to live in this incessant circle of life and death. In other words, the will is the will to live, manifesting itself in all organisms without distinction; it is the same force at work in all animals, plants, and inorganic bodies.

Schopenhauer's Will: suffering in the continuity of life

The will serves as a blind urge maintaining the continuity of life in nature. The concept of life here refers not the life of an individual, but the whole of nature. Though each individual comes into being and then dies, its death cannot "injure the whole of nature" (Schopenhauer Volume I 1966, 276), since new individuals will come into beings that compensate for the loss of those individuals who pass:

For it is not the individual that nature cares for, but only the species; and in all seriousness she urges the preservation of the species, since she provides for this so lavishly through the immense surplus of the seed and the great strength of the fructifying impulse. The individual, on the contrary, has no value for nature, and can have none, for infinite time, infinite space, and the infinite number of possible individuals therein are her kingdom. Therefore, nature is always ready to let the individuals fall, and the individual is accordingly not only exposed to destruction in a thousand ways from the most insignificant accidents, but is even destined for this and is led towards it by nature herself [...]. (Schopenhauer Volume I 1966, 276)

Though the mechanism of nature, under the urge of the will, ensures the continuity of all species in nature, it is indifferent to individuals: "the affairs of individuals in all their ephemeral totality are very insignificant; hence he is always ready to sacrifice these arbitrarily" (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 549). Nature is indifferent to individuals when individuals are urged to "serve the maintenance of the species" by the will, and this makes the continuity of life a never-ending cycle of suffering.

Schopenhauer perceives suffering in the phenomena of the world. Nothing in the world can exempt any individual from suffering. Perhaps knowledge or intellect can help solve predicaments or enlighten one's spirits, but that does not entail perpetual liberation from the force of the will. Schopenhauer's argument that the intellect is enslaved by the will manifests the evidence that the essence of life is suffering. The will masters the intellect, for it possesses certain qualities that make the destiny of manipulation of the intellect inevitable. The will is metaphysical and immortal, whereas the intellect is something physical and subject to decline and exhaustion.

The intellect grows tired; the will is untiring [...]. It [the will] alone is active, unbidden and of its own accord, and hence often too early and too much [...]. The intellect, on the contrary, develops slowly, following on

the completion of the brain and the maturity of the whole organism. There are the conditions of the intellect, just because it is only a somatic function. (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 211-212)

The perpetual thing is not the intellect, but the will. The will is the kernel of inner nature; it is indefatigable and shows itself in the desires and passions that permanently affect an individual, including influencing the intellect of that individual. While intellect or knowledge is “exposed to oblivion,” the will is “unchangeable, indestructible, does not grow old [...]” (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 239); the real destiny of the intellect is “the service of the will” (386). The intellect requires rest just as the other organs in the body need rest, because when it is overused by the will, it might lose itself: “it becomes permanently dull, and in old age this dullness can pass into complete incapacity, childishness, imbecility, and madness” (213). There are examples in which the individual escapes the manipulation of the will, but this escape is temporary. For example, genius, as “an intellect that has become unfaithful to its destiny” of being enslaved by the will (386), helps maintain a “*pure subject of knowing*” (219).² When the intellect of the genius successfully escapes enslavement by the will, the genius does not lose all faculties of reason. As such, without the disturbing influence of the will, or through the emancipation from the service of the will (386), the intellect of the genius is still capable of operating correctly. However, genius is very rare to achieve, if not impossible, and is destined to decline because it is a somatic function.

Schopenhauerian Will in Lovecraft's worldview

It is uncertain whether Lovecraft read Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*, but the significant notion in Schopenhauer's theory regarding the will's dominance on nature is seen in Lovecraft's stories. Lovecraft applies Schopenhauer's enunciation of the world as representation of the will. His conviction of the insignificance of human beings complies with Schopenhauer's notion of the subordination of the body and intellect to the will. However, Lovecraft revises Schopenhauerian Will in terms of cosmic horror. While Schopenhauer argues that the will urges the preservation of the species in the circulation of life and death,³ Lovecraft's cosmic horror reveals the horror in the extinction of human beings and vanishing humanism along with the possibility of inter-species hybrid individuals. To reiterate the horror of the vanishing human species, Lovecraft dramatizes the will as an amorphous force of a monstrosity that might transform human beings into unknown beings. Recognizing the power of the will, both Schopenhauer and Lovecraft ascertain that immeasurable suffering is an essential part of life.

As S.T. Joshi notes, Schopenhauer profoundly affects Lovecraft's ethics concerning life, existence, and suffering. Both Schopenhauer and Lovecraft perceive that suffering is an inseparable part of life (Joshi 1990, 30). “It is absurd to look upon the enormous amount of pain that abounds

everywhere in the world, and originates in needs and necessities inseparable from life itself, as serving no purpose at all and the result of mere chance,” says Schopenhauer in “On the Sufferings of the World” (Schopenhauer 2004). “All life is fundamentally and inextricably sad,” reiterates Lovecraft (Lovecraft 1971, 292). Lovecraft situates the immeasurable pain and suffering in his weird fiction wherein the monstrosity of horror is pervasive in the world of phenomenon, which is itself a representation of the will.

Lovecraft’s most intelligent creatures — the extraterrestrial beings who lived on Earth before human beings — are driven by the will to survive, which is the same will that urges humans and all earthly creatures to live. The force that urges all lives to persevere depends not on the faculty of reason, but on the indefatigable will, which, as manifested in the world of phenomenon, is absolutely inhuman. As Ben Woodard in “Mad Speculation and Absolute Inhumanism” indicates, it is not humanism, but “the absolute inhumanism” (Woodard 2012, 172) that dominates the universe. Lovecraft links inhumanism of the monstrous extraterrestrial beings to the manifestation of the will in time and space. For example, his “sickly amorphous nature of the Shoggoths” that “invade[s] materialism at large” (178) is the manifestation of the will to live. The monstrosity embodied in Lovecraft’s Old Ones, who lived on Earth before human beings and who are seeking their own survival, is actually the manifestation of the indefatigable will in the world of phenomenon. Though the will manifested in the Old Ones and the Shoggoths is the same will manifested in human beings, those extraterrestrial beings possess a stronger will to live, strong enough to eliminate human beings.

The force of intellect is subject to the force of will; it is enslaved to the will until it is completely exhausted. The will is indefatigable, whereas the intellect and body of human beings are subject to decline and death. Thus, the faculty of reason in humanity is subject to decline and dissipation; it cannot hold out permanently against the dark force of the will. Although human beings have constructed a civilization in order to shelter themselves from dissipation, their civilization “provides only a thin barrier against the cosmic and ever-present pressures ensuring our eventual destruction” (Link 2016, xiii).

In Lovecraft’s works, the will to live that his human beings sense in those alien beings is something immanent mirroring their inner nature. When his human characters encounter a monstrous alien being or a preternatural force, whether it is violence or a contagious germ, the inner nature within leads them to mentally break down, for those human characters might have perceived that inner nature — something like an enormous amount of horror and suffering — dominates nature as never-ending existence and suffering on Earth. Those human-survivors, urged by the will to live, *continue to live*, though they might be regressing to something inhuman when being subsumed by extraterrestrial beings. As Woodard notes, Lovecraft’s human characters are regressing to “a becoming-creature” (Woodard 2012, 179), for they cannot elude the amorphous force of the monstrous will. This causes human beings to feel they are “completely overwhelmed and left in a state of unending terror” (Houstoun 2011, 168).

With the recognition of pain as an essential part of life, Schopenhauer advocates “the denial of the will to live” in order to lessen the influence of the will on life. In much the same vein, Lovecraft resorts to the Epicurean principles of promoting tranquility and calmness in life (Joshi 1990, 31). Schopenhauer enunciates that the will is defined as the force that drives an endless and insatiable striving for life; this incessant drive to live, whether at the moment of saving lives in crises or looking to satisfy one’s desires, might lead to madness if one cannot recover rationality. The will is unchangeable; it is fully integrated with life itself. However, the will, though unchangeable and indestructible, can be lessened via “asceticism and quietism” (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 615). Schopenhauer advocates a denial of the will to live, with the purpose of tranquilizing the will, to salve the suffering caused by desires and passions. With “asceticism and quietism,” the individual acquires a relief from an insatiable will that continues urging him to strive on; the individual can avoid emotions such as fear, hope, joy, desire, grief, fury and madness if the intellect remains detached from the will (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 367-375). Schopenhauer uses Buddhism in his search for tranquility via renunciation of the will. Affected by Schopenhauer, Lovecraft regards achievements in life as ephemeral trivialities and adopts a stoic attitude equivalent to Schopenhauer’s renunciation of life:

The cosmos [...] is simply a perpetual rearrangement of electrons which is constantly seething as it always has been and always will be [...]. We are conscious by accident, and during the unfortunate instant that we are so, it behooves us only to mitigate our pain and pass our time as agreeably as we may. Since good sense shews us, that pleasure is but a balance betwixt desire and fulfilment; 'tis the part of reason to avoid needless labour by having as few wants as possible, and gratifying them in a manner so quiet as not to encroach on the pleasures of others and stir them up against us. (Lovecraft 1965, 260-61)

However, Lovecraft does not depend on religion to search for renunciation of the will. On the contrary, religious rituals in Lovecraft’s literary works are dramatized as a bridge for the resurrection of his extraterrestrial beings, the prototype of horror and suffering. Apart from religion, science for Lovecraft ushers forward the force of destruction. Lovecraft’s way of lessening the misery of life — avoiding being driven towards madness — is to have a “warmth of heart and natural good feeling” (Lovecraft 1965, 247), something he finds in traditional New England before its fall into decline.

***The Dunwich Horror*: the key of the door ushering one toward unknown knowledge**

In *The Dunwich Horror*, the indefatigable will is embodied as a monstrous force in the form of the extraterrestrial entity, Yog-Sothoth. The knowledge of the will is inaccessible, but the worshiper of Yog-Sothoth, Old Whateley, intends to evoke the unknown knowledge, probably because he desires to possess the most powerful force from the will. To possess such power, he must obtain the

key for the gate held by Yog-Sothoth, since that key can open the gate leading to knowledge concerning the resurrection of the Old Ones. He then reads the book relevant to Yog-Sothoth — a copy of the *Necronomicon* — and he produces the offspring of Yog-Sothoth by marrying his daughter to Yog-Sothoth. As Wilbur and his twin brother—the interbreeding creatures of human-Yog-Sothoth — are born as the offspring of Yog-Sothoth, the key opens the gate of the door leading to the unknown knowledge. The consequence is horrible: all living creatures in Dunwich village confront fear, terror, and madness. The dogs emit “half-mad growls and barks” (Lovecraft 2016, 690) as they sense the approach of Yog-Sothoth. The whippoorwills madly snatch the souls of the dead. They pipe wildly near the dwellings of the victims, waiting for the souls of the dying:

It is vowed that the birds are psychopomps lying in wait for the souls of the dying, and that they time their eerie cries in unison with the sufferer’s struggling breath. If they can catch the fleeing soul when it leaves the body, they instantly flutter away chattering in daemonic laughter; but if they fail, they subside gradually into a disappointed silence. (Lovecraft 2016, 677)

Not only are the animals driven mad as they smell the alien body odor from Wilbur and his twin brother, but the human beings in the village also go mad. As the twin brother of Wilbur, who is representative of the monstrous force of Yog-Sothoth (the form of the will), approaches the villagers, the villagers perceive what the unknown knowledge is: the villagers scream in “a fright-mad voice” (Lovecraft 2016, 697) before they die. Perhaps what Lovecraft’s victims perceive at the moment of being killed is the amorphous force of the will that manifests itself in the world of phenomenon and drives all lives toward never-ending suffering and never-ending catastrophic regression into becoming-creatures.

***The Shadow Over Innsmouth* and “The Colour Out of Space”: germ and disease as the manifestation of the will in the world of phenomenon**

In *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, in which the Deep Ones threaten the lives of human beings, Lovecraft dramatizes the dominance of the will over human beings. The Deep Ones — a race of amphibious humanoid ocean-dwelling creatures more intelligent than humans — are seeking their resurrection by interbreeding with humans. Through the obedience of Obed Marsh and his followers, the alien beings successfully resurrect themselves by colonizing the body and wakening the nonhumanity dormant within the DNA of human beings. Obed Marsh, due to his obsession for immortality and wealth, makes deals with the Deep Ones, performing human sacrifice to the Deep Ones in exchange for wealth and forcing the villagers to breed with the Deep Ones. Since Obed Marsh married into the Deep Ones race and became subservient to the will of the Deep Ones, his

descendants are human-fish hybrids. The protagonist (Robert Olmstead), a descendant of Obed March and Pth'thya-l'yi, is born as a human, but gradually acquires fish-like physical traits and loses his mental state of rationality as he ages. Uncle Douglas and Cousin Lawrence, the relatives of Robert, go mad in the process of their transformation to amphibious beings; eventually, Uncle Douglas shoots himself, and Lawrence is shut up in a sanatorium.

Lovecraft's scenarios of the hybrid interbreeding concern the manifestation of the will in the world of the phenomenon as well as the struggle of the body against the will. Two phenomena of the objectification of the will dwell within Robert Olmstead — human beings and the Deep Ones; the lower grade (humanity) is gradually subsumed into the higher intelligent grade (amphibious creature). Finally, this transformation leads him to break from human society and return to Y'ha-nthlei, the submarine world of the immortal Deep Ones. Those town people of Innsmouth, who once resisted the Deep Ones, eventually compromise with the Deep Ones, and as a result they lose the ability to reason. Lovecraft's fictional human characters do not have much opportunity to maintain the faculties of reason; as they confront the superior will, they eventually become enslaved to the will. The intellect of human beings is something somatic that cannot conquer the immortal will.

Moreover, the will manifests itself in the form of germ and disease spreading over the ruined town in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. The town is not prosperous, but teems with disease and madness, because it has been infected by a germ. There is “the germ of an actual contagious madness” that “lurks in the depths of that shadow over Innsmouth” (Lovecraft 2016, 916). Under its influence, the appearance of those human-fish hybrids in Innsmouth is described as being characteristic of disease: having a “skin disease or deformity” (868), “some cutaneous disease” (875), “a strange and insidious disease-phenomenon” (882), etc. The odor of fish embraces the decayed city with “maddening intensity” (912). Old Zadok, an entirely human citizen who escapes being transformed by the Deep Ones in the weird, decayed city, hates “the decay, alienage, and disease around him” (896), and nevertheless goes mad due to the maddening intensity of the alien odor. Robert, after his visit to Innsmouth, is affected by “some odd nervous affliction,” gradually transferring from “the sane world of wholesome life into unnamable abysses of blackness and alienage” (921). He must have been infected by a germ of madness. Finally, he is drawn into the world of the deep sea in his dreams, scheming to rescue his cousin from a madhouse, and yearning to live in Y'ha-nthlei — the marine world of the Deep Ones. The narrator's transformation augments the horror of physical and mental corruption (Joshi 2001, 240) as well as the omnipresence of the amorphous will.

The influence of the germ is primitive, as it has been affecting all creatures since the Old Ones. Its influence is both mental and physical. Infected by the germ, Lovecraft's unfortunate human characters become physically ill and mentally unsound. The most noticeable example is “The Colour Out of Space.” In the story, an unknown meteorite poisons the soil, and its color has a “diseased,

underlying primary tone,” and “chromatic perversion” (Lovecraft 2016, 645). The unknown color brought by the meteorite is an alien entity, through which anything living on Earth, if infected, would die from the disease — a “gray brittle death.” The unfortunate Gardners, who have imbibed the polluted well-water, quickly become deranged and die. Just as with the alien odor and disease in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, so the germ that causes mental and physical corruption and death is the most ancient form of the will that all lives on Earth cannot escape.

***The Whisperer in Darkness* and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*: the enslavement of the intellect in an infinite cosmos**

As Schopenhauer enunciates, the real destiny of the intellect is “the service of the will” (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 386); many of Lovecraft’s talented characters, though capable of maintaining their reason, eventually fall victim to the will. In *The Whisperer in Darkness*, the will is externalized as monstrous extraterrestrial beings, and the intellect is embodied in the character Henry Wentworth Akeley, an intellect in the realm of science whose brain is eventually extracted and placed into a cylinder by the aliens. His intellect is shown in his letters to the narrator, Albert N. Wilmarth. In those letters, he demonstrates an abstruse understanding of the extraterrestrial race and his combat with them. On the verge of mental breakdown, he is still capable of staying sane, revealing to Wilmarth the secret murder activities of the extraterrestrial beings. Nevertheless, Akeley is eventually transformed by the extraterrestrial race: the real Akeley is mutilated, and his beheaded brain is contained in a cylinder. Later, the identity of Akeley is used by the aliens when they trap their next victim, Wilmarth. The person who whispers in person to Wilmarth is not Akeley, but a non-human being, who might be Nyarlathotep. The brains of the victims contained in a cylinder and manipulated by the aliens symbolize the enslavement of the intellects in an infinite cosmos. Further, the alien disguised as Akeley invites Wilmarth to be beheaded with his brain contained in a cylinder so as to immortalize himself and fulfill his space journey to Yuggoth, the beings’ outpost on Pluto. Wilmarth feels a vague sense of unease towards the whispers of the fake Akeley: he obeys “those whispers so slavishly” (Lovecraft 2016, 764) at the start, but gradually he senses “the queer odour” and “the sick, motionless whisperer in the dark” (766), as the fake Akeley promises him no pain in the process to an immortal body and brain. Fortunately, Wilmarth has his doubts and manages to escape the danger. The manipulative forgery of the aliens reveals a ghoulish and miserable situation: the intellect’s enslavement to the will. The beheaded brain of Akeley underscores the horror of this enslavement.

The Case of Charles Dexter Ward is another example in which the intellect is enslaved to the force of the will. Charles Ward is a young scholar interested in antiquarianism, but his indulgence in the investigation of his ancestor, Joseph Curwen, leads to misfortune. In the eighteenth century, Joseph Curwen was a shipping entrepreneur, yet his real identity was that of a malignant alchemist-

necromancer engaged in a long-term conspiracy of manipulating the world's wisest people. In cooperation with certain other necromancers, Curwen exhumed the bodies of the wisest men and resurrected and tortured them so as to gain enough knowledge to make him and his followers the most powerful. Those necromancy rituals that he and his fellow-necromancers committed to are associated with the resurrection of Yog-Sothoth. Later, Curwen was killed by the raiders, and since then he has been seeking the opportunity of resurrection. Charles' interest in this ancestor gives him this opportunity. After Charles successfully resurrects Curwen, he is then killed by Curwen, and Curwen disguises himself as Charles. However, the identity of the person behind the disguise is disclosed: some remarks of Curwen reveal themselves on the body and the mind. The body is ageing with "a morbid chill and dryness" (Lovecraft 2016, 527), and the mind is diagnosed as being taken by madness. The resurrected Curwen, living under the identity of Charles, is incarcerated in a mental asylum. He steals not only the identity of Charles, but also his intelligence.

Psychologically, too, Charles Ward [the forgery by Curwen] was unique. His madness held no affinity to any sort recorded in even the latest and most exhaustive of treatises and was conjoined to a mental force which would have made him a genius or a leader had it not been twisted into strange and grotesque forms. (Lovecraft 2016, 527)

To deter the conspiracy of Curwen, Charles writes a letter to Dr. Willett, a family doctor of the Wards, informing him of the plan of the malignant Curwen. Under further investigation, Dr. Willett discovers that Charles has fallen prey to the notorious Curwen. By the end of the story, Dr. Willett, following the instruction offered by an enemy of Curwen, kills Curwen, but he cannot resurrect Charles.

The Case of Charles Dexter Ward is a story relevant to the torture of the intellectuals or wise men. In this story wherein some wise men buried in graves are resurrected and manipulated by the lunatic Curwen and his fellow-necromancers, Lovecraft reveals to readers the horror in the indefatigable force of the will. Dr. Willett exclaims the horror as he finds the crypts that confine those victims:

God! Could it be possible that here lay the mortal relics of half the titan thinkers of all the ages; snatched by supreme ghouls from crypts where the world thought them safe, and subject to the beck and call of madmen who sought to drain their knowledge for some still wilder end whose ultimate effect would concern, as poor Charles had hinted in his frantic note, 'all civilisation, all natural law, perhaps even the fate of the solar system and the universe'? (Lovecraft 2016, 618)

Lovecraft dramatizes Schopenhaurian Will: the will to live. Just as those human brains contained in a cylinder live in the status of mutilation in *The Whisperer in Darkness*, so the wise men

who were exhumed from their graves and resurrected by the necromancers do not acquire a normal form of life, but a monstrous body. They are tortured not only by the command of those malignant necromancers, but also by an unknown force of Yog-Sothoth — the form of the will — that urges them to continue to live. Whereas the wise men are urged to live in the form of monsters, the intellect of Charles is overused by the will when he is indulging in study and research. His enthusiasm for knowledge makes him unintentionally access to the dark force of his malignant ancestor. Dr. Willet, standing detached from the dark force, pushes Curwen back to grave, but he is unable to extinguish the will. Through the stories of the intellectuals, Lovecraft reveals the world of phenomenon not as a world linking to enlightenment, but as a world of darkness and horror.

At the Mountains of Madness: decline in the intellect of the extraterrestrial beings

Perhaps the most intense atmosphere of madness is the one in *At the Mountains of Madness*. Lovecraft reveals to readers the insanity of human beings and animals in the Antarctic world. As Danforth and his professor William Dyer are escaping from the mountains of the Antarctic, aboard the plane he continues to whisper “bizarre conceptions” that Dyer identifies as those concepts that Danforth read from the *Necronomicon*. Danforth has lost his reason. Danforth is not the only one losing his sanity: Lake and Lake’s party are driven mad when they are being slaughtered by the Old Ones who are returning to life. The blind penguins scream madly while being chased by unknown beings. Danforth goes insane as he looks back and sees an extraterrestrial being, Shoggoth, when he and Professor Dyer are confronted by the alien beings. Those victims go mad due to the maddening intensity from the Old Ones and Shoggoths, who are the manifestation of the will in the world of phenomenon.

The Old Ones and Shoggoths are the insane amorphous form of the will. Their essence is madness. The Old Ones wildly search for resurrection within the Antarctic mountains. As the intact specimens of the Old Ones return to life through an unknown power, the resurrected Old Ones wantonly kill Lake and his team. The way they dissect human beings and animals at Lake’s camp recall the ways in which human beings treat other animals for “the sheer pleasure of killing” (Houellebecq 2005, 33). Shoggoths, who were once the slaves of the Old Ones, ramble madly throughout the mountains as well. Urged by the will to live, the Old Ones and Shoggoths are striving to discover a new form of life for resurrection.

The sickly form manifested in the alien beings exhausts not only the human beings and animals, but also the alien beings themselves. The Antarctic mountains are a microcosm of the world of the phenomenon — a representation of the will. All lives in the mountains, including those of the extraterrestrial beings, are driven by the will to live. The Old Ones, the highest grade of the objectification of the will, once built a brilliant civilization. However, the civilization did not exist permanently, for the intellect in the Old Ones was some type of somatic function that wore out in time and space.

Greatly stimulated by the will when the Old Ones experienced the repeated shocks of climate change, wars with other extraterrestrial beings, and the rebellion of their Shoggoth slaves, the intellect of the Old Ones was exhausted. Later, the Antarctic mountains lost prosperity, falling into nothing more than the outer walls of an ancient, abandoned stone city. Just as Joshi notices, the reasons for which the Old Ones abandoned their city and became extinct are “unfathomable” (Joshi 2001, 10). Dr. Dyer identifies the Old Ones with human beings in terms of their social and economic structure (11).⁴ Dr. Dyer humanizes the Old Ones, sympathizes with their loss of prosperous civilization, and reinforces the connection of human beings and the Old Ones in terms of “biological and psychical vulnerabilities” (Ralickas 2007, 379). However, Dr. Dyer does not see in the fall of the Old Ones something more horrible: the vicissitude of the Old Ones provides evidence that the intellect cannot escape its destiny of being enslaved by the will.

Conclusion

Lovecraft's stories dramatize the philosophy of Schopenhauer's Will. Though the intellect becomes dull in the status of decadence, it still cannot acquire rest, for it is perpetually enslaved by a will whose purpose is to maintain the continuity of life. Lovecraft perceives horror in the never-ending struggle of life: in endless birth, death, and resurrection. Lovecraft's stories present not only a world of horror and disgust, but also a world of suffering and exhaustion. The will manifests itself as a despotic ruler dominating nature. The will never relinquishes its grip on all lives. In addition, Lovecraft revises Schopenhauer's Will: Lovecraft ascertains that a monstrous force in the will could make human beings lose their humanity while they regress into amorphous becoming-creatures. Along with Schopenhauer's view and his revision of it into cosmic horror, Lovecraft's monstrous force of the will might be the highest gratification of the representation of the will manifested in the world of phenomenon. When the will in Lovecraft's fiction is represented in the world of phenomenon, it can dwell in the form of a germ or disease, a hypnotic whisperer, or a sickly amorphous extraterrestrial being. The extraterrestrial beings — the most ancient creatures on Earth — are seeking their resurrection, even though they survive in the form of a monstrous body. The town people who are not killed by the Deep Ones in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* agree to compromise with the Deep Ones, living in the form of human-fish. In the scenarios of never-ending life in the form of a monstrous body, some become victims. Akeley continues his existence in a form of a brain in a cylinder; his “life” is perpetuated by a machine designed by the alien beings. The wise men, whose intellect are being exploited by those malignant villains who make them monsters, do not rest in the crypts. Lovecraft's characters encounter a variety of situations in which the will operates with no other purpose than the perpetuation of existence. There is no ending in Lovecraft's stories, for the world of horror never ends.

Endnotes:

1. See Johnathan Newell's *A Century of Weird Fiction, 1832-1837: Disgust, Metaphysics and the Aesthetics of Cosmic Horror*.
2. Schopenhauer did not deny the possibility of genius in the world of representation, and he found that on some occasions, genius has been mistaken for madness. He once visited the "insane" geniuses in a hospital and found that they were not madmen, though they lost correct memories or had problems such as perceptual distortions (e.g., hallucinations). The geniuses had a "pure subject of knowing": [...] the most perfect knowledge, the purely objective apprehension of the world, that is, the apprehension of the genius, is conditioned by a silencing of the will so profound that, so long as it lasts, even the individuality disappears from consciousness, and the man remains *pure subject of knowing*, which is the correlative of the Idea. (Schopenhauer Volume II 1966, 219)
3. For more about Schopenhauer's idea of the essential invariability of species, see Baptista's "Arthur Schopenhauer and the Current Conception of the Origin of Species: What Did the Philosopher Anticipate?"
4. This comparison of human beings and the Old Ones suggests Lovecraft's reading of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (Joshi 2001, 11). See *An H. P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*.

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