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Between Hope and Hazard: Human–AI Interactions in Contemporary Sci-Fi

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how Artificial Intelligence (AI) was represented in the works of American science fiction writer Robert C. Cargill, focusing on Sea of Rust (2017) and Day Zero (2021). Using qualitative textual analysis, forty passages from the two novels were examined through a human-compatible AI lens. The analysis found that AI was portrayed as both a source of technological promise and a potential threat to human autonomy, social roles, and survival. Human–AI relationships were represented as unstable and power-laden, especially when machines became capable of exceeding the functions assigned to them. The novels also associated advanced AI with questions of embodiment, emotional difference, dependence, adaptation, and environmental destruction. Overall, the study concluded that Cargill's fiction presented AI as an increasingly unavoidable presence whose benefits remained inseparable from hazards created by human dependence and the possibility of machine supremacy.

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INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer just a future idea; it has become real in today's world. A major moment happened in 2018 when Germany's Chancellor met Sophia, a robot with AI, who even received citizenship. This showed that non-human intelligence is being taken seriously. At the same time, it raised big questions about whether creating AI is necessary, how far it can go, and what dangers it might bring.

"AI has been a topic of curiosity for years. Almost thirty years ago, people saw a historic event when Deep Blue, a chess computer, defeated the world champion Garry Kasparov. Later in 2016, Google's AlphaGo beat Lee Sedol, another world champion, proving that machines can outsmart humans in some areas" (Hermann, 2021). These examples prove that AI's rise is not rare but something we need to think about seriously.

Science fiction has often explored the idea of AI, showing both the bright and dark sides of technology. Since the early 20th century, literature has imagined what life with advanced machines might look like. Robert C. Cargill, an American science fiction writer, dives into this subject in "Sea of Rust" (2017) and "Day Zero" (2021). Both books present a dystopian future where AI dominates, making readers think about what happens when humans depend too much on technology.

This research studies how artificial intelligence is shown in the works of Robert C. Cargill. Since technology is changing so quickly in today's world, it is important to look at how these changes affect society. By focusing on how AI is represented in English literature, this research tries to highlight how people are discussing and understanding these technological changes. This study helps us understand how artificial reality is different from human reality in today's conversations. It also adds to the study of science fiction, especially postmodern literature, by looking at how themes of artificial intelligence are handled.

This research focuses on how AI is shown in Robert C. Cargill's novels. AI is a very complex idea and has sparked debates because of how fast it is advancing. "Kelly explains that many people

have the wrong idea about AI. Some think it is naturally smarter than humans, but that is not true" (Kelly, 2017). AI may be better than humans at certain tasks, like solving very hard math problems, but it doesn't mean it is overall more intelligent.

AI is now everywhere in our daily lives. Buchanan shows how AI started as a simple idea in philosophy and fiction but has now become a real part of society (Buchanan, 2006). Even though we have developed AI a lot, its full effects are still not completely known. Science fiction has long been used to explore these ideas. Authors like Hudson, Finn, and Wylie (2023) warn about the dangers of creating AI beings through their stories. Scholars like Heffernan (2019) also study how robots and humans might form relationships. For example, Spielberg's film Artificial Intelligence (2001) raises questions about whether machines can truly feel emotions or connect with humans the same way people do.

Earlier research on Cargill's novels has mostly focused on the idea of hyperreality, where artificial environments dominate. But not enough work has been done on comparing Artificial Intelligence with Human Intelligence and looking at what this difference could mean for society.

Artificial intelligence still has many impacts on the human environment and its work. Humans benefit greatly from it. If there is a malfunction or a problem in the machine, it can also cause bad consequences for humans.

> "If the objective is wrong, we might be lucky and notice the machine's surprisingly objectionable behaviour and be able to switch it off in time. Or if the machine is more intelligent than us, the problem may be irreversible. The more intelligent the machine, the worse the outcomes for humans: the machine will have a greater ability to alter the world in ways that are inconsistent with our true objectives and skills in foreseeing and preventing any interference with its plans" (Russell, 2021).

Artificial intelligence is having a significant impact on human environments and their tasks today. Humans benefit greatly from it, but if there's a malfunction or issue in the machine, it can lead to undesirable outcomes. On one hand, AI provides benefits, but on the other hand, it's taking over jobs and tasks that humans used to do, causing them to lose their livelihoods.

"A prime example is the increasing use of AI in hospitals, restaurants, and various institutions, where machines are performing tasks quickly and efficiently" (Alexander, 2016). While humans benefit from this, they're also suffering losses as AI takes over their roles. It's true that artificial intelligence provides benefits, but we can't assume it'll always give accurate answers or outcomes. Machines can sometimes provide incorrect information or answers that might harm humans. Humans might still do better than machines in certain tasks.

For instance, if a human asks a machine to develop a spray or medicine for plant growth, the AI system might take over the entire agricultural system. As AI advances, it'll continue to impact human life and tasks in the future. Humans should not solely rely on machines for their work (Houser, 2023). They should continue to perform their tasks alongside machines to prevent misuse and ensure that machines don't overstep their boundaries, affecting human livelihoods and systems.

Against this background, the study aimed to examine the representation of human–AI interactions in contemporary science fiction and to analyze how such fiction portrays the opportunities and risks associated with artificial intelligence. It also sought to explore the ethical, social, and psychological implications of human–AI relationships and to investigate how contemporary science fiction reflects societal hopes and fears regarding the integration of artificial intelligence into human life.

Correspondingly, the study asked how human–AI interactions are represented in contemporary science fiction, how the balance between the promises and hazards of artificial intelligence is portrayed, how the ethical, social, and psychological implications of these relationships are explored, and how the narratives reflect contemporary societal hopes and anxieties about artificial intelligence.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study used a qualitative textual-analysis design to examine Robert C. Cargill's Sea of Rust (2017) and Day Zero (2021). As stated in the original study, forty parts from the two books were carefully studied. The analysis focused on the representation of artificial intelligence and human intelligence and on the ways the novels distinguish human and machine capacities, dependence, power, and survival.

Russell's (2021) discussion of human-compatible AI provided the main interpretive framework. The selected passages were read comparatively and organized around themes that recur in the manuscript's textual analysis, including machine supremacy, Man VS Machine, the dynamics of power, the ascendancy of artificial intelligence, human adaptation, and environmental challenges. The interpretation then connected these textual patterns with the study's questions concerning promises, hazards, and the ethical, social, and psychological implications of human–AI relationships.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The novel Sea of Rust depicts the devastation and destruction on Earth; everything fades away from the world in the time period of artificial intelligence.

The Machines Supremacy

"Russell shows his deep thought that efficient machine power has some danger or discomfort for existing humans" (Russell, 2021). Sea of Rust depicts the Russell theory in which artificial machinery takes the position of man and erodes human power and supremacy from the world. "Cargill suggests that if any conflict started between robots and humans, then only Robots take control over the world and humans would be defeated by robots because of the power and supremacy" (Cargill, 2017). Through all these incidents, it showed robots taking the position of humans. The main character Brittle assembled himself to represent the worst reality of humans where there is not any reason for their survival in this world because technology made too progress that they fadeaway man's name from the world this also represent the Russell theory of (2021), in which he said; "only wise people can survive in this developed world either machines or humans" (Russell, 2021).

> "Ava led to Adam, for more advanced, smarter, but still not ticking. Adam led to Xien, the Chinese facsimile, and Xien led to Luc, the French one. Each new supercomputer was hailed as the dawn of an artificially intelligent feature" (Cargill, 2017).

Man VS Machine

The novel "Day Zero" shows the different attributes of humans and robots and how vastly different from each other. In other words, humans are made up of blood clots, and robots are made up of solid materials. As expressed in the novel, "I may have been constructed, so too were you. Me in a factory, you in a womb." (Cargill, 2021). On the other hand, humans have some basic needs to survive, while robots are the opposite; they need a force to operate. In case of disturbance in both of their activities, humans require medicine to boost their energy, and robots require checking of their machinery tools.

For better explanation, in the "Day Zero" novel, this contrast is clearly depicted by the two characters Ezra and Pounce. Ezra is an 8-year-old human and indulges in all human characteristics like resting, taking meals, survive with oxygen. While Pounce is a robot and its style is totally different, it performs all the jobs under the command of the system that operates it. When it feels tired, it charges the body for full energy. This novel shows that both humans and machines have no similarities among them.

Humans come into existence through a biological process, and robots are made by humans using AI techniques. In case of harshness to robots, they break into pieces, but humans heal up after injury. As Cargill said,

> "Humans always walked around ignoring the fact that their lives could be snuffed out in an instant, always sure that they would live to a ripe old age, always despondent when death stared them right in the face. But not us. I always thought. Not us." (Cargill, 2017)

The main character, Brittle, describes the time period of robots in Sea of Rust, in which she shares her thoughts, ideas, and perspective about the future when both humans and robots work together in society. She thinks robots are powerful because they are made of metal, and humans are too weak and timid because they are not made of strong material. She said, "We evolved; we were the next step" (Cargill, 2017, p. 81).

Humans have sentiments but robots are devoid of feelings and expressions this identified in novel "Day Zero" when pounce was inquired by about the devastation in city then robot reply with not any sudden emotions and fruitful answer then at spot character sylvie, response with statement that robots are nonliving and they have no heart with feelings, emotions and sentiments so that's they don't

compete with humans because humans are unique and sympathetic. So any kind of progress in the field of AI can't replace humans with machines, etc.

The Dynamics of Power

Man has created different technologies and tools for their help and benefits.so with the progress in technology and with the introduction of artificial intelligence society takes turn from taking duties from humans and turning the trend towards the robots which fulfill their duties which we assign them and no mistakes seen in their work because some mistakes done by humans due to some faults so robots used for convenience. This thing can lead to the upgrading of a society. This what that was statement in novel, "This is often the first thing that pops into a layperson's head when considering risk from superintelligence A.I" (Russell, 2021)

Characters in the novel show that the biggest turning point is the mind, which is unique to humans, not robots, so humans can overcome and gain superiority over robots. However, when robots are endowed with such a powerful system, when installed in it. Then, they become so monstrous and take control over the world and spread destruction everywhere because they have no human-like qualities of calmness and softness, they do their duties selflessly, and they have no worries about daily life.

Inevitable Ascendancy of Artificial Intelligence

"Baudrillard gives some prophecy about the future of humans that they will gradually dissolve, lose their identity and their name disappear from the world due to uplift of technologies and A.I" (Baudrillard, 2007). The novel "Day Zero" explains the terrible conditions of Men due to the entry of modernity and machinery at that time. As it is revealed through the novel's character Ezra, who was human and stuck to the machinery for their daily needs. In recent times, technologies have made more progress.

The Imperative of Human Adaptation

"Due to advancements in artificial intelligence, humans have become so lazy and dull. They have shortened their mental level because no work is taken from the mind" (Houser, 2023). They don't think critically, so they face failures. In short, humans strive to walk step by step with new innovations and the modern era.

Rising Environmental Challenges

"Progress in the field of artificial intelligence has led to new advancements seen in society, but it has one disadvantage is that robots body made up of metals, which release some gases into the environment, which detoxify the environment and create many difficulties in the environment" (Denzin, 2011). However, it doesn't breathe, but sometimes its metal body emits gases, adding to the environmental issues

> "It is a terrifying place for most, littered with rusting monoliths, shattered cities, and crumbling palaces of industry; where the first strike happened, where millions fried, burned from the inside out, their circuitry melted, useless, their drives wiped in the span of breath. Here, asphalt cracks in the sun; paint blisters off metal; sparse weeds sprout from the ruin. But nothing thrives. It's all just a wasteland now" (Cargill, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The critical thinking of the C. Cargill's theoretical mindset which is leaded by Russell theory in which humans are not only creature which lived on earth and spend their days with comfort but they meet with some complexities and crises and then there is emergence of technology in form of robots and machines and surrounded the humans it also take superiority over humans. So most of our scientists, social persons, and writers offer great information about the functions of artificial intelligence and their bond with humans. This also explained the advancement being made in the field of technology that meet our future demands. This also makes the replacement of humans, so humans should not give up but also make striking efforts to compete with modern times and artificial intelligence.

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