



NEW FRONTIER IN LITERATURE: A GLIMSE OF CYBORG THROUGH ILLUM – A SCIENCE FICTION

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Abstract

Everyone wants to live long. The ultimate goal of every human is to have a long life without physical deficiency. Previously it is just a dream. But in the present scenario, it is a possible one because of advances in medical research and scientific experiments. Cyborg (cybernetic organism) is the new frontier in scientific research. Through this cyborg research, we can implant the machines inside our body to repair or replace the damaged parts of the body. The cyborg is not the only new thing in science, but also a new creative component to the literature. Cyborg is the current trend in science fiction. This research article explores the present and future action of cyborg. The present development is explained by depicting recent research and achievements of cyborg. The future action is explained through the science fiction book called Ilium by Dan Simmons, who predicts the future of human beings with the effect of cyborg. It is surprising, thrilling and shocking prediction of the human race.

Key words: cyborg, science fiction, Ilium, technical advancement.

We are in the age of technological advancement and super computers. It is possible for the experts to make us live longer with the help of technology. We are replacing the damaged organs with machines. For example, using an artificial cardiac pacemaker in heart from functioning, damaged heart, contact lenses, and hearing aid to fit a human with technology to enhance their biological capabilities. These are possible due to the result of research on cyborgs, which means cybernetic organism. It is the combination of organic and bio Mechatronic body parts. The organism may integrate or enhanced with artificial components or technology. The cyborg is the next step in human evolution, it is real:

Cyborgs do actually exist; about 10% of the current U.S. population are estimated to be cyborgs in the technical sense, including people with electronic pacemakers, artificial joints, drug implant systems, implanted corneal lenses, and artificial skin. A much higher percentage participates in the occupations that make them into metaphoric cyborgs, including the computer keyboarder joined in a cybernetic circuit with the screen, the neurosurgeon guided by fiber optic microscopy during an operation, and the teen Gameplayer in the local video arcade. (Hayles Life Cycle 322)

The term cyborg was coined by Manfred .E. Clynes and Nathan .S. Kline in 1960 to show an intimate relationship between human and machines. They wanted to develop this kind of research to explore the space. As space is a new frontier to human race, it is essential to have a man-machine system in order to modify the human portion with machines, so that human can try to survive in the extra-terrestrial environment.

Current examples are the c-leg system is developed by Otto Bock Healthcare replace the human leg. The sensors in c-leg helps the man to walk naturally with his own gait. Mann, a scientist, invented a miniature camera prototype and implanted it in a man's eye called Spence. This bionic eye records whatever he sees and have a wireless video transmitter to transmit to a computer for storage. Recently in 2010 cyborg jellyfish is created by a scientist using microelectronicprosthetic which helps to swim three times faster. That prosthetics can remove without any harm too. The military is recently focused on using cyborg animals by developing 'cyborg insects' to transmit data about the environment and to detect explosions and gas.

Cyborg is not only a scientific term of complex recent experiments carried by scientist but also a rich area of imagination in literature, especially in the science fiction genre. In most of science fiction, the cyborg is a human being with visible mechanical parts. Also portray as more like robots or more like ordinary humans. It may appear as humanoid robots also. They may possess super power or strength like extra senses, computer assisted brains or built-in-weaponry. William Gibson's Neuromancer (1984) is one such example, features 'Razor Girl' who has advanced cybernetic modification. The concept of man-machine combination was started to spread in science fiction before the World War II.

Edgar Allan Poe's story 'The man that was used up' (1839) features heroic general whose body is destroyed in war and replaced the damaged part with the machine and assembled piece by piece. In the story 'The ablest man in the world' (1879) by Edward Page Mitchel, a computer processor is implanted in a man's brain and that makes him too genius. Donna Haraway's 'A Cyborg manifesto' (1991) says "By the late twentieth

century our time, a mythic time. We are all chimeras theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism: in short, we are cyborgs” (Haraway, 150). She foresees the future and mentioned in her work.

This research article explores the evolution of human kind with the effect of cyborgs. The selected works of Dan Simmons novel - *Illum* set in the same way where human kind totally changed as cyborg figure and explore about the human species in the Earth after post humans. He shows much more advanced state of cyborg as the bodies of people are created through minute technical organism which can be programmed, repaired, renewed and destroyed which is contrary to the normal human body.

Dan Simmon's *Illum*- the parts of *Illum* and *Olympus* cycle comes under the genre of science fiction. The novel center's on three groups of people. Firstly -Hockenberry, a scholic, Greeks, Trojans, Greek Gods in the recreated Iliad on an alternate earth and terra formed Mars. Secondly - Ada, Harman, Daeman, Hannah, Savi and other old style humans on earth after the fall of post humans¹ created by the same. Thirdly -Moravec robots, Mahunmut, Orphu and more Vec robots in Jupiter who were sent by our earth people in the solar system during lost age. The settings of all three groups are over 3000 years of the 20th century. The three groups of the story begin apart, but converge at the near climax.

The earth of the post human era became pandemic due to Rubican virus². That virus created mass destruction and killed a mass number of people nearly 11 thousand million people over the earth. Only a few thousand people were left on earth. They decided to build artificial rings on earth and settle there in final fax³ with the help of advanced development in science. They did few more things too. They created an old style of humans with minute organism combined technology. Then they transformed as Greek gods due to a coding virus in the computer, terraformed the Mars and created alter earth with the Trojan War era. Some ages before they created many robots with a combination of biomechanical and technology and sent to the asteroid belt. They seeded all over the solar system, mainly in Jupiter and its moon. These three things affected the evolution of man.

In the earth for old style humans, the post humans strict with some rules and restrictions, like, they should be in a fixed number of population of one million only, fixed life span of 100 years, within 100 years of life they won't die and all diseases and accidents are fixed up by firmary⁴. They don't have functions like reading, cooking, thinking, walking for long distance, household chores and self-defense. Servitors like robots serves them everything and voynix, a bi-pedal bio mechanical creatures protect them. They used to travel through fax portals to one place to another where their total body explodes into millions of atoms and renew with all their memory in their destination portal in a fraction of a second.

They are more than cyborgs, compare to real time cyborgs and other science fiction. They don't have visible mechanical body parts. Their whole body is created mechanically with the combination of organism and technology. They are programmed by computer. Their creation itself is a complex science. Their life is divided into four twenties. End of each twenty they should go to firmary to rejuvenate their bodies and repair the damage cells and parts without altering their memory. At the end of fourth twenty their life on earth will over and need to join with post humans in the ring. But the old style humans don't know really what will happen to them after

100 years. Whenever there is any an accident or life threatening situations, the servitor and voynix take them to the firmary. They will send to ring for repair. Those persons are dumped into the green liquid filled tank with worms, which will repair their damages. Once Daemen went to Ada's home party. There he struck in dark and unexpectedly he was attacked by allosauras. He was tearing into pieces. Ada and her friends with the help of voynix and servitors shifted him to the firmary and saved him. The very next week he came back to normal. As they are cyborgs, it is easy for them to repair their body even after their body parted into pieces.

In the post human era, the post humans, not only created humans, but also altered and created some animals too for their research. They created few kinds of dinosaurs like allosauras. They would be near human habitats, but won't enter human territory except the few times like searching for food during flood and drought. They were exactly the same one like our ancient time dinosaurs. Apart from dinosaurs they created 'terror birds' which is as big in size as dinosaurs. These terror birds were near the Mediterranean basin far away from human habitants, these old style humans didn't even know their existence. Those birds were for hunting. That creation was the mistake of post humans. They planned to rid of the whole species of this kind before going to final fax, but they didn't. These cyborg animals actually hunt most of the animal species and so other kinds are in the endangered list.

The next thing the post humans did was artificial rings. They moved to rings for their safety. Due to a coding virus in their computer networking system a self-aware avatar called Prospero formed. The Prospero transforms the post humans in the ring as Greek gods. They forgot who they were and they were seven feet height then. He moved them to Mars and terra formed it for their living comfortably with the help of quantum shift and quantum fluctuation. Apart from that, for his entertainment he created alter earth of the Trojan War era, where the Trojans and Greeks fight. These god like post humans possessed more super powers, like travel to any place within a fraction of second using quantum flux, invisible for certain time for certain people, can fly, can make humans into dust, shape shifting powers by morphing them as other people.

The Greek god Zeus alone knew all about their history, who they are, why they were here and what happened to them. Prospero gave this knowledge to him. Zeus created the dead Homeric scholars of the 21st century from their DNA and they were called as Scholics. Their work was to compare the events of alter earth Trojan War and Homer's Iliad and to report and record those events with the muse. Those scholics didn't know about their previous life and death. They only knew about the Iliad and Homer. One such scholic was Thomas Hockenberry, who gave a big twist in the Trojan War and united all three groups in the book.

The gods fight within themselves and want to be more powerful. Goddess Athena wants to kill Aphrodite. And Aphrodite wants to kill Athena. Gods uses the humans to take vengeance and revenge among Gods. Aphrodite makes Hockenberry as a spy and insist him to kill Athena and gave a task to find a good chance to kill Athena. Same way Athena use Diomedes to kill Aphrodite. She invisibly came to the battle ground and made Diomedes as super hero by pouring nanocytes into him. These nanocytes gives him temporary godly powers. Using this power he throws a spear on Aphrodite and she got wound.

By these ways the transformed post humans live like Gods without knowing their history. Their body was transformed into godly figures by Prospero. He re-created them as humanoids with flesh and blood. These cyborgs play within themselves and with humans. There is no humanity with them. As they are changed into cyborgs their human qualities vanish and their mind becomes more mechanical.

In Jupiter, the moravecs were spread and colonized some thousand years before the decline of a lost age. They are transformed, updated and developed lots than the humans. They are not fully robots. Some of them are humanoids, some are machines, and some are sentients. They are biomechanical organism combined with technology. The humanoids can even breathe oxygen. They have much more power. They are technologically more equipped. Their technology is much advanced than any. These moravecs find the quantum flux and fluctuation on Mars and find it is dangerous as it destroys the whole solar system. So they go on an expedition to Mars to find, what is going on there? While their entry into mass atmosphere, Greek Gods attack them and only two of them are surviving, Mahanmut and Orphu. Both continue their mission alone.

During their mission they see Little Green Men, who are all carving big stone into face and plant on the surface of the Mars. They planted millions of stone faces already. They are called as Zeks. They have transparent bodies filled with chlorophyll and they are very short. They don't have nose and mouth. They only have two eyes in their face. They can communicate among themselves by telepathy. Mahanmut tries to communicate with them. One among Zeks press his hand against his chest and make him to touch its heart and so he heard their voice and converse with them. After their conversation that Zek died by drained out of chlorophyll. They came from the earth of an alternative universe and they are not created by Prospero. Even though they are not created by Prospero they worship him and out of gratitude they all are craving his face in stone and planting in Mars. Author of the book didn't mention about the origin of the Zeks. These zeks may come from the far future of the earth, even after some more thousands years. May be they are the evolution of mankind due to technology.

All the characters in the book 'Illum' are not human like us. They are created, recreated, transformed, terraformed, developed and evolved due to technology. Everyone and everything in the future may become cyborg in real also like this book. In reality, due to this cyborg culture and research, we have already become cyborgs. We started to depend on technology for our bodily needs. This is affecting the evolution of mankind. In such way we are post humans now. There is an irreversible shift happening within the human race. The future is unrealistic, but for sure everyone will become cyborgs. We do not yet realize it, but it is the bitter truth. The change which we change is not changeable.

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