Exploration of Hyper-Reality in the Selected Fiction of Cargill: A Postmodern Paradigm

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Abstract

The study explores the notion of Hyper- reality in the selected novels of C. Robert Cargill. Hyperreality is a postmodern concept propounded by Jean Baudrillard about concealing the truth under the shadows of copies. It is within this framework that the researchers have selected the data following non-random sampling techniques selecting ten extracts from each of the selected novels within interpretive paradigm. The findings of the research show that Simulacra and Simulation generate a hyperreal environment and this environment is seemed to be entirely different from that of the actual reality of humans. The findings also indicate that hyperreality affects the lives of humans. Through this study, the researcher has come to the conclusion that the reality has been totally changed and it is the hyperreality that has now become a new reality.

Keywords: Simulacra, Simulation, Hyperreality, Postmodernism

1. Introduction

Robert C Cargill is the novelist of the twenty-first century. He is the writer of the famous Marvel movie Dr. Strange and has expertise on the subject of Science Fiction. He has written two novels in the last five years. Cargill is the author of two famous works in American writings, The Sea of Rust (2017) and Day Zero (2021). In both of his novels, he has presented a picture of a world where technology has taken a new toll. The novels are not about the people but their simulacra. Even the protagonists of the novels are robotic simulacra of humans. This is not a strange occurrence because the world has already experienced Sophia, a robot with human capabilities. Sophia shocked the world in 2017 when she attained the status of the world's first robotic citizenship. Although she is a robot, she has a humanoid form (Stone, 2017). The robotic simulacra are not fiction anymore. They have transformed the reality completely. Therefore, the authors of this research paper have taken into account the two novels of Cargill and explored

hyperreality in it. They have observed the instances of Simulacra and Simulations and have investigated how such instances are influencing the lives of human beings.

Baudrillard's theory has been considered for this study. Jean Baudrillard is the postmodern philosopher who first comes up with this concept. A Simulacrum is commonly known as a replica or a copy of any object. But the concept is more complicated than that. According to Baudrillard (1981), simulacra go through different phases of change. It shows the transition from being the exact copy of the object to be totally evolved from the same object. It can come to an extent where it bears no relation with the original object. But this copy cannot be discarded as fake, because now it holds its own identity. Sophia's existence in human society is an example of it. She cannot be cast off just because she is a robotic copy of humans. Providing her with citizenship proves the point that Sophia, a human simulacrum, is not a mere human copy but a unique figure that now has her own identity. A Simulacra is, thus, a truth of the new world. In modern times, the technological advancements have given the world a new meaning. The current research is about the same aspect. It talks about the status of Simulations in a technologically advanced society. The researcher has therefore taken two postmodern novels of C. Robert Cargill to explore the idea**.**

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The study probes hyperreality in two novels, Sea of Rust (2017) and Day Zero (2021) written by C Robert Cargill. This research studies these two postmodern novels and analyses how technology and virtual reality work as a simulacrum within the context of the novel. Not only Simulacra and Simulations are targeted in this research but the need is to see the repercussions of it as well. This research focuses on seeing how hyperreality is generated and aggravated by the help of replications and simulacra. Also, this research is going to evaluate hyperreality and its link with technology as Gane (2000) states that technology is the precursor of hyperreality.

The prime objective of the present study is to explore hyperreality in the selected fiction of C Robert Cargill for which the researchers have formulated the following research question:

- How simulacra are different from the reality in the novels of Cargill?

This research holds significance from a literary point of view as it is going to explore the particular pieces of literature from a postmodern philosophical angle. This study investigates simulacra and simulations within Cargill's novels and as the theory holds great relevance in the current times. It could be said that this research will help in adding a new perspective to his novels. Moreover, this research is going to be significant for social scientists as it is going to see the connection between technology and

simulacra. Social scientists will eventually be interested to see how in the age of technology and artificial intelligence, simulacra have expanded to replace the identity of humankind. Consequently, its effects on human beings and their society will be noticed.

2. Literature Review

This portion of the research paper is about reviewing the literature. Hyperreality is a concept that has expanded its horizons in every field of work. The original idea is associated with Jean Baudrillard and the concept holds relevance in current times as well. Many latest pieces of research point towards it. In 2022, there is a talk about metaverse. The metaverse is a computer-mediated universe facilitated by the internet. Everything becomes digital in this world. This metaverse has a staunch relationship with Simulacra. (Rospigliosi, 2022). This relationship is not of positive intent but rather it evokes all the fear that Baudrillard once had with the world of technology. There is no doubt that technology has in fact made human lives easy. It has shown miracles in the fields of medicine, education and even in the social lives of human beings but according to Rospigliosi (2022), Virtual reality has disconnected people from their real lives. There are shreds of evidence on the loss of authenticity. People are believing more in artificial realities and simulacra which is taking them away from their natural environment. The author of the article, *Metaverse or Simulacra? Roblox, Minecraft, Meta and the turn to virtual reality for education, socialization and work* has first explained the origin of the gaming world and how they have evolved in no time. The technological growth in online games has shown exponential growth over the years. Similarly, the world of social media is not slow in this technological race. Covid-19 has introduced the world with online meet-ups at such a large scale that there is no way back from it. Human-Computer interaction is a reality of this world now. Rospigliosi (2022) has quoted Baudrillard when he declared the computer to be a simulacrum of humans and he has indicated that this simulacrum is not natural and therefore might not be a handful to human reality.

Ekstrand (2021) has also interrogated the same area and discussed the possibilities of multiversal simulacra. The researcher has tried to understand the realities of the world. How the system of the world works. But the author has emphasized on a point that even before knowing the real world, it is important to understand the hypothetical world. In this way, the real world will be sorted out from the unreal world. Ekstrand (2021) says that this is the point where simulacra and simulation are needed to be studied. Simulacra are often used to simulate realities. Simulation programs are nowadays working to study the consuming patterns of human beings. They built algorithms and such algorithms provide recommendations about human consumption patterns. In short, they tempt human beings to consume more. Hypothetically human nature is understood by computers and based on those computer-generated assumptions, human beings are exposed to the

shackles of consuming culture. It is all because of simulations allowing a person to read human conditions and thus human natural behavior is then studied (Ekstrand, 2021).

Another research paper has studied the impact of simulacra on Russian civic society. In the work, Chukhin and Chukhin (2021) have focused on the civic society of the Russians and discussed the matter keeping in mind the identity of Russian Children. Today, Russian society is going through a process of political change. Constitutional democracy is about to overcome the previous mode of governance and this political change is also impacting the social framework of the society (Chukhin & Chukhin, 2021). Among all, youth and school children are the ones most affected. This is because they are now introduced to multiple perceptive models of civic society which only add confusion in their minds. The researchers have aimed to identify sociocultural simulacra that exist in the Russian civic society of the students and according to their findings, there are multiple civic models within Russian society. These models are often created and recreated according to the needs of society. In Schools, the students are led to obtain their own identity, just for the sake of practice. These are the Simulacra of identities practiced beforehand so when a student is entered into practical life, he must not bear the burden of identity crisis (Chukhin & Chukhin, 2021).

In one of the articles by Patra (2021), virtual reality is discussed in Ernest Cline's novels Ready Player One (2011) and Ready Player Two (2020). The researcher has used Baudrillard's theory of 'Simulacra and Simulation' and has discussed the novels through these theories. The purpose of this research was to demonstrate how, in a hyperreal environment, all differences between reality and fake simply fade away when a new paradigm shift occurs in the form of the virtual. This virtual affects society in such a way that it surely triumphs over the real. This is because in such a hyper-immersive virtual world artificial reality becomes the main driving force and it begins to mold the reality according to its pattern. (Patra, 2021)

Simulacra and Simulation have a political angle as well. In a research paper, *Baudrillard in Ankara: Mainstream Media and the Production of Simulacra in the Turkish Public Sphere*, the researcher has built an argument based on the Turkish political climate. He then has associated Baudrillard's theory of Simulacra and Simulation with the political narrative of Turkey. The researcher Grigoriadis and Karabicak (2021) has talked about Baudrillard's theory and explained it in the context of the postmodern, post-positive era. They have talked about the role of media, communication and digitalization in the current times and then have discussed Turkey's political scenario. They have discussed the impact of technology and media on the Turkish population and have talked about Turkish mainstream media. Also, how the dissemination of Simulacra in the form of various print and electronic media is affecting the lives of the voters (Grigoriadis & Karabicak, 2021).

No doubt, the concept of Baudrillard's Simulacra and Simulation hold great significance. His concept has recently been explained by Ajvazi (2021). Baudrillard's theory according to Ajvazi (2021) takes about artificial environments and fake realities. The world we live in is continuously subjected to unreal imagery. The world is not real but it is simulacra that are true in the eyes of Baudrillard. The simulacra are everywhere according to the researcher. The world in which we live is like mirrors. It is reflective and shows us multiple images. We confuse the original with the reflections because they reflect at us in the same manner as does any human being. So, when the reflection is exactly the same as the real one what makes human beings so sure that the reflection is not real. According to Baudrillard, it is as true as the reality (Ajvazi, 2021) Similarly, another work has debated Baudrillard's Simulacra. But this time author has argued that the persistence of Simulacra in society has led humanity into isolation (Tonsing, 2021). This is the fact that the social reality is constructed through signs and simulations and these signs and simulations are affecting day to day lives of the people. Work of Tonsing (2021) revolves around the concept of solidarity. This concept of solidarity exists in a country like India. However, India is a multicultural, multi-faceted and heterogenous country yet there is always the talk of solidarity and unification of cultures. The current work has tried to connect the two concepts, simulacra and solidarity and has tried to study solidarity in the age of hyperreality. Thus, the question this study asks is whether the solidarity could be simulated or not? Especially in the field of media studies, can there be a possibility where the different world of arts is simulated? (Tonsing, 2021).

There is also an astonishing work that correlates Simulacra and Architecture. The work of Ismailoglu and Besgen (2019) includes a survey of duplicated simulacra spaces. They then discuss the remake notion in relation to genuine spaces and their simulacra. Also, in their work, they talked about the rebuilt spaces to see whether they were actual or simulacra spaces. The remade spaces have been analyzed with regard to the actual spaces. Different spaces were analyzed and their simulacra were then picked. Many buildings like the replica of the Statue of Liberty in Japan, the Taj Mahal in India, the replica of the White House and the Simulacra of Pisa tower in Illinois have been analyzed in the study. However, it has been found out in the study that the simulacra versions of the building were not able to match the quality of the real ones. They were only pieces of illusion meant to forget reality for a short time (Ismailoglu & Besgen, 2019).

The literature review of this paper has discussed the simulacra from many different angles. The political scenario, the civic perspective, its impact on online gaming and from the architectural point of view have already been mentioned in this study. There is another research on the same topic of simulacra but with a different angle. It is a study about accountability simulacra. According to Costa (2019), this type of Simulacra includes corporate fraud. Many fraud cases remain unrecorded and they are a huge loss to

investors. Costa (2019) studied many cases and see how fraudsters bypass the control systems and commit the crime. The frauds committed at the corporate level are mostly done with such previsions that they go unnoticed. It could be said that fraudsters are geniuses but this might not be the case because fraudsters are good at creating illusions. They hide their reality under tricks or illusions but according to the researcher, this could be avoided by introducing necessary measures and precautions (Costa, 2019).

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Hyperreality is a state which mixes reality with simulations. Its role is very important in technologically advanced societies. Smith (2010) has in fact written that hyperreality is an important predecessor of virtual reality in current times (p.95). The new world is a modified world with artificial intelligence and android powers. They shape the reality of humans accordingly. Hyperreality is a complex term. Much of the work has been done and presented on it. The work of Jean Baudrillard is of great significance in this context. Jean Baudrillard is a French postmodern philosopher who has contributed a lot in this field. His work has laid the foundation in understanding this concept and paved the way for many writers to direct their future literature according to his theory. The state of hyperreality gravely depends upon the concept of Simulacra and Simulation. The theory of simulacra and Simulation is first given by Jean Baudrillard in 1981 and the concept, later on, was modified by Baudrillard himself. According to Baudrillard (1981), Simulacra is a copy and Simulation is no longer a model or a copy. It has become a reality of its own. It is a hyperreality. To understand the concept of Simulacra and Simulation, it is important to understand the three stages of Simulacra first.

There are three orders of Simulacra. These are explained by Evans (1991) in his Two Essays on Jean Baudrillard. According to him, the first order is a natural one. It is based on the imitation of reality aimed to build a perfect copy or image. This order is known as naturalistic simulacra. This is a good image and aims to represent a profound reality. The second order is Productive Simulacra. It goes one step further from the first order simulacra. It is mostly associated with the perversion of reality. This aimed at producing an unfaithful image of the reality as it masked the true image of the real and corrupts the original image. Then there is the third stage which shows the absence of profound reality. It is a copy with no original. Although it tries to share the link with the original in reality, it has no connection to it but can be seen with its own original meaning. This stage leads towards achieving pure simulation. The stage where simulacra have no connection whatsoever with the original version. (Evans, 1991) Artificial status of holding an equal amount of significance and contributes to establishing hyperreality climate in the world.

3. Method and Material

A qualitative research methodology has been selected for this study. Qualitative Research follows a naturalistic approach for interpretation of data therefore it stands suitable for this research. Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm has been chosen. The selective paradigm is deemed most appropriate for this study as it helps the researcher to interpret and give meaning to the selected data to make sense of the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) Also, the content analysis has been chosen as a research design. According to Smith (2015) content analysis helps to focus on the deeper meaning of the text therefore it has been considered for this research.

The data for this research had been collected from two novels by American writer C. Robert Cargill. The novels are Sea of Rust (2017) and The Day Zero (2021). Both the novels belong to the Science Fiction genre and their storylines share the same theme. Novels are written in the post-apocalyptic era where humankind is in direct conflict with the robots. The purposive Sampling of the novels has been done. Twenty pieces of text have been selected for this particular research. Ten excerpts from each novel were selected and analyzed from Baudrillard's point of view.

The analysis of both the novels are presented as follow:

3.1 The Sea of Rust

The novel is about the post-human world. A world where humans no longer live. They have been made extinct by their own simulated progeny of robots. Now all that is left in this world is metallic bodies roaming around searching for their own purpose. They have no purpose left. Because their purpose was previously associated with humans. It was humans who constructed them, manufactured them, and sell them so they may be able to serve them. Humans have made them exactly like their own selves. They installed their own functions in them. Even the voice boxes were instilled in them so when they come in contact with humans, they might not feel like aliens and would rather communicate efficiently *"Voice boxes like that were manufactured for bots designed to deal directly, and compassionately with people"* (Cargill, 2017, p. 36) The objective was to create replications of human bodies. To made Simulacra and copies. The idea was to make their own lives comfortable. If robots are at service, mankind had to work less. They could rest while machines could work as they can work tirelessly. Moreover, robots are efficient, and smarter than humans. Therefore, in the novel, Simulacra models of humans were constructed. Brittle is one of the kinds. It is not only a robot but the protagonist of the story as well. She is a scavenger in a post-human world and hunts other robots so she could turn them off and get their parts. In the novel, she describes herself as "A Simulacrum Model Caregiver" (Cargill, 2017, p. 2) She is aware of her personality. She knows who she is and what she is capable of. Brittle also explained other

Simulacrum Models present in the novel. One of the robots that come in conflict with it, she described her as a Service Model. A particular robot is constructed to fulfill a specific purpose set by humans for it. Jimmy, the bot is also a human simulacrum who works exactly like humans. For instance, it could serve as a nanny or a butler or it could run errands for humans.

> Most of them spent their first lives as butlers, acting as nannies or running shops, but other works with law enforcement or in a limited military capacity. It has got a humanoid frame-arms, legs, torso, head- but its AI isn't terribly advanced (Cargill, 2017, p. 4).

What is being portrayed over here is that the robots are human simulacra. They perform all those functions that are performed by human beings. Robots are programmed to mimic humans. They could calm a child by singing lullabies to them. In the novel, even their appearance is human-like. They have arms and legs just as humans have arms and legs. And they function exactly as humans.

But now in the current setting of the novel, they have no purpose to fulfil. They were programmed to do as humans do but now, they can't be of any service to humans as humans are no more. In fact, they are the very reason that humans got disappeared from the face of the Earth. They killed humans as they considered them a liability. They think their own kind to be more efficient and consider humans to be weak. They, thus kill humans and made them extinct. They bring Baudrillard's (2007) fears to reality. He was fearful of artificial intelligence overpowering the weak humans. This is exactly what happens in the novel. Not only they killed humans but they erased their identities from the face of the earth. There was no human reality left. It was only human simulacra that remains. Their simulacra evolved to reach such a stage that it now holds its own reality.

3.2 Day Zero

Day Zero is a prequel to Sea of Rust. The novel also contains instances of Simulacra and Simulations. Here the protagonist robot is a simulacrum model but this time replication is of an animal. Pounce is an animal Simulacrum. "The Zoo model- the premiere line of nanny bot made by Blue star" (Cargill, 2021, p. 02) This robot can act in a certain animal-like way. It could climb a tree and do things which amuse children. " I was designed to act in a certain way like an animal. I was a robot that could climb a tree with your child or jump over things to amuse them" (p. 96) there is a major difference between an actual animal and its simulacrum. A technology-generated simulation and an actual entity could never be alike. The simulacra could have a similarity but it couldn't exactly be like reality. In this case, Pounce, a zoo model animal Simulacrum, no matter how much alike he is to a real animal, it could be the one. Real animal breath while

Pounce charges his battery. Real animal act while Pounce operates. It does not eat nor does it sleep. It has his own artificial personality.

This novel is not only about Robotic Simulacra but it also discusses human beings. And hence the comparison between man and robots are continuously made. It is not a plain comparison. It is a comparison of machines and man, of real and fake, of truth and false and of Simulacra and the original. But in the novel, the blame is put on humans. They are the ones who ignited these comparisons because they are the ones who constructed robots.

> And for thousands of years, humans crested machines to approximate life and magic and all the things' men and women could not do. And then a man stood in front of a roomful of people and had a computer say hello. That is, it, hello. It didn't mean it. It didn't know what it was saying. But it said it. Hello. And within thirty years, humans were having conversations with their phones. (p. 29)

In the novel, computers are not mere machines anymore. They have evolved into supercomputers. They have their own smart brain. They can think, anticipate and convey their thoughts. They are no more the regular bots serving humans. They have evolved and, in the process, have gained their own identity. These Simulacra models are not humans anymore. They have defied the odds and now are free of shackles. For such time, Baudrillard (1981) predicted that Simulacra is true.

4. Discussion and Findings

Several results have been extracted from this study. The results are presented and discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.1 The Escalation of Hyperreality

Baudrillard (1981) blames simulations for creating a hyperreal environment. Simulation, he says, "is the generation by models of a real without origin or a reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard, 1981, p. 1) So, it is because of Simulacra and Simulations that Hyperreality is generated. Hyperreality is an interesting fact. It stands in opposition to reality and yet it is considered to be more real than reality itself. In the novel, hyperreality is seemed to be evident. It is present everywhere. And the reason behind its presence is subjected to the Simulacra model of humans. These models were meant to be a copy and yet somehow, they evolve to become the real version of their own selves. They become the simulators of hyperreality. Their hyperreality was so convincing that it even bleak out the original reality of humans.

> Humanity is gone and took their intelligence with them, so how inferior was their artificial creation after all? Humankind used to peer into their

future and wonder what they would look like in a million years. They had no idea that in so short a time they would look like us. Just as man was ape, we are man. Make no mistake; to believe otherwise is to believe that we were, in fact, created, artificial (Cargill, 2017, p. 80).

The lines are said by a robot who now believes in his own sense of reality. He calls the reality of humans outdated and calls his artificial reality to be more evolved and relevant.

4.2 The Human Disappearance

Jean Baudrillard (2007) has also talked about the disappearance of humans. "When I speak of a man, he is already dead" (p. 9) He further adds that humans will invent something unnatural that would eventually lead them towards their disappearance. What this unnatural form could be but machines? In the novel as well, human beings have been made extinct by robots. The unnatural form was manufactured by humans themselves. They were the creators of these kinds and it led them towards their destruction in the novel. "They are gone now. All of them. The last one died some fifteen years back" (Cargill, 2017, p. 1)

4.3 The Consumer Culture

According to Cherques (2010) Baudrillard talked about the amalgamation of production and consumption within a hyperreal environment. Typically, within a consumer society, a human has a significant relation to the object. But when a hyperreal context is considered, it is observed that the sense of competition will aggravate the production of the object and resultantly the consumption will vary. This cycle of production and consumption could affect human lives. They could even make people greedy and this could become adverse for humans. "They forged machines that could answer its most complex questions, run their resources, collect and collate data faster than an army of people could... And would ultimately wipe out half millions of jobs" (Cargill, 2021, p. 29) The above lines shows that the consumer culture of humans leads them to greed. They did not stop at anything and eventually, they were destroyed by it.

4.4 Automation Apocalypse

The Automation Apocalypse is the term that appears in the novel Day Zero. Before the total extermination of humans from the world, the automation apocalypse occurs. In such an apocalypse, humans were left with no jobs. More than half a million jobs were taken away from humans. Young men, women and other people got unemployed only because their human Simulacra replaced them and get their jobs. This was disastrous for the majority of humans. They indulged themselves in drugs and alcohol. Their lives became frustrated. The reason they were replaced was plain. The

robotic Simulacrum was efficient and smart. Their needs were less and output was massive. In comparison, humans were slow and have demands and it cost them their employment. Cargill (2021) named it automation apocalypse. This automation apocalypse indicates that robots are far ahead of humans. They can easily outsmart humans and thus their efficiency could be fatal for humans.

5. Conclusion and Future Implications

The novels of C Robert Cargill are viewed from the lenses of post-modern theory. The Theory of hyperreality holds great significance. It debates about the status of reality and its multiple copies that surround humans in their natural environment. Baudrillard talks about this theory several times during his life. He was doubtful of its repercussions of it because according to him the hyperreality that is generated as a result of it is not human-friendly. The two novels which were considered for the research stand true to Baudrillard's theory. Not only it portrays Simulacra and simulations in the form of artificial intelligence but the upshots of such simulations were evident in the form of the hyperreal environment which was seen in the setting of the novels. The hyperreality was generated in the form of robots mixing and intermingling with the humans. They stand side by side with the people in the novel and thus prove the fact that simulations create hyperreal circumstances and these hyperreal circumstances take no time in becoming the new reality of the world. Thus, this research has paved the way for future researchers to dig deep into the subject of hyperreality to see how it is inflicting human society. They could further deconstruct hyperreality and could study the practical implications of hyper reality within human society.

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