Conceptualizing Artificial Intelligence through Alternate Neo-Planetary Models in the Science Fiction of Dan Simmons.

S Ambadi Narayanan, Beena S Nair

Abstract: The technological competence of a nation is confirmed by the number of successful space expeditions. Science Fiction from the early 1900s has dealt with the idea of living in conceptual spaces. This paper deals with select works of Dan Simmons including four prize-winning Science Fiction novels which are usually referred to as the Hyperion (1989), The Fall of Hyperion (1989), Endymion (1996), The Rise of Endymion (1989). In modern Techno-Fiction, the mind of the man and the scientific innovation of the machine have been harmoniously brought into existence as Cyborgs through Artificial Intelligence. The life expectancy and the available technical manifestations would seem scarce to get into a feasible interface of enhanced human beings and mechanical efficiency to accelerate the voyage into an anticipated future. This study further examines the ways in which the incredible complexity of the Cybernetic self has been portrayed in the works of Simmons. The principle aim of this proposed paper is to understand the context of the technological forces unbridled in the man-machine interface and how it has been constitutive of bringing up a new social order. It further analyses how symbolic, social spaces can be experienced adversely by multiple Man-Machine synthesis - mutant beings and clones during the planetary invasions. It is unnatural of a Cyborg to think politically or materialistically, as the functioning would be predominantly based on the commands received from its Artificial Intelligence led consciousness. Moreover, Cybernetics would be an exploration into the formidable secrets, the realm of decrypting ciphers and interpreting codes and cryptograms. Furthermore, embracing the possibilities without a foresight into the Man-Machine synthesis, might lead the whole humanity into a catastrophe depicted by Simmons.

Keywords: Techno-Fiction, Science Fiction, Cyborg, Cybernetics, Man-Machine Synthesis.

I. INTRODUCTION

The American author Dan Simmons (1948-) is a prolific writer who has published in different genres as science fiction, horror and fantasy.

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Dan Simmons unleashes a literary panorama of Artificial Intelligence. He redefines various possibilities of a technologically enhanced future. The characters envisage a holistic future consciousness with the help of Artificial Intelligence. Artificial Intelligence enhances the biological processes and leads men to a state of immortality, further helping them to answer many of the man's deepest doubts and fears. Artificial Intelligence plays an important role in the cultural, psychological and sociological evolution of human beings. On the other hand, Simmons also takes us to the unpredictable dualisms within the man-machine interface, as it might also lead men into a complete estrangement in the cosmos. *The Hyperion Cantos* offers a sophisticated vision of the future ahead (29th century) comprehending all dimensions of humanely possible advancements. Speculating on the possible human future, Dan Simmons's four novels *Hyperion* (1989), *The Fall of Hyperion* (1989), *Endymion* (1996), *The Rise of the Endymion* (1989) portray the interconnectedness of man and his possible evolutions in space. The proposed article investigates the human intervention and the role of Artificial Intelligence in self-consciously enhanced and accelerated evolution. Artificial Intelligence also contributes in intensifying the natural pace of evolution with the help of machines and cyborgs.

The study focusses on societies positioned in the interstices of conflicting discourses of power, where the birth of a new order takes place in the wake of man-made crisis in its multiple manifestations. The aim of the proposed article is to examine the ways in which Dan Simmons has tried to create a new social order in *The Hyperion Cantos* (1989-1996). It would further examine the extent to which Simmons express technological trends and aspirations of the post-modern culture in Simmons works. The prominent thematic concerns found in the works are the quest for truth, an evolving dystopia, encounter with mutant beings, the unwavering faith in the Utopian ideal, the conflict between the Good and the Evil and the emergence of new and innovative models of evolution.

These novels powerfully encompass the predicament of humanity undergoing intense ordeals with reference to perceptible events like war, rebellion and building alternate neo-world models. The selected works deal with universal themes and humanist concerns like dystopian reality and conflict with hegemony.

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The author is also concerned about how people try to manipulate memories and justify their past actions as they repress information in order to create multiple identities with technical nuances.

Simmons' Science Fiction is not merely about space wars, robots, mutants and aliens. It is about world building and social orientation.

Even the robots depicted by Simmons are furtive machinists, working for the good of mankind. The *Hyperion Cantos* which begins as a prediction of ruin and a depiction of the deranged times ends with revival of hope in the platonic ideal of collective good and evolution. The utopian desires and dystopian nightmares of humankind find eloquent expression in popular culture in narratives that focus on future life, nation and empire building, technological innovations and social organization. These works depict man as a social being man who has to overcome his dormant fears and believe in the possibilities of a better future to take forward his culture and civilization.

II. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology is based on various postmodern theories focusing on concepts such as Posthumanism, Post-anthropocentrism, and Anthropology. A close reading of the selected novels and excerpts of the text that will help in analyzing the texts was carried out. A general exploration of sci-fi novels was undertaken in this research.

III. THE HYPERION CANTOS AND ARTIFICIALINTELLIGENCE

Hyperion Cantos offer multiple possibilities for rethinking the human with its non-human others (machines, objects, systems and environments) in the Posthuman era and further leading to investigate the man's predicament in the Postmodern era. The study is also an attempt to analyze Cyborg as a posthuman subject representing the contemporary cultural trends. The book also explores some of the concepts underlying an understanding of human beings as culture bearers and further discusses the issues of cultural anthropology: the nature of culture, the structure of society, and the functions of ideological systems.

The *Hyperion Cantos* by Dan Simmons spans three centuries, beginning in the twenty-ninth century. The themes of human dream of immortality, which involves selling soul; the reincarnation of the poet Keats as a Cyborg within cyberspace; technologically enhanced humans who live in outer space; a giant tree space ship; the fall of human civilization and innumerable alien ecologies and forms of life and civilization; the narrative of death and resurrection realized through Time travel. *The Hyperion Cantos* is a complex vision of a possible future, covering all dimensions of human life technological, scientific, psychological, social, ethical, cosmic, and religious. Venturing on the post-human future, Dan Simmons' four novels, *Hyperion* (1989), *The Fall of Hyperion* (1989), *Endymion* (1996), *The Rise of Endymion* (1989) portray the interconnectedness of man and his possible evolution in space. The first novel *Hyperion* modeled on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, tells the story of the journey of seven pilgrims to the planet Hyperion, having been sent there by enigmatic forces, which

include super-intelligent computers and mysterious personages within the institution of religion. The pilgrims' mission is to confront the Shrike, a giant metallic being covered in razor-like blades that is killing human settlers by thousands and seems to come from the future. On the journey, the narrator pilgrims such as the poet, the philosopher, the colonel, and the priest unfold their personal stories of how they came to this critical juncture in their lives.

This paper would explore the struggle for Man's continuous search for evolution as depicted in Simmons' novels through the time travel of the Poet, the Politician, the Soldier, the Priest, the Scholar, the Detective and the Consul creating multiple ideal habitats in space. The proposed research also investigates the self-consciously enhanced and accelerated evolution with human intervention. Man attains a holistic future consciousness, which in the opinion of Tom Lombardo is the "total set of psychological processes and modes of experience and behavior involved in our consciousness of the future." It includes our hopes and fears about the future; our planning, strategies, and goals; our futuristic visions and stories; and our purposeful behaviors to create desired futures and prevent negative possibilities from occurring.

Human dream of Immortality and Ideal state

Man attains immortality in *Hyperion*. Father Lenar Hoyt after reaching Hyperion, in an encounter with a tribe named Bikura attains immortality through indigenous practices. A unique parasite triggers a terrible cell multiplication so as to bring back dead men. "…even the terrible illogic of this accursed bacteria must respect the imperative of the law of conservation of mass." (Simmons, 86) Immortal life has induced painlessness, mindlessness and an indifference towards basic human instincts.

Nature and Biology do not work that neatly. Besides the problem of minimum herd population there were other absurdities. Even though it is difficult to tell the ages of these smooth-skinned people, it is obvious that no more than ten years separate the oldest from the youngest…so where are the very old? Where are the parents, ageing uncles, and unmarried aunts? At this rate, the entire tribe will enter old age at approximately the same time[1].(Simmons, 60)

Hoyt caught in this uninterrupted and undisturbed cycle of life attempts suicide several times and every attempt brings him back to life. Men are led into a dissociative regulatory condition in which they completely forget themselves and leave to find a life; after the recovery there are no proofs of this dissociative state. Father Lenar Hoyt after undergoing the technology initiated physical transformation says,

Pain has become my ally, my guardian angel, my remaining link with humanity…I do not wish to die, but I welcome pain and death rather than an eternity of mindless life. life is sacred- I still hold to that as a core element of the Church's thought and teachings these past twenty-eight hundred years when life has been so cheap- but even more sacred is the soul[2]. (Simmons, 88)

Utopia is a collective impulse to change the world into a better place. The realization of any personal goal becomes immaterial. The ultimate goal is the benefit of the humanity. It is in this context that Carl Freedman's observation becomes relevant. According to Freedman, "Utopia's hoping or longing, in other words,

possesses an inherently collective character and at the bottom has nothing to do with individualist impulses like greed." Thus, creations of utopia are expressions of a collective consciousness in its stride towards progress. Nonetheless these images of social perfection serve as a continuous inspiration for mankind in its progressive evolution. These impulses mirror the desire to escape from reality filled with rebellion, crisis instincts to escape from a social condition prevalent with hegemony and is the foundation of all social change. Frederick L.

Polak argues that "such dreaming of the future is fundamental to the continuance of our civilization" (53).

Simmons constructs a human geography in the outer space named Hyperion. It is also a social construction of space and the continuous reshaping of geographic landscapes. Innumerable interpretations of spatial relation can be drawn from *Hyperion*, one among the spatial relation is manifested in subjective attitudes of narrator and characters, and deduces space as product of human perception. Literary space within *Hyperion* is an imaginary geography, which is technologically enhanced and is the backdrop for spatial relations for the distribution of knowledge, power and prejudices. Space is also seen as a sign system filled with meaning upon which social reality is constituted.

IV ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ENHANCEMENTS

The Hyperion Cantos depicts various possibilities of planet invasion within our solar system whose preliminary steps have been already attempted by various space organizations. The Hegemony and the Ousters are the inhabitants within the alternate neo-planetary models proposed by Simmons, where Ousters; the modified humans inhabit external space stations between planets and stars and the interconnected planets are occupied by the Hegemony.

Cyborgs

Donna Haraway says that "the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense" (151-52). Medical cases have been reported regarding the efforts taken for genetically upgrading the Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells (iPS cells) to recalibrate dysfunctional genetic sequences to functional ones. Modern medicine employs several archetypes of cyborgs and interestingly US Budget once had a cyborg program to be financed with $84 billion. Science Fiction is extensively preoccupied with cyborgs; predominantly in the form of individuals created by the amalgamation of machine consciousness and biotics. Cyborgs programmed with Artificial Intelligence is devoid of all humane instincts and the continually attempt to improve the conditions of existence without evolving themselves. Moreover, the only motive would of attaining the pre-programmed goals rather than other materialistic preoccupations.

In the words of Donna Haraway,

The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust. Perhaps that is why I want to see if cyborgs can subvert the apocalypse of returning to nuclear dust in the manic compulsion to name the Enemy. Cyborgs are not reverent; they do not re-member the cosmos. They are wary of hol - ism, but needy for connection—they seem to have a natural feel for united-front politics, but without the vanguard party. The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the ille - gitimate of spring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism [3]. (Harraway,9)

Joseph Severn in *Hyperion*, a cyborg with the Artificial Intelligence persona of poet John Keats finds a world which seems to be an exact miniature of earth but like Keats he gets diseased with tuberculosis, gets out of his physical body; his consciousness and collected information goes into the database of Techno Core. Simmons builds up a future space with technological determination not closed up by the reinterpretations of organism and machines as allegorical texts through which he unleashes a play of writing. The titles *Hyperion* (1989), *The Fall of Hyperion* (1989), *Endymion* (1996), *The Rise of Endymion* (1989) indicates that Simmons is deeply engaged with the writings of the English nineteenth-century poet John Keats (1795–1821). There is a plethora of literary allusions and quotations in the texts, but the ethical core in the novels is expressed through references to some of Keats's best-known poems and letters. Despite Simmons's great engagement with Keats, critical analysis of these novels usually focusses on technological devices, scientific advancements, or societal issues, and very little of the analysis explore the intertextual contents.

Techno Core and Far casters

A civilization of enhanced humans having unique calibrating system and an independent technologically advanced psyche involve themselves in building an omniscient Artificial Intelligence named as the Ultimate Intelligence (UI). Transportation portals are developed and managed by Techno Core, whose omniscience is experienced by various interactions through distinct virtual realities. The hidden possibilities and unexplored dimensions within virtual reality is traced by Simmons as he effectively uses it for simulating the environment of an outer space and uses it as an effective method for physical rehabilitation in the future ahead if earth faces an external threat. The world within the Hyperion Cantos, guided by Artificial Intelligence has several planets interconnected by time portals named Far casters. Far casters are transportation devices that enable the travel beyond the speed of light.

Death and True Death

People of Bikura tribe call themselves "Three score and ten" [three scores (years) and ten means seventy; a score is an old term for twenty]. It is supposed to be a lifespan of a man, as per Psalms 90.) Neural implants are fixed inside the body of the tribes for retarded aging and kill themselves unless a requirement is required. According to the law of "Three score and ten" total population cannot exceed beyond seventy. Similarly, with the help of technology assisted biological process body of a deceased person is frozen from decomposing until medical cures are invented, so that it may bring the body back to life. the Bikura live normal-length lives, have children at a normal rate, but kill them unless a replacement is required. They may practice abstinence or birth control- other than slaughtering the newborn- until the entire band reaches an age where new blood will soon be needed. A mass- birthing time explains the apparent common age of the members of the tribe[4]. (Simmons, 61)

The people are sexless. Not celibate, hermaphroditic or undeveloped- sexless. Humans engage in purposeful evolution, attempting to improve upon their nature and their conditions of existence.

Humans continually attempt to evolve their minds and capacities, and in so doing, improve their abilities to more effectively and wisely change reality toward desirable ends. "…what a sacrifice it must have been for the Son of God to condescend to become the Son of Man." (Simmons,27)

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Virtual Reality and innovations in Artificial Intelligence has a great preoccupation in numerous modern operating systems and applications. Simmons conceptualizes numerous enhanced versions of the existing prototypes which the humanity would be pursuing in near future. The various characters of Simmons conjure mental picture of an ideal civilization in one form or the other which are manifestations of this alternate models to bring in a social change. These structures vary in form and space in accordance with the social circumstances of the subject and this account for the varied range of technological upgradation. For example, mutant beings in *Hyperion Cantos* and human clones in *Never Let Me Go*. The alternate models seem to be against social stratification and further more ensures an organic unity. Imagination has a great role in conceptualizing the possibilities, in fact various protypes are imaginary models of the unseen. Artistic ingenuity beautifully amalgamates man, mind and machine in *The Hyperion Cantos.*

IV. CONCLUSION

With human capabilities and a three-dimensional perspective of the world, attaining an ideal world would be next to impossible. Cyborgology and Artificial Intelligence would be the next important steps with which the entire humankind would be making a giant leap into further technologically enhanced evolution. Defense organizations have already put themselves into the various nuances of Cybernetics for cyborg arms and military. At the same time, technology should not be the finest way to wipe out the entire human race from the planet. The extensive influence of technology would be the driving force behind its utilization regardless of its pervasive risks. An Artificial Intelligence civilization with a cybernetic consciousness as depicted by Simmons would prove fatal. Whereas a diplomatic use of techniques and machines for labor and consciousness part being humane would be the eloquent balance between man and machine.

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