

The Postcolonial Galaxy or a Galactic Postcoloniality: New Dynamics of Power in Isaac Asimov's *The Naked Sun*

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Aspects related to the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotics are in vogue in discussion concerning the future of humanity. In the domain of social science, there have been mixed responses to the issue at hand. While much of the opinion highlights the negative impact of Artificial Intelligence development on jobs and survival, others do not seem to be too sceptical of the same. While ideas concerning the former approach assume a survivalist mode of conceiving the issue, the latter seem to veer towards the issue of accommodative practices which enable the sustenance of human life, perhaps even with greater ease and comfort. Both approaches, however, tend to ignore the fundchaamental dimension of the new changes taking shape over the past few decades—namely, the sociological dynamics that have guided and will continue to guide research in science and technology. There is, as I shall demonstrate, a need to engage with fiction centring around the issue of robotics. A close reading of these texts might help recuperate visions/discourses on certain sociological presumptions about the future.

Foucault discusses the emergence of Western liberalism as concomitant with the disciplinary control of populations by granting the liberal subject enough space to make its articulation. This semblance of transparency helps create bodies of knowledge manipulated for control and surveillance. Francis Fukuyama's contention about the role of Information Technology in preventing any centralization of authority seems to flounder in the face of intrusive technological processes of such knowledge gathering. Knowledge of the colonial subject in the Foucauldian paradigm and its indispensable role in the application of colonial power has been the mainstay of postcolonial phenomenological reflections of the Self/Other. The notion of the subject's delusional agency in liberal discourses, however, witnesses a further modification in fiction speculating on AI, since the very thought of maintaining control over oneself becomes redundant when confronted with an intelligent being capable of knowing the Self better than it can comprehend itself. This results in the rupture of complacency about the resistance to authoritarianism deemed to be a positive takeaway of technology as Fukuyama had asserted. AI, as an offshoot of the revolution so dear to Fukuyama, produces the case for a new kind of subject in speculative fiction like Isaac Asimov's *The Naked Sun*. What emerges subsequently is an intelligent subject capable not simply of producing knowledge but also withholding it—a simulated intelligence that is human-but-not-quite—because it is more than what we ascribe to the category of human.

Such a degree of subjectivity of the projected Other in fiction reads the robotic intelligence as itself in its uniqueness and through the contours of AI research. This avoids reading the Other in science fiction studies as a “metaphor...or a perceived metonym” so as to render its humanness beneath the robotic shell (Langer 84). This gives rise to an anxiety of control experienced by the human subject. In Asimov's text, as it will be demonstrated, Elijah Baley, the principal detective character is desperate in his wish to make the robot-assistant, Daneel Olevaw, remarkable in his simulated difference, serve his purpose alone. Such an anxiety experienced in the face of the rupture of the purpose of robotics research mimics postcolonial anxieties in the event of rupture of colonial projections on the Other. The resultant anxiety in the face of the emergence of this new dynamics of inter-subjective relationship, as

will be demonstrated, causes laws long held to be expedient for an intergalactic universe to emerge steadily as ‘exceptions.’ Thus, while ‘robotic intelligence’ by its definition might enable the intellectual conception of laws for its sustenance, the anxiety that accompanies such a degree of auto-intelligence results in its sublimation in a man-made Law of Robotics in fiction. Such a method of suspension of projected discourses on the governed subject had been characteristic of colonial injunctions like J. S Mill’s conception of democracy in the colony—an idea that Partha Chatterjee (16) calls the principle of “colonial difference.” Although colonial encounters of such a kind might not enable us to know the extent of anxiety of the disruption of its political unconscious in the hands of the Other that fuels the principle of colonial difference, Asimov’s text does present a symbolic representation of the blatant causation of anxiety that results in the state of exception and its sublimatory gestures in letting a politically charged diktat masquerade as “Law” as understood in the natural sciences.

This paper seeks to explore postcolonialism as a condition not only reflective of the past but also an expedient tool to measure anxieties, fantasies, and their subsequent sublimation in speculative fiction on the future of robotics and AI as in Asimov’s text. The delineation of such anxieties results in the intermingling of the detective fiction with the anthropological account, since the elusive claim to objectivity of the latter (mimicking the elusive agency of the liberal subject) is shattered by the explicit power-relations based on the access of knowledge in standard detective fictions. However, the genre of the detective fiction also responds to the difference of subjectivities that I argue is presented in Asimov’s text and presents, as it will be shown, a unique dynamic of relationship between the man detective and his robot assistant. John Reider’s distinction between the traditional generic literature such as satires, tragedy etc. and mass-cultural generic formations (in which he bundles together both the detective fiction and the sci-fi genre), therefore, undergoes a modification here, whereby the particular literary practices of the text result in the transformation of the detective genre, itself making it hard to establish it as one amongst others of its kind (Reider 2).

While integrating the disciplinary spheres of ‘postcolonial’ and ‘science fiction’, Jessica Langer writes that postcolonial science fiction attempts to point out the conflict between the rational Western scientific discourse and the indigenous methods of knowledge production (9). Asimov’s situation in the Western scientific canon, both as a novelist and scientist makes him rather oblivious to such epistemic indigenities. However, the novel’s position in uncanny environments also projects enormous anxieties in universally upholding the categorical imperative of the ‘intelligent’ scientist.

Tracing an analogy from the literary oeuvre surrounding the critique of Western rationalism, one might say that while writings of the Victorian *fin-de-siècle* dwelling on the perils of Western imperialistic technologies such as R.L. Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and H.G. Wells’s science fiction writings are not ‘postcolonial’ per se; they contribute immensely to the projection of anxieties and ruptures that shatter the colonial myths of progress, thereby providing a rationale for the conception of epistemic systems beyond those which ground colonial hegemony. In terms of AI fiction, *The Naked Sun* performs a similar function.

The perpetuity of scientific development and the consolidation of scientific knowledge, ever since the First World War had significantly shifted its purpose, as Hans J. Morgenthau observes, from the Aristotelian preoccupation with “pure knowledge” to the use-value of scientific knowledge in the broader schema of political life. In the case of the development of AI research, it is the same thread that runs albeit with moments of anxious halts and scepticism as a look at the history of AI research shows. Nick Bostrom, in his book, *SuperIntelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* discusses these spells of darkness in the history of AI research concerning research outcomes—both technical and speculative. His description of Senator McCarthy’s rueful rumination over the future prospects of this development is conspicuous in the revelation of an unprecedented outcome of another Cold War strategy meant to achieve domination. This paradoxical outcome of loss of control over a project intended to control in the first place is interesting in our understanding of the subject. The products of Western modernity meant to achieve mastery and control over the colonial subject often produced results contrary to the projected intention of the colonial master as the history of the impact of Western education has shown. The psychological ramifications of these processes have been explored by critics like Frantz Fanon, who reflects upon the anxiety resulting out of the loss of control and the subsequent fantasy of usurpation of privilege as is revealed in the encounter in the train between the Algerian student and the French man in his text, *Black Skin White Masks*.

The genre of science fiction dealing with the interrelationships between the human and the non-human (read, the robots) can, I propose display similar trains of thought, albeit with regard to laws and protocols instead of cultural signs, as the former comes to dominate a standard discourse of man-machine interaction. Thus postcolonial methodologies whilst interacting with the knowledge of laws and exceptions reveal themselves not simply as being derived from certain historical encounters of the past but also as elements worth considering in speculative and fictional discourses concerning the future.

The very urge to initiate scientific engagement with AI stems from a desire to obtain certain specific results which were initially imagined or speculated. These speculations account for the voluminous availability of fictional texts surrounding these and other congruent themes and subthemes. The place of literature in this speculative practice embedded within ambitious thought-claims is quite significant. In fact, fiction, in its reliance on the faculty of imagination, does provide an effective ground for the enunciation of desires and the narration of anxieties. Even a mathematician involved with AI research and development in the heydays of the Turing Test Project, I.J. Goode, could not help commenting on the impotency of scientific inventions following the development of the machine capable of choosing and developing on its own (Bostrom 4). Thus, speculative strategies have been inextricably related to the field of scientific development and progress. Besides the idea of sublimating the deepest fears concerning a new and different kind of ‘intelligence’ is also a performative aspect of fiction and is therefore a consistent supplement to reality that may present issues that bespeak such fears. Thus fictions on Robotics can help reflect some of our politically motivated perceptions of the Other ‘intelligence’ and our intelligent Selves.

The Ideology of the ‘Human’ in *The Naked Sun*

Written in 1956, *The Naked Sun* is the second novel in Isaac Asimov’s well-renowned ‘Robot Trilogy’ series of novels. Born in 1920, Asimov’s foray into the world of science fiction began with short stories in the genre of science fiction, and his interest in robotics was primarily shaped by certain projections on the future. *The Naked Sun* (1956) is a novel about a detective named Elijah Baley (an Earthman, called so on account of his being from the planet in an age of interplanetary interactions) who is sent on a mission to the planet, Solaria, supposedly the

richest and most envied planet in the galaxy, to probe the murder of a Solarian man of repute, Delmarre. One thing leads to another and the novel finally becomes a document of Solarian life and customs revealed in fragments and from across various sources that emerge from within the precincts of the investigative plot. It is finally revealed in the end that the murderer was a Solarian and one of Mr. Delmarre's scientist-colleagues—a certain Mr. Leebig. The motive behind the perpetuation of the crime is also revealed to be personal envy. Even the prime suspect in the case, Delamarre's wife, is declared innocent. The generic intermixing of boundaries takes place in the novel through the entwinement of the detective plot with the anthropological content that also resembles the former in the sense that it produces outsider information of vital importance to the Earthmen.

In fact, as it will be subsequently shown, the detective plot actually supplements the documentary content. The presuppositions of an objective anthropological framework are put into question through the inevitable assumptions of subjective fantasies, anxieties, and perceptions in the course of presenting a purportedly objective ethnographic account. In this context it is worth mentioning that Patricia Kerslake suggests that unlike the first novel in the 'Foundation series' (*The Caves of Steel*), Solaria is an idyllic space marked by population control (124). However, the politics of inter-subjectivity renders such spatial concepts problematic as the suppression of passionate desire seems a prerequisite for population control whilst being at the same time a cause for the murder of Delmarre—the first crime of its kind in this idyllic planet. In the novel, in the first place, the ethnographic encounter is premised upon an understanding of a social order that does not actually form a part of our present realities.

The novel invokes the authorial production of anxiety as the principal subjective principle ordering and guiding the narration in an extremely uncanny state of realities. There emerge several contradictory points and features in the novel which are ultimately held together by the sublimatory instincts of the text that stem from authorial anxiety. These points taken together portend a certain place of the 'human' in a speculative world marked by intergalactic cohabitation of life. Although anxiety of the place of the human is the predominant cause of concern in such a universe, the alleviation of anxiety is rooted in (as far as the novel is concerned) a privileging of what are categorically posited as 'Earthly' aspects of life—emotions, sentiments, etc.—which are found to be missing or lacking in lives elsewhere in the galaxy.

The situation of the novel in *la momente, la milieu, la historie* draws our attention to the fact that the situation following the start of the Cold War and the prevailing tensions thereafter offer a ground for portraying aspects of a certain ideological viewpoint that, as Francis Fukuyama had claimed, has brought about the "end of history" (1). However, Fukuyama's perception of a unified and universal world order characterized by liberal democracy guides his perception of technology as well since technology enhances the democratization of information thereby upholding liberal democracy in a self-sustained form. Conspicuously, technology here performs an anthropocentric role while the category of "non-man" seems to be alienated from the product of its labour—liberal democracy. This mimics again the notion of "difference." The emergence of "intelligent robots" seems to question the principle of differential applicability of discourses in Asimov's text while the seemingly familiar "Earthly" aspirations in Solaria (Fukuyama's universal category makes a shift from the domain of Man to the domain of the Earthman) characterized by a heteronormative liberal non-authoritarian politico-social order is ruptured through the population control techniques and dictatorial ambitions of Leebig precisely by using technology. Thus, Solaria not only presents a state of exception to a seemingly unchallenged discourse in the post-Cold War Era

but also a cause of grave anxiety produced through the perversion of the Universal idea of liberal democracy. This also produces a case for the Earthman to be an intergalactic watchman of liberal democracy invested with the burden of order and civilization.

The novel, in evoking these contradictions and privileging certain terms amongst the contrasting subjects, helps elucidate the role of the 'Earthmen' in becoming the most sought after watchdogs of the prevailing order. In fact, this mode of representation is the immediate fallout of a certain anxiety concerning the spectre of difference in a seemingly unified world as Fukuyama's idea suggests, and about the political implications of technological advancements, given the fact that rival political blocs during the Cold War had historically revealed their uncompromising dependence on science and technology.

The various contradictions that arise in the novel relate to— Law as rigid and static / Speculations about disruption, Criminality/ Judgement, Ideal/ Practical, Benevolence/ Misrule, among others. Each of these sets of terms is put to use in such a fashion that the outcome of events leads to the prioritization of "Earthly" life as the index of true liberal democracy— the new world order. In the upholding of the "Earthly" is revealed the text's ideological strains in battling the anxiety of a challenge to the "Earthly" and its metonymic chain of signifiers— 'liberalism', 'man' etc. The threat to the same (that is effectively closed through textual manoeuvres) that arrives in encountering Daneel's "intelligent" subjectivity will also be revealed alongside the textual procedures of negotiating the same. The argument that the sci-fi genre itself remains contingent on historical contexts of production and reception (Reider 8) is bolstered here as the post-Cold War Era and the political conditions thereof singlehandedly account for the primacy of "liberal democracy" and its metonymical associations with Earthly hegemony. In so doing, Asimov's canonization fosters an understanding of science fiction as the product of "traditional" intellectuals who "undergo more elaborate elaboration with the dominant social group" (Gottlieb 116).

Control and Knowledge: Robot / Man

As I have argued "liberal democracy" is a textual metonymy for the "Earthly," it is important to engage with the text's perception of it in the course of a man-machine interaction in an intergalactic universe and its potential threats. Fukuyama's latest book entitled *Our Posthuman Future* defines the nature of liberal democracy in its very introduction. It is conspicuous that his recourse to a subjunctive narration arises out of a deep-seated suspicion concerning the consequences of bioengineering and its possibilities in the near future which can have the potential to undermine the category of the 'human' and thereby the question of 'human rights.' He writes:

What will happen to political rights once we are able to, in effect, breed some people with saddles on their backs, and others with boots and spurs? (Fukuyama 5)

It may be surmised from the aforesaid question that Fukuyama's concern/anxiety about bioengineering results out of an apprehension of the absence of equality of opportunity as it would imply the creation or breeding of 'natural' inequality at the start. Needless to say, this is an indication of the intervention of science in the ethos of a liberal order aimed at fostering equality of opportunities to enhance mobility. What emerges as a problem of bioengineering also presents itself as the predicament of robotics research in the work of Asimov almost a couple of decades earlier than Fukuyama's text. In fact, Asimov positions himself as being radically opposed to the ideology of science fiction writers such as Arkady and Boris Strugatsky in the Soviet Union whose works depict the capitalist West for their Soviet readership as "more different" from their Martian counterparts (Kerslake 20). Asimov's aim,

as it will be demonstrated, is to suppress the emergence of a world in intergalactic space which is different from the liberal, heteronormative and American male Earthman's horizon of expectation, thereby demarcating the standards of discipline and punish in such a society.

The final and conclusive ending that describes Leebig's crime and subsequent indictment is a testimony to the achievement of the 'Earthman', Baley, in weeding out a possibility of extreme centralization of control achieved through unbound checks on the new means of production in the intergalactic era—the robot (as the primary labour-force). Alessandro Portelli mentions that Asimov's "sympathetic" position vis-à-vis android beings leads him to consider the equanimity between artificial beings and labour so much so that, the robots are alienated due to the existence of disciplinary laws of robotics while any hint of robotic intervention in existing laws is the biggest cause of panic to the middle class which has created this new class of labour in the first place (154). However, it must be mentioned here that in the novel under consideration it is not so much a robotic proletarian upheaval that is feared as is a case of extreme centralization of control characteristic of anthropocentric fascistic tendencies. The fact that the misuse of human privilege has been responsible for the crime in the first place spells out the first sublimatory gesture towards robotic qua socialist interventions. It is interesting to note that the concern over centralization—an anxiety that drives the spirit of Fukuyama's recantation, fuels the discontent against the ideological aspects of political doctrines like National Socialism or the Soviet-style centralization of control of political and economic authority—is at the heart of the implied dangers surrounding Leebig's experiment. However, in mentioning his implied guilt (almost akin to 'sinning' given the uniqueness of the crime in Solaria which is conspicuous in its absence of a police force), there are elements that remain unsaid in the text in spite of cursory references that convey the possibility of their wholesome articulation.

The French Marxist critic, Pierre Macherey talks about the potential of a reader to identify gaps or 'silences' that necessarily comprise a literary text in order to tug at its ideological impasse. He writes:

The speech of the book comes from a certain silence, a matter which it endows with form, a ground on which it traces a figure. Thus, the book is not self-sufficient; it is necessarily accompanied by a certain absence, without which it would not exist. A knowledge of the book must include a consideration of this absence. (Macherey 85)

Patricia Kerslake writes:

Since Asimov wanted his readers to admire and embrace robotic technology his works never strayed far from an understanding of the human perspective. Therefore while his robots are always Other, they are a friendly non combative Other. (111)

What follows is an examination of the novel's considerations about certain aspects of robotic potential only lightly touched upon as a sublimatory gesture par excellence that records the generation of anxiety about the doubts over 'friendly robots.' In spite of being sympathetic with the 'human perspective' this gesture transforms into an anxiety about robotic violation of human rules which are ultimately not allowed to develop to their full extreme.

There is an unsaid resemblance between Leebig and Baley's robot-assistant, Daneel, as both assert or at least attempt to assert their control over robots. Daneel is quite adept at doing so as is revealed by the fact that he manages to turn Baley's instruction on its head in order to escape from his state of imposed house-arrest, to Baley's surprise. Besides, in the course of Baley's interrogation session with Mrs. Delmarre, it is Daneel who reminds him of the latter's

attempt at seducing him into believing her— a fact not just unnoticed but also unknown to Baley. Detective fictions across time are significant in their incorporation of the figure of the assistant who provides valuable knowledge to the detective-hero. In the case of the Baley-Daneel relationship, there happens to emerge a new dimension to the aforementioned relationship between the detective and his assistant.

The aspect of knowledge is also marked by the presence/absence of control. While Daneel goes by the laws of robotics in handling this relationship, the fact remains that what is best for Baley is known only to him, thereby causing grave anxiety to the detective-hero whose prototypes in detective fiction enjoy the privilege of being the only means of access to encrypted codes and trails of signs leading to the solution of cases. This anxiety is made evident in the hapless state in which Baley finds himself at the beginning when Daneel refuses to comply with his orders to open the rooftop of the vehicle on which they arrive at Solaria in order to have a glimpse of the skies above, as Daneel thinks it would be damaging to Baley's health, thereby citing his knowledge of the fragile human constitution. It is this knowledge and its cursory revelation only in opportune circumstances that consolidates Daneel's control and becomes cynically indicative of the possibility of transfer of authoritarian privilege. This coupled with the resemblance between Daneel and Leebig leaves the possibility of his imbrications within the same crime open.

There is a tacit narratorial gaze that regards the character of Daneel as one that is under dire need of surveillance and the impossibility of guaranteeing the efficacy of surveillance (especially with regard to a knowledge-withholding instead of a mere knowledge-producing intelligence) is revealed in the occasional denial of convivial treatment towards Daneel, as is usually meted out to other assistant characters in detective fiction like Dr. Watson in the *Sherlock Holmes* series, or Ajit in *Byomkesh Bakshi* series in Bengali or even Topshe in the *Feluda* series of Satyajit Ray. It is perhaps worth remembering that the last two series mentioned above have the assistant as a member of the detective's family either as a blood relation (Topshe) or as someone who lives with him (Ajit) thereby sublimating the uncanny nature of the hero's man Friday. The novel thus delves into sub-generic differences by showing how anthropocentric considerations in ordinary detective novels undergo remarkable transformation in a detective novel centring on AI. The transformative function of such a sci-fi text vis-à-vis the genre of detective fiction therefore is tied to the difference of subjectivities and the peculiar inter-subjective relationship between the man and robot as indicated here.

Despina Kakoudaki, in her book, *Anatomy of a Robot* writes:

The trope of artificiality offers a powerful existential register: we may describe ourselves as robots or androids when we feel dismayed by limited choices, dehumanized by repressive social and political institutions, oppressed by repetition or conformity, when we simply do not feel 'real' to ourselves, or when we fail to recognize the reality and humanity of others. (22)

In the case of the Baley-Daneel relationship, it is the converse of this statement which is true. In uncovering Daneel's guise and exposing him as a robot in the course of one of his impassioned moments of exchange, Baley maintains the detachment between the human animal and the robot that is constantly threatened by Daneel's addressing him as 'partner.' Kerslake suggests that "it is only when the Other is indescribable or too similar to be described as Other that true fear results" (18). In the case of a higher form of simulated intelligence however the familiarity (semblance of humanness through intelligence which is not an attribute of a mere 'machine') is not as unsettling as is the enhanced efficiency of the similar attribute

— i.e. intelligence. This mode of addressing is deliberately done because the assistant in this detective–fiction is also the adversary, and remains so till the end when it is ultimately Baley who is portrayed as being triumphant in his quest remaining true to his role as the detective-hero (and interestingly, proving Daneel’s assertion about Mrs. Delmarre wrong).

Thus even in terms of its generic overhauling potential, the culmination of the standard detective plot takes precedence with the emergence of the detective as the ultimate champion of circumstances. Thus, what we witness thematically as the suppression of robotic potential conforms to the generic peculiarities of the novel as well. Thus the issue of control qua knowledge/ subservience qua ignorance, so integral to the genre of detective fiction, is qualified alongside the ultimate claim to superiority of the ‘Earthman’ hero through a brilliant co-option of Daneel’s potentially subversive gestures.

Besides, although Leebig is brought to book, the possible agency of criminality that could be exercised by Daneel in the same capacity generates a concern that, we might speculate as readers, could become the justification for the Earthman’s intervention in Aurora, the planet that Daneel hails from. Given the Earthman’s successful restoration of order and resistance to centralization of any kind, the possibility of such an intervention not only remains open (and with it, of course, the possibility of knowledge acquisition of Daneel’s world— a reason outlined by Baley’s boss for expediting upon such missions and pleas for help thereby making us recall the colonial politics of the benevolent master), but also desirable by the Spacers as can be gathered from the almost unanimous appreciation of Elijah Baley by Solarians at the end.

This is perhaps a new logic of intervention in a new intergalactic universe characterized by the emergence of newer forms of intelligence that remain rooted in colonial metaphors and is centred around the preservation of the liberal world-order marked by decentralization and dissemination of knowledge (as opposed to Leebig and Daneel’s self-serving interest in withholding knowledge), the burden of preserving which rests on the shoulders of the ‘Earthman.’ In terms of the question of sovereignty also this presents an interesting issue. While the assertion of political self-determination qualifies sovereignty of nation states in liberal democracy, it is precisely the violation of sovereignty that marks the colonial encounter.

Giorgio Agamben outlines two different approaches to the question of the violation of existing sovereign laws causing the sovereign to suspend existing laws to come to terms with it. This legal flux put into operation by the sovereign authority is identified as its own limitations of legislative hegemony by Walter Benjamin while it portends the sovereign as the sole begetter of laws and their ‘exceptions’ in accordance with Carl Schmitt’s notion of sovereign power. In Asimov’s text, while the incapability to come to terms with the crime committed posits the Earthman’s sovereignty, it does not lead to the suspension of an existing legal framework defined by the liberal order but only to its restoration. The potential disruptive capability of Daneel witnessed in the abovementioned encounters with Baley is also conspicuously silenced out of an anxiety of the suspension of such a political discourse in the hands of a superior intelligence. The text’s tryst with colonialism presents an interesting case with respect to the Robotic Other, and the difficulty of its co-option within the structures of colonial assimilation.

Emotion, Sentiment, And Passion: Robots/Man

Kakoudaki’s work traces the etymological history of the word ‘soul’ from Aristotle to Descartes and thereafter in order to review the rather common-sensual notions of the artificial being as a soulless existence. She writes that the Cartesian notion of the soul implied the quality

of rationality and propensity to reason that was found wanting in machine-beings (or animals/non-humans) who were characterized by a primacy of matter over mind. Thus in accordance with the Cartesian definition of the soul, “artificial people are often excluded from the human” (Kakoudaki 103). However contemporary definitions of the ‘soul’ stand in contrast with Cartesian observations since they “relate more closely to the body and its urges and impulses and [are] focused on expressive qualities such as unpredictability, passion and impulsiveness and sexual desire” (Kakoudaki 182). It is this parameter that results in a distinction or, non-identification between the robot and the man.

In Asimov’s text, this non-identification prevails as such, and is forcibly emphasized in instances by Baley in dialogic conformity with the author. However the anxiety of the protagonist is fuelled when he finds that the Solarians themselves are heading towards a society where such distinctions are growing thinner. It is quite remarkable that the category ‘human’ is used not only to describe the Earthman but also the Solarians. This category grows thinner with all social standards which aim at reducing the predominance of emotions and sentiment. The word ‘emotion’ has the suggestive undertones of ‘sympathy’, ‘empathy’, and ‘passion’ in the text. In fact, the interview between Mrs. Delmarre and Baley shows the reader how the aspect of ‘passionate love’ is used as a weapon against Baley to influence his investigation which is supposed to be an essentially rational act. This gives us an indication of the fact that the Spacers regard this as a ‘weakness’ predominantly affecting Earthmen. Now, the role of Daneel is worth considering here. He proceeds to explain this as a weakness to Baley, although the very fact of his knowledge might suggest a possibility of its manipulation in his hands. However, the authorial anxiety concerning this is both traced and tempered in the formulation of a ‘law of robotics’ by which robots must abide.

Needless to say, it is the fragility of legal systems that the novel is premised upon, and the fact that what is unprecedented occurs (crime in Solaria) suggests the typical anthropocentric fallacy of assumption. However, the fact that the perpetrator is a human is a sublimatory gesture par excellence, since, in spite of projecting the disruption of order, it leaves the sanctity of the ‘law of robotics’ untouched. Once the investigation is over, we get to know that it was lustful ‘passion’ for power and control that lay behind the crime. This could lead us to two possible conclusions—first, that the society of the planet has in place those conditions that do not foster feelings or passion in Solarians (the issue of ‘viewing’, disregard for sexual intercourse due to be replaced with genetic engineering etc.) but that, at the same time, lead to the unbearable repression of drives and their untoward manifestations through Leebig’s idiosyncrasies and Mrs. Delmarre’s passionate flings.

This is also a deliberate authorial attempt to contain the transformation of social standards whereby the engineering of the ‘human’ could signal the lack of difference between the domains of the ‘human’ and the ‘non-human/artificial’— a society typified by an unbearable sameness of being between labour and the owners of labour. It is important at this stage to recall the conversation that Baley has had with the resident sociologist in Solaria. The conversations make us aware of the miniscule size of the Solarian population. Whilst it could, in being viewed through the lens of the present problem of global population explosion, be a practicable lesson for the Earthman, the inhibition of ‘passion’ that seems prerequisite for the maintenance of the population size has also been a prime cause of the crime.

‘Passion’ then seems to be a marker of difference, being almost intricately associated with the ‘human’ the compromise of which can be unsettling for the Self even if that seems a requirement for survivalist purposes. Although the practices of the domain of the ‘human’ predominated by passion is clearly prioritized over the sphere of the ‘non-human’, the

restoration of Passion in Solaria amongst Solarian ‘humans’ spells out the hierarchical framework of the category of the ‘human’ itself where the Earthly human (and not the Solarian ‘human’) dictates and guarantees the standards of humanity in an intergalactic universe. This only seems to modify Gregory Benford’s understanding of science fiction based on “Galactic empire motif”—“the concept of a human empire of many planets scattered across the stars” (Langer 83). The ideological qualifications of the “human” in such a world, in other words, are clearly spelt out.

Law-as-Natural versus Law-as-Artificial: Robot/Man

The pinnacle of all events involving robotics in the text is the three laws of robotics introduced by Asimov himself. Instead of mentioning these laws in detail, I shall only give a brief summary of them.

The first law of robotics prohibits a robot (through action or inaction) to allow harm to be caused to humans, the second law states that robots will have to serve humans except where the orders they receive are in conflict with the first law, while the third law states that the robot must protect its own existence as long as it does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

Mitchell Travis and Kierran Tranter argue that while science fiction texts like Asimov’s Robot Series deal intensively with fundamental legal issues, they are conspicuous in the absence of a lawyer as a character. One of the reasons they cite is that in dealing with advanced intelligent forms, the issue of legal manipulation by legal professionals becomes redundant. The novel deals with such ‘intelligent’ forms which are ultimately shown to be manipulated by the Laws of Robotics, thereby rendering superfluous the existence of a legal patron. What it necessitates instead is the character of a scientist-legislator capable of nipping in the bud the possibility of any robotic violation of law.

If the discipline of robotics caters more to artificiality, it is imperative that we cannot use the definition of natural law to explain it. We must bear in mind that these laws, like the text, signal a viewpoint that is constructive of fiction as fiction has its own themes of anxiety (thriller/mystery thriller) or fantasy (science fiction). Although we cannot go into a full-length discussion of self-developing machines, (the coinage of the word ‘intelligence’ and Goode’s rumination may provide a faint hint) the novel at least suggests the possibility of disruption of the law. The robots in Solaria as well as on Earth are depicted as being obsequious and have rather complicated in-built punitive mechanisms which are programmed to be activated in case of any breach of law on their part. However, being a detective thriller, the development or unravelling of the plot does not fail to present us with fresh speculations which even concern the possibility of subversion of the existing law by the robots themselves. This propels the society towards a state of exception through the fallibility or incompleteness of the existing code. The state of exception as the new law is the depiction of the fallibility of assumptions of the sovereign begetter of laws—the narrator qua the human. Although the state of exception has been proactively used by governments to portend their own sovereignty over laws, the text, through its silence on the possibility of such an occurrence owing to robotic violation of laws, portends the challenge that is posed to power through the state of exception. The text does not take recourse to exception to negotiate with the violation of laws by Solarian ‘humans’ like Leebig. It rather takes recourse to the restoration of social principles (“Earthly” principles) gone awry.

The law of robotics that is held sacrosanct otherwise when read alongside Daneel’s intimidating gestures suggests the author’s deterrence from touching upon the question of exceptions to existing laws. The reader realizes how the possibility of the robots’ manipulation

of the existing laws is diffused. In fact, even when there exists a possibility of tweaking the existing laws, this aspect of diffusion is starkly evident as in *Robots and Empire* where Daneel includes the Zeroeth Law over the First law and replaces “human being” with “humanity.” What may appear to be the sovereign power of the robot does not appear to be so when one realizes that this tweaking comes at a time in the series when humanity is up against other odds, unlike the human-human clash that *The Naked Sun* embodies. Thus it is actually the author as the real human sovereign who pulls the strings and avoids any negative implications of this problematic assertion by introducing this amendment to the existing laws subtly in a completely different situation altogether than the one presented in the novel.

Thus, Asimov’s utilitarianism, as J.J. Miller proposes is a sublimatory utilitarianism grounded in anxiety that his own proposals engender. What Baley hints at while demonstrating a possible explanation of the events leading to Delmarre’s murder is only indicative of human intervention to manipulate laws of robotics thereby leaving their uprightness and rigidity unimpaired. In leaving the onus of manipulation or the sovereignty to evoke a state of exception to the prevailing laws upon the human alone, complete control over the law and subsequently over the sphere of the robot is retained. Thus the status of the robot as ‘labour’ is upheld strictly in accordance with the principles of capitalist production with the legal superstructure completely in the hands of the owners of labour.

The only point of contention is that such a mode of production is applied to a system where labour is made to seem devoid of conscious agency and thereby rendered impotent in the text. In fact, although the possibility of human vice is exposed in *The Naked Sun*, it is no surprise that a human assistance (conspicuously, a scientist's assistance) is sought by Daneel to expound on the implications of “humanity” in *Robots and Empire* and this introduces us to the character of Hari Seldon and his psychohistory which once again establishes the real sovereign as the “human” alone.

Conclusion

In response to questions concerning his religious beliefs, Asimov is famously said to have remarked that branding his views as ‘atheism’ would only give a negative indication of the same while ‘humanism’ would stand for its positive values. The implications of the latter term emerges in three ways in our reading of the text— namely, Man as the natural inheritor of ‘natural’ rights (in the garb of liberal democracy whose propagation is the burden of the white Earthman as the forbear of democracy), as the Earthman in his capacity to save the galaxy from the offshoots of centralization of control (and in the process adopt and enact the tropes of the benevolent colonial agent such as assimilation of information, documentation of social and cultural intricacies etc.), and lastly as the ‘human’ which in an intergalactic world would come to essentially signify a community of non-robots as the purported owners of the new labour.

As a fictional text, the novel therefore enacts a sublimation of the anxiety resulting out of a contact with newer forms of consciousness and the consequences thereof by illustrating the corruption of codes and mores of control as the effect of ‘human’ vice, even for that matter in Solaria where it’s non-robotic inhabitants lay greater claim to the ‘human’ due to the similarity of precarities they share with their Earthly counterparts in their inter-subjective relationship with robots. Human vice therefore emerges as a fact more amenable to rectification (and interestingly, providing greater cause to the Earthman to exercise hegemony over other ‘humans’) than the corruption of laws by robots. However the proliferation of voices in the novel precipitate further its own silence that stems from the question—why can artificial and fictional laws not be imagined to be violated by robots as well? The answer to it lies in the

textual closures that stem from a particular anxiety concerning the fact of dealing with new “intelligent” labour which holds the potential of subverting presumed codes of knowledge gathering and control. It thus renders the state of exception which has emerged, as Agamben puts it, as the ‘new law’ more potent for the governed (robotic intelligence) rather than for the governor (the “human” which, as has been illustrated, emerges as a construct centring around one’s position in this inter-subjective relationship in an intergalactic universe).

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