

**Liminal Monster and the Conflict Between Human
and Machine: The Shrike in Dan Simmons'
Hyperion and *The Fall of Hyperion***

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Tarkastelen tutkielmassani Dan Simmons'n kaksiosaista tieteisfiktioiteosta, joka koostuu romaaneista *Hyperion* ja *The Fall of Hyperion*. Keskityn teoksissa esiintyvään Shrike-hirviöön, joka edustaa ihmiskunnan pelkäämää potentiaalista konfliktia ihmisten ja koneiden välillä. Pelko ja konflikti ovat keskeisiä teemoja paitsi tieteisfiktiossa, myös hirviöteoksissa yleensä, ja näiden kahden käyttö samassa kertomuksessa luo otolliset edellytykset nyky-yhteiskunnan ahdistusten kuvaamiseen.

Hirviöitä ja tieteisfiktioita on tätä nykyä tutkittu melko laajalti, mutta Shrike on aiemmin jäänyt vähälle huomiolle. Lähtökohtaisen teoreettisen viitekehyksen tutkimukselleni ovat luoneet Jeffrey Cohenin *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, Stephen Asmanin *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* sekä Holly Lynn Baumgartnerin ja Roger Davisin *At the Interface: Hosting the Monster*. Teoksista kokoamani hirviöteorian kautta tarkastelen sitä, miten Shriken puoliksi orgaaninen ja puoliksi keinotekoinen keho heijastaa niitä romaaneissa esiintyviä osa-alueita, joista tulevaisuudenpelko ja ihmisten ja koneiden väliseen konfliktin uhka koostuu.

Koska Shrike on puoliksi orgaaninen ja puoliksi keinotekoinen, se on näiden ominaisuuksien kynnyksellä; tässä risteytyneessä kehossa yhdistyvät molemmat ääripäät, jolloin tämä keho myös symboloi osapuolten välistä konfliktia. Konfliktin lisäksi Shrike ilmentää niitä vastakkaisuuksia, joista ihmisten ja koneiden välisen konfliktin pelko rakentuu: itseyyttä ja toiseutta, houkuttelevuutta ja luotaantyöntävyyttä, menneisyyttä ja tulevaisuutta sekä utopiaa ja dystopiaa.

Asiasanat

tieteiskirjallisuus, hirviöt, pelko, ahdistus, tulevaisuus, teknologia, dystopia, utopia, orgaaninen, keinotekoinen, tekoäly

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List of abbreviations

The Cantos: Simmons Dan 2004. *The Hyperion Omnibus*. London: Gollancz.

The Fall: Simmons Dan 1990. *The Fall of Hyperion*. In Simmons 2004: 351-779.

1. Introduction

Among the things that science fiction deals with is sense of fear. What can go wrong when we do scientific experiments? What will technological development lead to? What threats await us in space? Most importantly: what will the future hold for humanity? These are questions to which the genre of science fiction has provided many possible answers. A popular way in the genre to express this sense of fear is through a monster. The monster can be an alien, a robot, a cyborg or a computer. We have watched and read about alien invasions, homicidal robots and lab experiments gone wrong. What is perhaps most relevant to our time is the speculative fiction that explores a future where technology develops beyond control and decides to wage war on mankind. In this type of science fiction technology takes the role of a monster.

My thesis deals with the last example: the fear of technology turning against the human race, and how a monster can function as a representative of this fear. I will examine Dan Simmons' *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, together known as *The Hyperion Cantos*. When referring to both of the novels at the same time, I shall refer to them as *The Cantos*. This name originally referred to only these two novels, whereas now it has become to refer to a wider body of work by Simmons that consists of two further novels and some short stories. For reasons of clarity, in my thesis *The Cantos* only refers to *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*. When referring to *The Fall of Hyperion*, I will abbreviate it as *The Fall*. Whenever the name Hyperion appears non-italicized in my text, it refers to the planet in the novels, not the first novel itself.

Simmons' novels take place in a future world where humans have colonized space and rely completely on technology. The problem is that the computer network and cyberspace have evolved into an artificial intelligence entity known as the TechnoCore, which has its own agenda. The monster that lurks in the recesses of a distant colony planet Hyperion represents the threat of

artificial intelligence by being part organic, part machine: a liminal hybrid entity known as the Shrike. While being a “killing machine”, the Shrike is also worshipped as a god, to which the citizens of Hyperion and the followers of the cultist Church of the Final Atonement make human sacrifices. This makes the Shrike not only part organic, part machine, but also part past and part future: as an organic killing machine sent back from the future it represents fear of the future, but as a terrifying pagan god of a church that demands human sacrifice it represents fear of the past. In the technological context of the novels, a pagan god such as the Shrike represents a dark past, a past where people were followers of religions that used fear to control them. Fear of the future is a common enough theme for science fiction, but what makes *Hyperion* and *The Fall* special is the way in which progress results in regression, technological development leads to devolution, and through these processes the fear of the future merges with the fear of the past.

In my thesis, I will analyse how the fears of the past and the future combine in the monstrous body of the Shrike, and through my analysis I will demonstrate how the conflict between humanity and artificial intelligence can be depicted through a world that I will call dystopian utopia. By drawing conclusions on the basis of the thesis, I will demonstrate how the liminal body of the Shrike represents the conflict between technology and humanity, a conflict that brings the fear of past threats into the future. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that this liminal body represents an interconnected structure of liminalities found in the novels through which the central conflict between man and machine plays out. These liminalities are self and Other, artificial and organic, past and future, god and monster, repulsion and attraction, and utopia and dystopia. By representing all of these, the Shrike serves as an element, a construct, which ties all the separate components of *The Cantos* together.

First I will introduce the aspects of the monster and science fiction that have to do with representing contemporary society and its fears. Then I will move on to looking at how science fiction in particular continuously shows us our fears of

the future. I will show that both science fiction and the monster have the potential to reveal possible outcomes for contemporary phenomena, and to inform about these developments. After that, I will look at how fears of both past and future are manifested in the liminal monster of *The Cantos*, the Shrike. I will also demonstrate how the notion of technological progress means regression and oppression for the human race in the novels, and how the fear of the future becomes fear of the past through a representation of a past scenario in a new context. Finally, I will look at the type of dystopian utopia that humanity has crumbled into in *The Cantos*, and see how the Shrike is the embodiment of this dystopia. I argue that what first appeared to be the utopia humanity is striving to achieve is actually a dystopia because it has rendered humanity into a regressed state of being, and is on the verge of human subservience under the rule of artificial intelligence.

2. The monster and fear

The monster is a fictitious construct that has featured in legends and stories for thousands of years. It is a creature that communicates the fear and anxiety that grips the society from which it emerged. Through examining a literary monster, one can pinpoint and analyse the causes of said anxiety; in the case of the Frankenstein's monster, the fear was that of science and playing God, whereas Dracula communicated anxieties having to do with sexuality, xenophobia and the aristocracy. The monster represents these fears through attributes both physical and psychological, and analysing these attributes leads to the source of the fear. The monster as a construct is built from several pieces – just as Frankenstein's is – and these pieces are linked with the most basic sources of anxiety humans have experienced throughout their documented history, and probably for even longer than that. In this chapter I will look at these building blocks of a monster, how the monster's liminal body is difficult to categorize, and how the monster generates anxiety both through its physical form and its actions.

2.1. The monster

The most obvious observation one can make of a monster is its difference. There is something about the monstrous creature that sets it apart from what we consider to be normal. Baumgartner and Davis (2008: 1) dub the monster as “the absolute other”. They explain that it is precisely because of its being the absolute Other, difference itself, that the monster appears to be horrific and “evil”. Cohen (1996:7) also addresses the monster's Otherness:

The monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us. In its function as a dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond – of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct but originate Within. Any kind of alterity can be inscribed across (constructed through) the monstrous body, but for the most part monstrous difference tends to be cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual.

(Cohen 1996: 7)

Cohen introduces the basic function of a literary monster. He means that the monster stands for difference, it is the Other incarnate, it represents all that is considered to be divergent from the familiar world. Usually this divergence has

to do with social norms, and the familiar world often stands for the Western civilization and its values. Asma (2009: 26) also writes about monstrous difference: "Monsters seem to represent the most extreme personified point of unfamiliarity; they push our sense of abnormality beyond the usual anthropological xenophobia". Asma means that monstrous difference is more drastic than difference between people of various ethnic backgrounds. Being an age-old source for anxiety, difference is an ideal form for the monster to take in order to elicit fear.

The monster is a construct that dates back thousands of years. From the dawn of humanity to the present day the monster has served as an embodiment for fears that torment the lives of human beings. Cavallaro (2002: 172) says that monstrous constructs have represented our fears for many millennia, and that they have served as warnings against things that threaten the fragile existence of humanity. Therefore the monster does exactly what I will later explain to be the fundamental function of fear itself (see part 2.2.): it warns. Furthermore, the monster has served as a warning in the imaginations of human beings from the earliest cave paintings to the latest blockbuster movies.

Monsters can be found in any genre, but they are especially common in fantasy and science fiction. Since a monster emerges out of fears of a society, it also divulges sensitive information about the very fabric and nature of said society. Just as it is with science fiction, by using the fear of the society as its base the monster has the ability to deliver a warning to the audience.

Cohen explains how a monster imbibes in its body anxieties and fears as well as difference, and by imbibing these it brings forth the issues that produced those fears and anxieties in the first place:

The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy ... The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically "that which reveals," "that which warns," ... Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of

upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again.
(Cohen 1996: 4)

He says that a monster emerges from an “upheaval”, a disturbance in the order of the society. A disturbance in social order creates anxiety, and thus the monster is born: out of change, out of fear of the unknown and out of anxiety. It is exactly these kinds of upheavals that call for warnings to be made. For example, our contemporary society is revolutionized by technology, which provokes anxiety and dread about the future: computer technology might render a vast number of people unemployed and turn whole communities of people into hermits that stare at a screen all day, thus enslaving humanity even without the help of artificial intelligence. These are the kind of fears that are represented by science fiction stories on print and screen, and the monsters that are born out of these fears are technological in form, usually sporting an overdeveloped artificial intelligence to go with their instinct to destroy humanity.

Cohen also mentions desire and fantasy in relation to monsters. He is talking about the ability of any monster to both repulse and attract: “This simultaneous repulsion and attraction at the core of the monster’s composition accounts greatly for its continued cultural popularity” (Cohen 1996: 17). Cohen explains that the attraction of the monster stems from the forbidden fruit effect; the monster represents difference, but it also represents the forbidden or the unacceptable, therefore also incorporating the lure of breaking free from social or societal limitations. This phenomenon of attraction is important for understanding the dystopian utopia argument I am making in this thesis: achieving what humanity is attracted to, what humanity desires as a forbidden fruit in *The Cantos*, is the road to losing what makes us human. In part 5.4. I will explain how the Shrike represents this indulgence in the forbidden fruit and its humanity-destroying consequences. Next I will have a closer look at how exactly the monster is constructed.

2.2. Fear

The main element to look at when analysing a monster is fear. As one of our most primitive instincts, fear is an essential part of the human condition:

The reason why fear has emerged as an evolutionary phenomenon is quite evident: a creature without the capacity to feel fear will have a worse chance of surviving and procreating. ... Fear not only protects us from predatory animals and other dangers that exist in nature but also from many self-initiated dangers, like walking straight out into heavy traffic without looking.

(Svendsen 2008: 21)

Svendsen says that fear is a rational part of biological development, since it is a crucial part of surviving. He clarifies that while fear has originally developed as a precautionary measure against predators, fear can also warn us about risks we inflict on ourselves. Human fear can also warn against hypothetical and imaginary threats, which makes it a more potent instinct than that of most animals (Svendsen 2008: 29). Therefore fear is something that protects and warns, not only about immediate threats, but also about potential ones. In the case of contemporary science fiction, fear of self-inflicted potential threats is a popular theme. It manifests in the form of technologies of our own making turning against ourselves, for example.

In addition to being a warning mechanism, fear is thrilling, particularly to contemporary people who experience very little acute fear in their lives.

Scariness has gained ground as a pleasure: it is perhaps a modern affect, a symptom of the late twentieth century, of the mixed feelings we suffer when new beginnings and new endings collide at the end of the millennium.

(Warner [1998] 2007: 4)

Warner hypothesises that pleasurable fear is a phenomenon that has to do with cultural change and the parallel feelings of excitement and anxiety it brings about. According to Svendsen (2008: 74), the biochemistry of fear is the reason why horror in controlled, safe environments can be very enjoyable: he says that “fear is related to curiosity” in the human mind. Because fear is a source of intrigue, the experience of fear can be considered a delightful occurrence. Be it mixed feelings about cultural change or plain old intrigue, fear is sought after in the contemporary world. Fear is something that both repulses and attracts, which is a characteristic I already introduced in the previous part as a

characteristic of a monster. Therefore the monster and fear have this trait in common: they both repulse and attract. Now I shall introduce one fundamental source of fear: the Other.

2.3. The Other

One of the most common causes of fear is the Other. The process of othering means that someone is considered as different from oneself, rendering said Other as a source of fear, in a disadvantaged position, or both. In the context of postcolonial writing, the process of othering is a central matter of consideration. Emig and Lindner say the following on the matter:

In philosophy, theology, and psychoanalysis, the Other is the binary opposite that the self needs in order to assert itself. ... Both present and absent Others haunt colonial and postcolonial discourse with their insistence on racial, ethnic, and cultural identity or difference and form the benchmarks for a thinking in terms of inclusion or exclusion, assimilation, adaptation, mimicry, but also subversion, travesty or segregation.

(Emig and Lindner 2011: vii-viii)

Emig and Lindner's explanation on the Other clarifies how it is often discussed in postcolonial terms. They say that othering includes a range of societal processes that have to do with difference and the way a society deals with it. While *The Cantos* has strong postcolonial themes, the main self-Other distinction in the novels is human-machine. Thumboo (2008: 11-12) points out that a number of matters related to past inequality and oppression influence the process of othering on both sides of the cultural power struggle. Therefore the self-Other distinction not only reflects difference in background and/or appearance, but also of social and political position. When the Other is feared, it is not merely perceived as a threat because of its difference, but also because of the knowledge and memory that outsiders of the past have acted oppressively towards those who are different.

Kaye and Hunter (1999: 1) demonstrate how the otherness of aliens in science fiction narratives serves as an allegory to instances of otherness that have actually taken place. Because of 'the identity politics' of 'postmodern culture', a rich tapestry of alien identities are celebrated in fictitious narrative (ibid.).

Being different, otherness has become a thing to celebrate, at least in mainstream politics of the Western culture, and this is reflected in the science fiction of our time.

Mars is no longer to be feared, for human creations are now far more terrifying. Earth and the human race are endangered not by invaders from Mars or an 'it' from beyond space, but by the activities of the human race itself.

(Badmington 2004: 28)

The quotation above sums this view up nicely. Otherness that occurs organically, be it otherness of ethnicity or otherness of representing an alien race, is predominantly not considered as a threat anymore, which gives way to a whole different type of Other. What has replaced the human-alien self-Other distinction is human-machine; the Other is something humanity created, and is no longer from another planet.

The notion of hybridity is a further phenomenon of otherness. When the identity of someone has elements of two different backgrounds, that person might experience a state of eternal otherness, of exclusion from both backgrounds. These situations arise every day in the real world through different cultures mixing with each other, and they manifest in science fiction in the form of hybrid characters. Linton (1999: 172) says that the complex otherness of the in-between creature is examined in science fiction through the characters of cyborgs, for example. A cyborg, half machine, half human, is the type of character that combines the extremes of the contemporary self-Other binary: human and machine.

2.4. Liminality

While the monster does symbolise difference and represent the ultimate Other, hybridity is a central feature of monstrosity as well. Hybridity and otherness go together in the sense that a hybrid identity can be stranded in a state of eternal otherness, a state of not belonging to either group from which the dual identity has emerged. However, hybridity can also be mixture of self and Other. A hybrid creature breaks the boundary between the binary opposition of self and Other, and therefore blurs the distinction between these two extremes. When self and

Other are mixed, the resulting hybrid defies the categories that separate its halves, and challenges the ideologies that support their separation. This is a feature the hybrid shares with the monster, for the monster also blurs distinctions and breaks boundaries.

Asma (2009: 36-37) writes about the tendency of the human race to label the different, the Other as monstrous. As an example, Asma describes how other ethnic groups were judged to be “barbarians” by the ancient Greeks and Romans, and how the idea of monstrous difference developed when scholars such as Pliny the Elder and Ctesias encountered new animal species or heard of such encounters, and interpreted what was seen to be half-human. This concept of half-human, of hybridity, is a central feature of the monster. Asma and Cohen both call this phenomenon *liminality*:

Liminal comes from the Latin word *limen*, meaning “threshold”. When you are on a threshold, you are neither inside nor outside but in between. ... [L]iminality is a significant category for the uncategorizable.

(Asma 2009: 40)

Asma’s explanation clarifies how difficult it is to define a monster, just as it is difficult to define the word liminal. Difficulty in definition is exactly the definitive characteristic of a monster. This is Cohen’s point as well, as he clarifies how the danger the monster emanates is the result of its “refusal to participate in the classificatory “order of things”” (Cohen 1996: 6). He explains how the monster’s “disturbing hybrid” body represents this aspect by being “incoherent” (ibid.). Cohen means that the extreme difference, the absolute otherness of the monster, originates from its form that is impossible to categorise. Because the monster resists categorization, it does not fit into the familiar world, and that which does not fit causes anxiety. Cohen also mentions that a monster has the potential to shatter categories altogether with its liminal body. This is another aspect that allows the monster to provoke so much anxiety; shattering categories causes change, which in turn prompts fear of the unknown.

Therefore it can be deduced that while Baumgartner and Davis (2008) dub the monster as “the absolute other” and Cohen makes it out to be the “dialectical Other” and the “incorporation of the Outside”, the monster’s terror can actually stem from being a mixture of self and Other. The fact that the monster shatters the binary opposition of self and Other allows it to provoke more anxiety than merely taking the role of the Other, since the Other is easy to categorize, but the monster is not. Following Cohen’s logic, the “incorporation of the Outside” is, in fact, not the other end of the spectrum, but a hybrid that incites fear by resisting categorization, incorporating two extremes in one body, and by its very existence crossing boundaries, which is something I will return to in part 2.5. Baumgartner and Davis’ use of the phrase “absolute other” can be contested, since it can be seen as misleading from the true liminal nature of the monster. Then again, a solid argument can be made in favour of liminality representing true otherness due to its unfamiliar nature. In my thesis I maintain that the monster, the Shrike, is a liminal being, and that technology and artificial intelligence function as the Other of the narrative. Therefore, I will not be taking a stand on whether the Shrike is “the absolute other” or not, but instead I will concentrate on how it represents the clash of the two extremes: human and machine, organic and artificial. Therefore the Shrike is a truly liminal hybrid monster, a creature that articulates the anxiety that rises from the conflict of these two extremes.

In the case of *The Cantos*, the monsters liminality is a relevant feature, since it symbolises the conflict between humans and machines through its hybrid body. Human hybridity is a phenomenon that has been a source of fascination for centuries:

Throughout history, hybrid and grotesque entities have proved immensely adaptable vehicles for the articulation of enduring cultural anxieties, and have been rendered manageable by the translation of their troubling anatomies into *curiosities*.

(Cavallaro 2002: 198)

According to Cavallaro, the fears of a society can conveniently be expressed through a hybrid organism, since they can easily be adjusted to reflect a particular anxiety. He also refers to these organisms with the word “curiosity”.

In part 2.2. I mentioned how Svendsen explained fear and curiosity to be connected in our minds. Therefore the hybrid creature is able to elicit curiosity and at the same time represent a societal fear. He further demonstrates that human-animal hybrids in particular rouse the question “what being human really means”? (Svendsen 2002: 190).

Hybridity is also a relevant question in post-colonial writing. The same power of articulating cultural panic manifests in the hybridity that is present in the field of postcolonial writing.

The margin of hybridity, where cultural differences ‘contingently’ and conflictually touch, becomes the moment of panic which reveals the borderline experience. It resists the binary opposition of racial and cultural groups ... as homogeneous polarized political consciousnesses. The political psychosis of panic constitutes the boundary of cultural hybridity across which the Mutiny is fought.

(Bhabha [1994] 2006: 296)

Bhabha means that hybridity is the point where the anxieties between the coloniser and the colonized are revealed, since it forces the built up tension to the surface. He adds that hybridity is a phenomenon that negates the absolute divergence of the two clashing groups; if elements of both can coexist in one body, the necessity for the division can be brought to question.

Cohen (1996: 6-7) writes about how the monster’s liminality symbolises the situation from which it arose. He says that the monster emerges when two extremes on a spectrum of difference conflict with each other. From the two extremes a third entity materializes, a compound of the two, and this compound is the monster. He also says that a monster can only be defined in terms of difference precisely because it consists of two extremes, which rules out definition through binaries. Earlier I quoted Cohen’s mention on how a monster is the product of an upheaval, and here the nature of the upheaval is revealed: a hybrid creature, a liminal monster, rises out of an upheaval that is a conflict between two extremes. I also gave the example of technological revolution as our contemporary upheaval, and that applies here, since the nature of the technological revolution is the binary opposition of man and machine.

Furthermore, the hybridity of the monster, the mixture of self and Other that it consists of, causes further unease. This unease is felt not only because it reveals the tensions between two extremes, but also because of the idea that some of the self lies within the monster. Due to this fact it becomes eminent that there is something monstrous within ourselves. For example, a monster that takes the form of half animal half human, exhibits its human half as a demonstration of the monstrous side of a human. In the case of *The Cantos*, the monster is half organic, half machine. The monstrosity that relates to humanity in this case is not, however, the organic side; it is the machine side. The Shrike's monstrosity is born out of human-made technology, human achievement. Therefore the Shrike's hybridity reveals the monstrosity of that which is man made; the threat lies within humanity, in the potential of our technological creativity. The desire for advancement and the technological prowess that drives humanity forward proves to be the monstrous side of humankind in *The Cantos*.

2.5. Crossing boundaries

In the previous part I already touched on the boundary-crossing nature of the monster by explaining liminality. The conflict of two extremes in one body is already an instance of boundary-crossing through the combination of the two extremes. However, the monster also crosses boundaries other than those that have to do with liminality.

The too-precise laws of nature as set forth by science are gleefully violated in the freakish compilation of the monster's body. ... The monstrous is a genus too large to be encapsulated in any conceptual system; **the monster's very existence is a rebuke to boundary** and enclosure.

(Cohen 1996: 6-7, emphasis added)

Cohen explains that the monster is a fabrication that defies the very laws of nature and shuns the idea of clear-cut definitions. According to him, being a monster means crossing boundaries. The laws of nature being the most basic rules that enable our reality to function, breaking them can be seen as unnatural, as a violation against nature.

In parts 2.1. and 2.2. I explained how a monster both repulses and attracts, and that fear, a quintessential part of the monster, is also a phenomenon that can elicit both attraction and repulsion. Boundary crossing is yet another monstrous feature that manages this two-sided effect:

Moreover, monstrosity eludes conclusive categorization insofar as it embodies what we concurrently dread and hanker for most intensely: **the transgression of dividing lines** meant to separate one body from another, one psyche from another, and, at the same time, the pure from the impure, the delightful from the gruesome, virtue from vice, good from evil. ... [T]he prospect of boundary dissolution is both alluring and frightening.

(Cavallaro 2002: 174, emphasis added)

Cavallaro describes the appeal of boundary crossing and of the violation of regulations. Things that seem unattainable due to boundaries become tempting and yet, precisely because there is a boundary, they are also to be feared. Punishment or unwanted consequences evoke fear in the boundary crosser who desires the breach to have a taste of the other side. The monster in itself is a boundary-crossing creature that repulses and attracts; the outcome of a transgression that humans crave and fear.

Crossing boundaries is such a fundamental part of the monster that it can in fact be recognized solely based on its boundary-crossing exploits (or indeed, boundary-crossing body, as explained in the previous part). When talking about Anne Rice's vampires, Grady (1996: 231) demonstrates that whilst they are charming and attractive, they are still monstrous precisely due to the fact that they "blur" a "sacred boundary" that has been envisioned to exist between assets and arts. Therefore Rice's vampires can be identified as monsters only by looking at their way of life, which crosses a boundary that was perceived to exist in the society they fictitiously inhabit. It follows, then, that the monster not only crosses boundaries in its physical form, by being a liminal hybrid creature, but also crosses them in its actions or even way of being, if a monster has acquired an existence amongst humans. I will explain in part 4.3. how the Shrike crosses boundaries both physical metaphysical, and how the laws of nature are not only thwarted by the Shrike's existence but also by the presence of the technology that enabled its creation.

As I have shown, a monster is a cultural construct that holds within it the anxieties and fears of a society. In order to represent them the monster takes its form through an upheaval that is happening within that society, which is usually a conflict between two extremes. By incorporating both of these extremes in one monstrous body, a degree of otherness is achieved that generates fear in the audience. This fear stems from the anxiety of not being able to categorize the creature, but also from the anxiety of the categories being blurred and potentially shattered by this monstrous body. The monster also warns, for it has this power through absorbing fears of the potential outcomes of a given upheaval. Despite all this anxiety and dread, the monster also attracts: by being a creature that resists categorization, the monster holds the lure of that which is forbidden. Now I will move on to look at how science fiction reflects our society and its anxieties.

3. Science fiction

Science fiction communicates several possible future threats to its audiences. These threats are relevant to the society they emerge from, since the origins of the future disasters can often be observed in the time the work was written. The most prominent future threat that can be observed in contemporary science fiction is technological progress going too far, which results in the creation of artificial intelligence. This is perceived as a threat, because something sentient that humans have created rouses many anxieties, the most prominent one being the fear of the artificial intelligence oppressing and / or destroying humankind. These imaginary future worlds where a threat scenario has taken place are called dystopias. In this chapter I will examine all of these aspects of science fiction, starting with linking science fiction to the main topic of the previous chapter, the monster.

The monster is a common motif in science fiction, and the contemporary science fiction monsters share roots with the most classic ones. “*Terminator* (1984) is Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* revisioned via gleaming machines instead of body parts”, says Roberts (2000: 146). Therefore monsters and science fiction go hand in hand in many cases. Furthermore, they both share the ability to reflect the society from which they emerged.

Science fiction, in many obvious and not-so-obvious ways, reflects the nature of modern society. ... The sociologist may approach an SF story in one of three ways: as a *product*, bearing the imprint of social forces at every level from fundamental narrative structures to the precise forms in which it is manufactured, distributed and sold; as a communication or *message*, with a particular function for a particular audience; and, finally, as a *document* articulating and passing judgement upon the social situation from which it emerges.

(Parrinder 1980: 29)

Parrinder introduces one outlook on the theoretical value of science fiction. He looks at science fiction as a channel for communicating sociological thoughts and criticism. In his text, he explains that science fiction is affected by the society that creates it not only by carrying meanings relevant for the author and his social status, but also by presenting ideas and critical views on the civilization the piece was produced in. Parrinder’s look at the genre means that

social commentary can be achieved successfully through a work of science fiction. This is relevant to my thesis; a sociological viewpoint covers the fears and anxieties that a society might have as a whole, and how those can be represented in a work of science fiction.

While science fiction often takes place in the future, in space or indeed both at the same time, the stories reflect the society from which they emerge, and specifically the state that society is in. Science fiction is a particularly good tool for this, because it distances the reader from the society it critiques, thus enabling a fresh perspective on the subject matter of the critique. Parrinder (1980: 72) writes about how science fiction acquires its status as social criticism through something called *cognitive estrangement*: by taking the reader into a world that is unfamiliar, the science fiction author manages to rouse disapproval towards the real world and its societal state. By detaching the morale of the story from the real world the reader finds a new angle of looking at it and becomes susceptible to absorb the ideas the author is trying to convey (Parrinder 1980: 72-74). Ever since the 1950s science fiction has been recognized as a genre that brings forth social issues, especially different kinds of fears of what the future might bring, such as a threat to the individual through technology that can penetrate the human brain in different ways (Parrinder 1980: 70-71). Therefore, through speculating about problems we might face in the future, science fiction addresses the fears and anxieties we have now. By being speculative, the genre allows us to look into a possible future where our fears have come to pass, and by doing so gives us a warning: is all this progress really a good idea?

The phenomenon of cognitive estrangement Parrinder introduced is applicable to monster theory as well. Because the monster resist classification and shatters familiar categories, the fears and anxieties that it represents have also been estranged from the everyday world. Therefore the monster can serve the same function as science fiction does; it can reflect conflict and social distress that takes place in the real world, but it does so by providing a fresh perspective on

the situation. An author can practice cognitive estrangement through a monster as well, and combining science fiction and the monster the estrangement is all the more acute. I will now turn to look at how cognitive estrangement works in practice by showing us horrific images of a future where technological progress has gone too far.

3.1. Fear of progress

Humanity has taken leaps away from its original, what some might call natural, state. Every day human beings rely more and more on technology. Millions of people would be hopeless if they were suddenly, say, stranded on a desert island. To a great extent, our instinctive behaviour has been repressed, and replaced with an abundance of machinery. These leaps away from the “natural” state and towards an “unnatural” one are a source of anxiety, a source of fear.

[W]e are exchanging one form of dependence for another – we liberate ourselves from nature only to be subject to the supremacy of technology. ... Technology develops faster than culture. We have long since passed the stage when we could keep up with technology. We are incurring an ever larger *comprehension lag*. It is difficult for us to acknowledge this fact because it means that we are exposed to an outside world that will always contain the unforeseen.

(Svendsen 2008: 64)

Svendsen points out that while we have – to a certain degree – managed to relinquish our dependence on nature, we have become dependent on a (some would argue) much less reliable entity. Svendsen demonstrates that the problem with being dependent on technology is that because of the monumental speed of its development we are forced to face the unknown, the “unforeseen”, on a regular basis. This generates fear and anxiety; having so many unexpected developments happen in the everyday life, one cannot help but wonder how far these developments will go and what they might lead to.

Whereas the average person might not realize how prevalently technology is taking over their lives, science fiction authors have taken the matter into careful consideration. The unknown future threats that technological development might lead to are well hypothesized in the genre.

While speculative fiction frequently reflects the nightmare of nuclear war, the fear of information technology running wild is just as prevalent and, some would argue, is of more pressing concern. Computers are now so fully integrated into our lives that many of us cannot imagine a day without them; but, as a culture, we also cannot ignore the potential downsides of a technology that pervasive. Speculative fiction continually warns us of these dangers, including the loss of privacy and individual freedom, personal isolation, and even global destruction.

(Urbanski 2007: 39)

Urbanski explains here how fear of technological progress is the most pressing fear exhibited by science fiction today. She says that fear of technology is not limited to overdeveloped artificial intelligence; it is also about losing touch with our individuality and each other. She mentions that while we develop these fears, we at the same time become more and more dependent on technology every day. This is the type of technology fear that has to do with losing humanity and the things that we see as defining a human being. Fukuyama (2002: 7-15) argues “that the most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a “posthuman” stage of history”. He says that we are gripped by a fear of losing our fragility, because somehow we see our psychological and physical weaknesses as defining human characteristics (2002: 8-10).

Urbanski (2007: 39-40) lists “three aspects of our Information Technology fear: 1) That we will be replaced by robots or some other form of artificial intelligence; 2) That our forays into cyberspace will fundamentally change the way we live; and 3) That we will rely too much on technology.” Progress in artificial intelligence research is indeed the subject for fear, since it not only has the potential to create something that might indeed be a threat to humanity, but its creation in itself also generates anxiety; nothing good can come out of playing God. Cyberspace induces the fear that many concerned parents have experienced ever since the invention of videogames: will we lose ourselves in the virtual reality in the expense of “real life”? Relying too much on technology is arguably already upon us, and we experience moments of horror whenever technology fails us. All of these fears apply to *The Cantos* and I shall be examining them later in part 5.1.

The fears that playing God arouse are also addressed by Scholes and Rabkin, who explain that once the computer was invented, writers of science fiction immediately started to speculate about the disasters this new machine could cause, and that it is a fitting object of examination when writing about the consequences of playing God (1977: 136). Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein's* monster is mentioned as the canonical work of man creating life through science (ibid.). By setting fear of computers side by side with *Frankenstein's* monster, Scholes and Rabkin demonstrate that fear of the future in connection with fear of science is not a new phenomenon, and that creating something that presumably can think for itself is a dangerous endeavour. Playing God by assembling a person has developed into playing God by assembling a machine, but the dread this act generates is as strong as ever.

I have now shown that science fiction has theoretical value, especially when it is considered through a sociological point of view. Science fiction has the potential to exhibit social criticism and warn us about possible future threats. The audience is more receptive to ideas and warnings about the future when the story unfolds in an unfamiliar environment: Parrinder calls this cognitive estrangement, and it enables the audience to adopt a fresh perspective on a problem on which they might have lost their perspective. The most prominent threat in contemporary science fiction is the threat of information technology, since it poses threats primarily to our lifestyle and secondarily to the survival of the entire human race. Playing God is a topic that computers raise in science fiction due to the potential development of the artificial intelligence.

3.2. Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence has the potential to reflect fear of the past and fear of the future, because fear of being enslaved is fear of a past scenario repeating itself in the future. In this way, artificial intelligence and fear of progress generate fear that is liminal in nature; fearing a future in which past horrors are happening again but by a futuristic operative. I will return to this subject in more detail in part 3.3. Now I will look more closely at the fear of artificial

intelligence. The largest threat humanity is facing in *The Cantos* is the threat of artificial intelligence enslaving humanity and using their brains as external hard drives. Furthermore, the Shrike is a monster with artificial intelligence. Therefore it is relevant to take a closer look at artificial intelligence and its position in science fiction as a provoker of the fear of the future.

Slotkin (2012: 864) writes about how technology does not settle for fixing the problems of the human body: “human technology seeks to enhance our natural abilities until they approach godlike omniscience or omnipotence”. By this Slotkin means that technology aims to make the aides that facilitate the course of everyday life better and better, not settling for them to perform their task, but endeavoring to make them perform their task superbly. In his essay Slotkin mainly discusses memory, the technological aide of which is the computer and cyberspace. By perfecting this technological memory aide, the human race would create an artificial intelligence. According to Heuser (2007: 129), using technology to better ourselves can also be seen as an attempt to continue the existence of the human race. He says that bypassing the biological reproductive process with technology can be seen as a goal for artificial intelligence development. By definition, the kind of artificial intelligence created from the foundations demonstrated by Slotkin and Heuser would be superior to the human race.

Drawing from the way information acts, Slotkin (2012: 871) describes a future threat scenario. He explains that especially in the era of the Internet and cyberspace information is seen as a disobedient force capable to develop “autonomous agencies”. These agencies are the threatening, independent artificial intelligence entities that take form in science fiction. This is exactly the scenario in *The Cantos*; the cyberspace that humanity created in order to further facilitate information exchange and to enable teleportation developed independent artificial intelligences, that would eventually develop their own godhoods. Slotkin (2012: 863) introduces the term infocosm, by which he means an “imaginary space” used “to organize and store information”. He

demonstrates that it is precisely due to the creation of an imaginary space for information that the threat of information forming into new autonomous entities feels so tangible (Slotkin 2012: 863-864). In *The Cantos*, there is an example of this kind of space, and from within it the artificial intelligences of the story developed into autonomous entities.

Technological development in general and the development of artificial intelligence in particular generate fear and anxiety about the future. When speculating about a world where human race has managed to create artificial intelligence, things are often seen in a negative light. Because of the hypothesised potential for artificial intelligence to develop into autonomous entities, the world in which machines can think is often imagined to be dystopian. I will now turn to look at utopia and dystopia and how they are often harnessed by science fiction.

3.3. Dystopia and utopia

Technological research and development is driven by, among other things, the hope of improving human life, and scientists and non-scientists alike dream about a future where technology and science have beaten diseases, food shortages, the need for money, and even death. The notion of this type of future world is known as *utopia*. In science fiction, utopian dreams are often realized through massive developments in technology and medicine which eradicate most of the problems people face today, but the resulting society is usually not the utopia human beings so long dreamed it to be. Looking at the direction that technological development has taken, science fiction authors create possible worlds that are the result of said development. More often than not these worlds, inspired by utopian dreams, are actually dystopian in nature.

Utopia and dystopia are not as far apart as one would initially assume. Indeed, a dystopia can seldom happen without someone first envisioning a utopia:

Despite the name, dystopia is not simply the opposite of utopia. A true opposite of utopia would be a society that is either completely unplanned or is planned to be deliberately terrifying and awful. Dystopia, typically invoked, is neither of these things; rather, it is a utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society.

(Gordin et al. 2010: 1)

As it is explained in the quotation above, dystopia is often someone's utopia, the execution of which has either failed or proven to be dysfunctional for part of the population. This part is often the majority. Therefore the ideas of utopia and dystopia are not clear-cut; they have significant overlap. As dystopia and utopia overlap and can sometimes be hard to distinguish from another, they can also be perceived to be a liminal concept; indeed, the dystopian utopia that is taking place in *The Cantos* is a world where the two extremes collide, forming into a liminal version of reality. I will return to the idea of dystopian utopia later on in part 5.2. For now I will examine more closely the overlap of dystopia and utopia. The visions of technological development and artificial intelligence, with perhaps the exception of war technology, are a perfect example of this overlap: “[m]an’s wavering between the twin poles of dystopian technological fatalism and utopian techno-fetishism expresses itself in the techno-imaginary” (Kraus 2004: 198). As Kraus says, the interlocked fears and hopes for technology are at the core of science fiction. The utopia is a world where technology takes care of all the menial tasks of everyday life. The dystopia is the world where this has happened but the result has either fundamentally changed humanity, enslaved it in eternal oppression, destroyed it all together, or maybe even all of the above. The point is that a dystopia cannot be achieved without a utopia; someone has to have a dream, the execution of which will lead to a dystopia.

Dystopias often correlate with horrors of the past. Therefore dystopias are a form of fear of the past; the fear of certain aspects of history repeating themselves in the future. Moylan explains that the various catastrophes of the previous century are the subject matter of literary dystopias:

Dystopian narrative is largely the product of the terrors of the twentieth century. A hundred years of exploitation, repression, state violence, war, genocide, disease, famine, ecocide, debt, and the steady depletion of humanity through the buying and selling of everyday life provided more than enough fertile ground for this fictive underside of the utopian imagination.

(Moylan 2000: xi)

With a list such as the one above of suffering and cruelty in the recent past alone, writers of dystopian fiction cannot help but reflect the fear of those horrors repeating themselves in the future. Once a certain unfortunate development has occurred, for example a dictator rising to impose a totalitarian rule over their citizens, it is easy to imagine a similar scenario happening in the future, no matter how distant. When the patterns of occurrences such as these are known, they can be tracked forward into the future.

As I already mentioned, totalitarianism can be a subject of dystopia, and one that specifically reflects fear of the past. Gordin et al. (2010: 3) list a number of dictators and political leaders as the makers of “the dystopic qualities of the twentieth century”, the most prominent ones being Hitler, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot and Stalin. Because complete authority over its people is a horror many a state has inflicted on its citizens, it is a horror easily recreated and allegorized in dystopian fiction. Subservience and unjust government make a believable image of the future by recreating a fear that is easy to understand, and for many even easy to remember. In the foreword of her book, Gottlieb (2001) writes: “[T]wentieth-century dystopian fiction can be seen as a protest against the totalitarian superstate”, by which she means that motifs and themes in dystopian fiction have dealt with the horrors of totalitarianism on a large scale. Furthermore, totalitarian world order as a subject is not limited to humans ruling over other humans.

Much of the fear of artificial intelligence stems from this real fear of the past repeating itself, only with machines as the dictators rather than human beings. Fukuyama (2002: 3-5) writes about how George Orwell’s *1984* managed to foresee technological development comparable to the Internet in the form of the telescreen, but predicted this type of technology to emerge in the form of a menacing totalitarian ruler. Fukuyama points out that while Orwell managed to anticipate a form of technology, the Internet has indeed caused a very opposite scenario from the one in *1984*: “Instead of Big Brother watching everyone, people could use the PC and Internet to watch Big Brother” (ibid.). He also

mentions, though, that “many technological advances of the past reduced human freedom” (2002: 15), which is an argument in favour of the fear of technological tyranny. Seeing the future of technological development as a totalitarian worst-case scenario is, therefore, a theme that science fiction has utilised for decades. I will be analysing artificial intelligence totalitarianism in relation to *The Cantos* later in part 5.2.

Because dystopia gets its subject matter from the horrors of the past, a dystopian vision of the future reflects both fear of the future and fear of the past. In the case of artificial intelligence subjugating the human race we have a specific fear of progress that leads to fear of the future: the fear that artificial intelligence will gain a life of its own and aspire to oppress rather than be oppressed. Nevertheless, this scenario also reflects fear of the past in that it recreates a situation of totalitarian rule, a scenario that has taken place on several occasions in the past. Therefore we can deduct that fear of artificial intelligence stems from a fear of the past repeating itself; of a past terror being recreated by a new executor. Whereas dystopia and utopia can overlap and create a liminal dystopian utopia, fear of the future is also a liminal fear that mixes with fear of the past, for what else would humanity know to fear from the future than the horrors it is already familiar with?

4. The Hyperion Cantos and the Shrike

The Cantos tells the story of humanity reaching the boundary between technological development and artificial intelligence taking over. Humanity has spread across the universe and set up colonies on other planets, and this human collective is known as the Hegemony. The story is told through seven characters that are selected to make the final pilgrimage to the monster of planet Hyperion: The Shrike. The pilgrimage is final, because Hegemony is facing war, Hyperion's colony has fallen into chaos, and the Shrike has broken free of its containment, the mysterious Time Tombs. The Shrike and the Time Tombs are travelling back in time from the future, and the Tombs are set to open when they reach their time of destination. The Shrike has broken free because the Tombs are opening.

The final pilgrimage is a desperate measure taken by the CEO of the Hegemony (the ruler) to gain any information and / or control over the unpredictable Time Tombs and their resident, the Shrike. She has been told by the supreme artificial intelligence All Thing that Hyperion is an unknown variable in an otherwise completely predictable future of a war the CEO has decided to engage in. The pilgrim characters are: the Consul (an intergalactic diplomat), Lamia (a private detective), Silenus (a poet), Weintraub (a Jewish scholar), Kassad (a soldier), Father Hoyt (a catholic priest) and Het Masteen (a Templar of a mysterious nature religion known as the Templar Brotherhood). Another important character is Father Duré, Father Hoyt's mentor. His fate is intertwined with Hoyt's, since the latter is carrying the former attached to his body in the form of a mysterious resurrection parasite called the cruciform. Duré discovers these cruciforms on his first encounter with the Shrike, and later on finds out their true purpose in the greater scheme of the artificial intelligence. All the characters I mentioned have previous experiences with the Shrike or Hyperion, or both. Through their experiences the mysteries of the Time Tombs, the Shrike, and the upcoming war are unveiled.

The Shrike is a mystery that slowly unfolds throughout the novels. There is a Church of the Shrike that is dedicated to worshipping this monster and sending pilgrims to the Time Tombs. Mostly, though, the citizens of the Hegemony fear this unknown force, precisely because it is impossible to understand. It has a tree made of steel filled with thorns, and the Shrike hangs people on it to suffer eternally. Because of this, the Church of the Shrike believes it to be the Angel of Atonement, come to punish humanity for its sins. The participants of the final pilgrimage have their personal impressions of the Shrike: for Weintraub it is an unfair god, for Kassad it is a dishonourable soldier, for Silenus it is a muse. What it is in the end is part of a computer deity, a holy trinity the artificial intelligence TechnoCore built for itself. The Shrike was sent back in time by the TechnoCore deity, the Ultimate Intelligence, to apprehend its counterpart: a part of the holy trinity of the human race that fled the future war of faith back in time to hide in the past. This monster has many functions throughout the story, and has no single exhaustive explanation.

There are two different eras in the narrative that I will be referring to. When I talk about the present time of the novels, I mean the time the characters are living in. When I refer to the implied future of the novels, I mean the time from which the Shrike was sent back, where the Ultimate Intelligence reigns and where humanity has been all but wiped out. I will now start my analysis by looking at how technology is viewed in the novels and then move on to examine the Shrike.

4.1. Artificial intelligence as the Other

The Shrike could be seen as the most evident Other in *The Cantos*, because it is the monster of the story. However, as I clarified in part 2.4., for the purposes of my thesis I will treat the Shrike as the liminal being that incorporates the binary of self and Other in one body and maintain technology and artificial intelligence as the Other of the narrative. As the Shrike represents the conflict between human and machine, organic and artificial, TechnoCore can be seen to represent the other extreme of the conflict, artificial intelligence; TechnoCore is the

autonomous entity of artificial intelligence that causes anxiety and fear in the citizens of the Human Hegemony. There are, however, even further nuances in the novels that establish TechnoCore as the Other. Next I will look at exactly how the otherness of the TechnoCore is substantiated in *The Cantos*.

In part 2.3. I explained that the Other is difference: something that allows the self to define itself through distinction. I also explained that othering is a central theme of postcolonial writing. In *The Cantos*, the central self-Other distinction is human-machine. This distinction becomes clearest when the Shrike's role in the scheme of the machine godhood is revealed, and the characters learn that artificial intelligence entities are plotting the end of the human race. However, a clear parallel of the TechnoCore corrupting the human Hegemony is drawn by the Consul's story, which is a postcolonial look at interstellar imperialism, and can be read as postcolonial writing:

[P]ostcolonial literature is generally defined as that which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship. It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives. ... To give expression to colonized experience, postcolonial writers sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization – the myths of power, the race classifications, the imagery of subordination.

(Boehmer 2005: 3)

Boehmer says that postcolonial writing can be identified from its opposing view on the colonizer's actions and motivations and its tendency to devalue any ideas that would justify the colonization of any particular people. In the Consul's story this opposing view on colonization is introduced through something his grandfather, Merin, experiences as an intergalactic marine. grandfather, Merin had a love affair with a woman called Siri from a world known as the Maui-Covenant, and during this affair he came to abhor and fight against the corruptive force of colonialism, leaving the Consul to continue his work as an under cover agent in the ranks of the Hegemony.

Merin repeatedly compares Maui-Covenant to the allegedly lost "Old Earth": "The sky is as tranquil as tales of Old Earth's seas" (Hyperion: 307), "a world that looked as much like the Old Earth as Maui-Covenant did" (Hyperion: 311).

Furthermore, the introduction of the farcaster portals (interplanetary teleports) to Maui-Covenant is portrayed as a fatal blow to the indigenous life of the planet. Merin blew up the first farcaster portal in an attempt to stop colonization, and the Consul continued in his footsteps:

At first my role was to provide Web ingenuity to help the colonists do what they do best – destroy truly indigenous life. ... On Old Earth, it had long been accepted that if a species put mankind on its food-chain menu the species would be extinct before long. As the Web expanded, if a species attempted serious competition with humanity's intellect, that species would be extinct before the first farcaster opened in-system.

(Hyperion: 337-338)

After the Consul has described in detail the systematic eradication of species the human Hegemony has executed during their imperial expansion, he describes how the artificial intelligence is carrying out similar plans:

The Big Mistake of '38 had been no mistake. The death of Old Earth had been deliberate, planned by elements of the TechnoCore and their human counterparts in the fledgling government of the Hegemony. The Hegira had been planned in detail decades before the runaway black hole had 'accidentally' been plunged into the heart of Old Earth. The Worldweb, the All Thing, the Hegemony of Man – all of them had been built on the most vicious type of patricide. Now they were being maintained by a quiet and deliberate policy of fratricide – the murder of any species with even the slightest potential of being a competitor. And the Ousters, the only other tribe of humanity free to wander between the stars and the only group not dominated by the TechnoCore, was next on our list of extinction.

(Hyperion: 340)

The Consul's explanations on how humanity had moved from destroying threatening species on Old Earth to destroying those in space and how the TechnoCore was driving humanity from its home and planning their demise draw a clear parallel between the actions of human colonisers and the actions of the artificial intelligence. It can be construed from the text that what humans did back on Earth, what the Hegemony does in space, and what TechnoCore is planning to do are comparable to each other. Therefore, in terms of postcolonial writing, the Other that is perceived to be a threat is now the TechnoCore, whereas before it was humans in general and later on the Human Hegemony in particular.

A being of artificial intelligence Lamia encounters in the datasphere (cyberspace) called Ummon makes a direct comparison between human colonizers and the TechnoCore. He compares the technology provided for

humans by the artificial intelligence to the weapons and diseases Europeans spread among the Native Americans:

[We enslaved you with power/ technology/ beads and trinkets of devices you could neither build nor understand \\ ... Like the Sioux with rifles/ horses/ blankets/ knives/ and beads/ you accepted them/ embraced us and lost yourselves \\ But like the white man distributing smallpox blankets/ like the slave owner on his plantation/ ... we lost ourselves \\ The Volatiles want to end the symbiosis by cutting out the parasite/ humankind]

(The Fall: 699-700, typography in the original, ellipsis added)

Ummon compares the TechnoCore to the colonisers of North America by referring to their actions as similar to the people who spread “smallpox blankets” amongst the natives and had slaves do the work on their plantations. Therefore, the artificial intelligence of the novel is represented as a coloniser who is on the way to destroy the colonized, i.e. the human race.

Because of the direct parallels drawn between the TechnoCore and human colonisers, the artificial intelligence of *The Cantos* can be interpreted as the Other of the novels through a postcolonial perspective. Due to the postcolonial themes present in the novels, the Other is established through drawing explicit parallels between the human colonization processes (both of the real world and that of the novels) and those of artificial intelligence. Furthermore, colonization always leaves behind individuals who are *in-between*: “[a] contingent, borderline experience opens up *in-between* colonizer and colonized” (Bhabha [1994] 2006: 295-296). These individuals suffer from a feeling of not belonging to either side: coloniser and colonized. Another central element of postcolonial writing, the *in-between* character also manifests in *The Cantos*, predominantly in the form of a cybrid.

Cybrids are essentially the same as androids (robots that look like people), but they are manufactured by inserting the personality of a human being into their artificial body that resembles a human one in every way. It is established in the narrative that the cybrid race is almost extinct. There are, however, two cybrids who play a central role in the narrative, and they are both replicas of the late poet John Keats. The characters of these cybrids bring forth the issue of in-

betweenness and of the existential plight of artificial life. The other also serves as an intermediary between Lamia (with whom he has a relationship) and the artificial intelligence entities in the datasphere. Therefore this other cybrid is capable of boundary-crossing, which is typical of hybrid in-between characters: since he can interpret the more difficult turn of phrase produced by Ummon, he can bridge not only the physical but also the intellectual gap between human and a being of artificial intelligence. In this sense, this cybrid is also suspended between colonizer and colonized, humans being the colonized and the artificial intelligence entities being the colonizers.

An in-between character can reveal the fear and anxiety that looms at the background of the clash of two cultures or political entities, as I explained in part 2.4. The first cybrid does exactly this, in an overt way: he takes Lamia to meet with Ummon, and she hears the terrible fate that awaits humanity in the implied future. By taking her to see Ummon and by interpreting his words, the first cybrid reveals the source of anxiety in a very concrete and straightforward way. But this is not the only instance where a cybrid reveals the anxiety behind the clash of the binary opposites. The second John Keats replica that goes by the name of Joseph Severn manages to reveal fear humanity feels towards artificial intelligence, a fear of the soon-to-be colonized, as he explains the fear of cybrids to CEO Gladstone's aide:

'Do you know why people are leery of cybrids?' Hunt asked.
'Yes,' I said. 'The Frankenstein monster syndrome. Fear of anything in human form that is not completely human. It's the real reason androids were outlawed, I suppose.'

(The Fall: 364)

Severn's answer clarifies how fear of artificial intelligence, and of things that are "not completely human", is a factor even in humanity's legislative decision-making. Therefore fear of the future manifests already as fear of artificial intelligence, even though the human Hegemony has yet to realize the full threat at the point when androids were outlawed. Furthermore, Severn's reference to Frankenstein's monster ties the cybrid race and the organic-machine hybrids of *The Cantos* to a continuum of liminal creatures, and the Shrike to a genealogy of monsters. Since this is not the only instance Frankenstein's monster (or

monsters other than the Shrike) is mentioned, I will return to this matter later on in part 4.4.

Since Severn references Frankenstein, this archetypal literary monster, when talking about an entity that is half organic, half machine, he establishes without doubt that hybrid beings are perceived as monstrous in *The Cantos*. Since the monster is a liminal being, and the artificial nature of the hybrids is what makes them monstrous, from Severn's answer it can also be construed that artificial intelligence is the Other of the narrative; since a cybrid is half human, half artificial, it is the artificial part that serves as the Other. Since I have now demonstrated that artificial intelligence is the Other of the narrative, it is time to look at the liminal being that combines artificial intelligence and organic features; the monstrous body to articulate the conflict between human and machine.

As I already noted, implication is made to a monstrous genealogy including Frankenstein's monster and the Shrike in *The Cantos*. Severn suggests that cybrids are the new Frankenstein's monsters, which means that humanity has once again dabbled in playing God. Since the fear of scientific and/or technological progress so consistently generates the notion of humanity playing God, of humanity going too far, it is only fitting that a monster should emerge to serve as warning for crossing this boundary between human and divine. But the monster of *The Cantos* is neither of the John Keats replica cybrids, even though it is similarly half organic and half machine. I will now turn to look at the Shrike and how it represents fears of the past and future in *The Cantos*.

4.2. The Shrike

In this and the next part I will examine the monstrosity of the Shrike, and see how exactly it fits the description of a literary monster I have illustrated in the theory section. First I will look at how the Shrike comes across as a liminal creature and how it crosses boundaries. Then I will move on to show how the

Shrike incorporates both the past and the future in its liminal body. Finally I will demonstrate how the liminality, boundary-crossing and incorporating of the past and future all together blur the boundary between fear of the future and fear of the past in *The Cantos*, making these fears into a liminal phenomenon.

The perception of the Hegemony citizens on the Shrike is neatly summarised by Silenus. He tells Sad King Billy, a king who founded an artist colony on Hyperion decades before the seven pilgrims set on their journey, what parts of the Shrike mythology he plans on using in his epic poem about Hyperion:

According to the Shrike Cult gospel that the indigenies started, the Shrike is the Lord of Pain and the **Angel of Final Atonement**, come from a place beyond time to announce the end of the human race. ... He's Michael the Archangel and Moroni and Satan and Masked Entropy and the **Frankenstein monster** all rolled into one package He hangs around the Time Tombs waiting to come out and wreak havoc when it's mankind's time to join the dodo and the gorilla and the sperm whale on the extinction Hit Parade list. ... [T]he Shrike Cult believes that **mankind somehow created the thing** He's supposed to be immortal, beyond time. ... More like one of the universe's worst nightmares come to life. Sort of like the Grim Reaper, but with a penchant for sticking souls on a giant thorn tree . . . while the people's souls are still in their bodies.

(Hyperion: 162, emphases added, last ellipsis original)

Again, Frankenstein's monster appears. Even though we are dealing with technology instead of a stitched-up person, the theme of Shelley's novel is ever present, since there is a belief "that mankind somehow *created* the thing". It also becomes clear that the Shrike is difficult to define: Silenus' words draw on disparate images, not using one definitive characterization, but relying on several characteristics to form a stitched-up whole, which also draws a parallel to Shelley's archetypal monster. Silenus says the Shrike is both Archangel and Satan, which implies that the Shrike indeed is the liminal, hybrid entity that I have already established monsters to be. Therefore it is already clear that the Shrike incorporates archetypal characteristics of monsters as a cultural construct, and occupies a place in the genealogy of the literary monster.

4.3. The Shrike's liminality

The Shrike symbolises both the psychological and the physical conflict between humans and machines, between organic and artificial. Being a liminal hybrid

creature, the Shrike embodies efficiently the variety of anxieties that the development of artificial intelligence awakens:

[T]his functional designer body “wrested” from earthly restraints is, on the one hand, the frightening image of the cyborg as killing machine, our alter ego projection which has escaped our human control and even threatens to extinguish the human species, and, on the other hand, that of the body which has become totally alien to us.

(Kraus 2004: 198-199)

As Kraus puts it, a cyborg body that holds both technological and organic qualities has a particularly liminal quality to it. A body that has human characteristics has incorporated the Other to itself, becoming an in-between creature, bridging the gap between humans and machines. Its frightful potential to wipe out humanity makes it an extension of the brutality of man, but yet it has become something completely different. While the Shrike is by no means a cyborg, it is a creature of similar design: part organic, part machine. Therefore a strong comparison between the Shrike and a cyborg can be drawn, and their metaphysical significance is, to a large extent, the same.

In part 2.4. I introduced the concept of liminality, and drew on the works of Asma and Cohen to explain it. One of Cohen’s points was that a monster is born out of a conflict between two extremes. The Shrike is exactly this type of creature: born from the clash between humans and technology, the Shrike is half organic and half machine. As the conflict in the novels is exactly that, between humanity and technology, the Shrike’s body symbolises it completely because of its hybridity. This fact is emphasized many times throughout *The Cantos*. Weintraub mentions this when talking about the Church of the Shrike: “I, for one, am a Jew, and however confused my religious notions have become these days, they do not include the worship of an organic killing machine” (Hyperion: 14). Here the words “organic” and “machine” are both used to describe the monster. Silenus mentions the following when describing his encounter with the monster:

The blur resolved itself into a head out of a jolt addict’s nightmare: a face part steel, part chrome, and part skull, teeth like a mechanized wolf’s crossed with a steam shovel, eyes like ruby lasers burning through blood-filled gems, forehead penetrated by a curved spike-blade rising thirty centimeters from a quicksilver

skull, and a neck ringed with similar thorns.

(Hyperion: 161)

In Silenus' description of the Shrike's face particularly the combination of artificial steel and chrome with the organic skull again emphasizes the Shrike's liminality. A third example occurs as Kassad encounters it and its tree of torture:

The thorn tree seemed to be made of the same steel and chrome and cartilage as the Shrike itself: obviously artificial and yet horribly organic at the same instant.
(The Fall: 525)

The words "artificial" and "organic" appear here, encompassing succinctly the hybrid nature of the Shrike's body. The word "organic" is accompanied with "horribly": the fact that something "obviously artificial" can be organic at the same time creates anxiety, because it indicates that machine has developed a life of its own, that the boundary between organic and artificial has been crossed, and that categories are being shattered.

The Shrike is a part of an artificial intelligence holy trinity, which makes it not only an AI creature, but also the representative of the ultimate AI in *The Cantos*. The fact that the Shrike is a being of artificial intelligence is in itself a liminal characteristic. In Heuser's (2007: 129) words:

The very term 'artificial intelligence' (AI) can be considered as an oxymoron. If intelligence is, by definition, a characteristic of rational human beings, how, then, can it be artificial, constructed, maybe even man-made?

Here again we have two extremes: human being and man-made. Heuser argues that intelligence cannot be artificial if it is regarded as a human feature, since artificiality refers to things that are created by humans. Following his argument artificial intelligence is in itself a clash between two extremes: a human feature and feature that definitively is created by a human. Somehow an artificial intelligence combines these two extremes and allows them to reside in one body, but it is clearly crossing a boundary; being artificial and being intelligent can be considered as mutually exclusive attributes.

The very fact that the Shrike has broken free from the confinements of the Time Tombs marks another crossing of a boundary.

[T]he Shrike had been prisoner to the tides of time and forces no one understood, and the anti-entropic fields had been contained to a few dozen meters around the Time Tombs. ... The Consul thought of the Shrike, free to wander everywhere on Hyperion, of the millions of indigenies and thousands of Hegemony citizens helpless before a creature which defied physical laws and which communicated only through death.

(Hyperion: 6)

From the quotation above it becomes clear that precisely because the Shrike crossed the boundary around the Time Tombs, the citizens of Hyperion experience anxiety and fear. Whilst having been an ominous creature even before breaking free, it is only now that the boundary has been crossed that the colony is facing chaos. The entire *Cantos* begins with this idea: of some dreadful entity having crossed over to territory it did not previously occupy. This establishes effectively the boundary-crossing nature of this creature, and by doing so establishes the nature of its monstrosity as well.

The previous quotation also mentioned that the Shrike “defied physical laws”. This is yet another feature that makes the Shrike liminal: the fact that it is travelling through time with the Tombs, backwards from the future. “The time tides drive Tombs backward through time”, Kassad learns from his mysterious lover, Moneta (Hyperion: 118). Therefore, at any time it is observed before the tombs open, it is both there and in the future, still making its journey. Something that is neither really here nor there in time is again a violation of boundaries, a liminal entity. The Shrike is also capable of manipulating time: “The Shrike did not seem to move – to Kassad it merely ceased being *here* and appeared *there*” (Hyperion: 121). By slowing time, the Shrike is able to move from place to place in the blink of an eye. Here the Shrike defies the laws of physics, breaking the boundaries of what is perceivably possible.

In addition to having several concrete attributes that make the Shrike a liminal monster, its liminality manifests also through the spiritual significance that different characters and groups affiliate with it. The most extreme binary

opposite definitions that are attributed to the Shrike are monster and god. Liminality of this kind communicates the religious anxieties that the citizens of the Hegemony are experiencing and projecting to the Shrike. I will now move on to examine the Shrike's spiritual liminality more closely and see how its spiritual connotations link it to fear of the past.

4.4. Part of a monstrous genealogy

In addition to being a boundary-crossing, liminal killing machine from the future, the Shrike is also connected to the past. Throughout the narrative of the novels several implications are made which link the Shrike with mythological and ecclesiastical tales from long ago. As a result of being linked to past tales of threatening evil, it becomes clear that the Shrike represents fears that predate the age of technology. Even though it is a being born out of technological progress and the rise of the autonomous artificial intelligence, the fears that it elicits are not progressive; indeed, they are fears humanity has experienced for centuries, maybe even millennia. By having these links with the past, the reader can make the following connection: although the poser of the threat has changed, the threat remains the same. In addition to this, the Shrike represents fear of the past through the regressive influence of technology. Since the Shrike serves as a representative of the conflict between technology and humanity, the regressive impact technological devices have had on the Human Hegemony in the novels suggests that the Shrike can also be seen as a harbinger of regression. Returning to a regressed state is a direct form of fear of our own past, which I will elaborate more in parts 4.5. and 5.3.

As an explicit link to past posers of threats, the Shrike boasts firm roots in the genealogy of literary monsters. These roots are established through the character of Silenus, while he explains the fall of the City of Poets on Hyperion:

It was only Hrothgar's claustrophobic mead hall with the monster waiting in the darkness without. We had our Grendel, to be sure. We even had our Hrothgar if one squints a bit at Sad King Billy's poor slouched profile. We lacked only our Geats; our great, broad-shouldered, small-brained Beowulf with his band of merry psychopaths. So, lacking a Hero, we settled into the role of victims and composed our sonnets and rehearsed our ballets and unrolled our scrolls, whole all the while

our thorn-and-steel Grendel served the night with fear and harvested thighbones and gristle.

(Hyperion: 130-131)

Silenus compares the City of Poets to Hrothgar's mead hall, because both of these settings were under repeated attacks by a monster that lived in the outskirts, "in the darkness without". This overt comparison made between Grendel and the Shrike suggests that the Shrike is part of a tradition of monsters, one that descends from biblical narratives:

The monster Grendel, who regularly breaks into the large feasting hall at night to kill and eat the sleeping Danes, is probably the most famous monster descendant of the biblical Cain. He is described as the "kin of Cain", underscoring the medieval tendency to tether monsters to an already established hereditary line of evil. Grendel, like his banished biblical ancestor, lives outside the region of normal society, like a phantom that seems to materialize only in the black of night.

(Asma 2009: 95)

Asma explains what Cain and Grendel have in common: they both represent the outsider by not being a part of the society in their respective narratives. Asma also demonstrates that this monstrous succession from Cain to Grendel is an old practice to establish the hereditary nature of evil. Just as Grendel inherits its monstrosity from Cain in *Beowulf*, the Shrike inherits its monstrosity from Grendel in *The Cantos*.

Waterhouse (1996: 26-35) also writes about how Grendel has been written as a descendant of Cain and how Grendel's legacy can be traced through the monster continuum of literature.

He is large, he is explicitly and frequently linked (by the third-person narrator as well as by the protagonists) with evil, and his superhuman aspects, such as his strength and the terror he evokes, are all part of the paradigm of the monster.

(Waterhouse 1996: 34)

This "paradigm of the monster" Waterhouse describes fits the Shrike in all ways but one. The Shrike is large in size, has infinite strength and stirs up an aura of blind terror. The one way the Shrike does not fit this paradigm is that it is not linked to evil, and I will look at this aspect more closely in part 4.5. The connection between the Shrike and Grendel is something I want to emphasize here. This connection creates a link between the Shrike and the terrors of the past; by linking this monster from the future with monsters from the past (by

the references to Grendel, the Shrike is associated with the whole continuum of monsters that began with the biblical Cain) fear of the past is integrated into its monstrous body. The fear remains the same even though the monster has transformed; the Shrike as an artificially intelligent being wreaks havoc on the human Hegemony just as Grendel, a god's son, inflicts terror on the village of Beowulf.

Since Grendel and Cain are outsiders, their nature in the Self-Other binary falls more to the category of the Other, rather than to the liminal space that the Shrike occupies. The fact that these ancient monsters are more Other than liminal can be attributed to the fact that the threats of the societies that created these monsters had to do with fear of the Other more than fear of anything man-made:

The wide-ranging nature of the attack of such an Other upon individual and society ... has been more and more narrowed in more recent monsters, but in *Beowulf* it is presented as being much more fundamentally against the structure of society and culture, and the sheer length of the discourse devoted to the lead-up to Beowulf's fight with Grendel is important for showing how widespread and terrifying is the perception of that attack in the Self's response to a threat to the whole fabric of society.

(Waterhouse 1996: 35)

Waterhouse says that Beowulf's fight with Grendel is first and foremost a fight between Self and Other, since Grendel represents an Other's attack on the society as a whole. Waterhouse also points out that current monsters tend to represent a self-Other dynamic that is much more specific than that of Beowulf and Grendel's. Therefore it is necessary to note that while the threat does remain the same – the disruption of society, the destruction of humanity – both the poser *and* the origin of the threat has changed over time. As I demonstrated in part 2.3., the fearful Other no longer originates in the outside, but is human made: we no longer fear alien invasion nearly as much as we fear machine rule. The Shrike does not straightforwardly fit into the category of the Other because it represents a threat that originates within the Self – within humanity – since it is a descendant of a man-made autonomous artificial intelligence entity. Because the conflict that the Shrike represents was created by humanity itself, the monster cannot be entirely of the Other – it must be liminal. Therefore there is

not only monstrous genealogy, there is also monstrous evolution: the monster that represents the same threat has evolved to communicate a more complex origin than merely that of the outsider.

The Shrike's liminality also links it to a third monstrous ancestor, Frankenstein's monster. As mentioned earlier, the cybrid known as John Keats explains why people fear him by calling it "[t]he Frankenstein monster syndrome" (The Fall: 364). Whereas the Shrike is not exactly in human form, this Cybrid's take on the fear that liminal, boundary-crossing creatures evoke connects the Shrike with the most canonical liminal monster, Frankenstein's monster. Frankenstein's monster being a more recent relative, it also falls into the space of the liminal, between self and Other: it is man-made, it is half human, half artificial. This monster also represents the threat of the man-made, which means that the origin of the threat of Frankenstein's monster and the Shrike correlate. The threat has remained the same since the days of Cain and Grendel, which is the destruction of society and humanity, but also the origin of this threat the Shrike represents has predecessors in the monstrous genealogy, most famously starting from Frankenstein's monster. The fears that the Shrike represents, albeit projected to the future, are fears humanity has demonstrably experienced for centuries, presumably even millennia.

4.5. Pagan god

As much as the Shrike resembles Grendel, the evil beast forsaken by God, it is also called The Angel of Atonement and worshipped by the members of the Shrike Church. Therefore, as I mentioned previously, the Shrike is not defined as evil. It is explicitly defined as not evil by Father Duré, Father Hoyt's ecclesiastical mentor: "I have *met* the thing twice, and I know in my heart that it is neither divine nor diabolical, but merely some organic machine form a terrible future" (The Fall: 631). The Shrike is not seen as an evil abomination at all; both the Shrike Church and the CEO of the Hegemony, Meina Gladstone, are clearly of the opinion that the Shrike is the bringer of retribution. For Gladstone the abomination is the technology that has taken control of the human

population, for the Shrike Church the abomination is the Human Hegemony itself. Even though Gladstone abhors technology, she still sees this being of artificial intelligence as a last resort. Should her plan fail, she would rather see the Hegemony terrorised by the Shrike than let it continue to deteriorate under covert and manipulative machine rule. Here again the Shrike both repulses and attracts; while it is a terrible torturer, it is also the road to penance. It is a way to atone for humanity's sins. This is why Gladstone and the Ousters (evolved separatist humans) wish to unleash the Shrike into the Hegemony; they believe that the Shrike can bring a frightful salvation upon them all.

This belief in the Shrike as the Angel of Atonement is the other feature that links the Shrike with the past. The Shrike is considered to be a god by its cultist followers, and in the narrative its godhood is referred to with the word 'pagan'. The followers of the Shrike Church conduct voluntary human sacrifices by going on pilgrimages to the Time Tombs, where the Shrike supposedly takes their lives; nothing is confirmed, the pilgrims are merely never heard of again (Hyperion: 6). Silenus alludes to the Shrike as a pagan god already in the very beginning of *The Cantos*, when he describes his religious background:

I was baptized a Lutheran ... A subset which no longer exists. I helped create Zen Gnosticism before any of your parents were born. I have been a Catholic, a revelationist, a neo-Marxist, an interface zealot, a Bound Shaker, a Satanist, a bishop in the Church of Jake's Nada, and a dues-paying subscriber to the Assured Reincarnation Institute. Now, I am happy to say, I am a simple pagan. ... **To a pagan, ... the Shrike is a most acceptable deity.**

(Hyperion: 15, emphasis added)

Silenus' religious continuum shows that he has, in terms of the historical religious development of the western civilization, regressed: through a wide assortment of different organized religions, he has ended up a pagan. In the quotation, the word "simple" is used with the word 'pagan', which emphasizes this impression of regression: from a more complex spiritual state of mind, Silenus has regressed into a simpler one. Therefore, through being alluded to as an acceptable deity to a 'simple' pagan, the Shrike is deemed a simple god: a god from more simple times, from the past. Through this it can be deduced that worshipping the Shrike as a deity can be observed as a regressed state; the Shrike has brought about regression in some representatives of the human race.

Furthermore, the Shrike as a pagan god reflects yet again a fear that has gripped humanity for thousands of years. Religions that are referred to as pagan in nature operate under a fearful pagan god or gods, which renders fear of the Shrike a repetition of a fear that has been experienced for a long time. As a concrete example of the Shrike's godhood being of an archaic nature, Weintraub renders the Shrike's demand for human sacrifice as an action of an obsolete god. He studies the theology of the biblical story of Abraham sacrificing his son, and comes to the conclusion that there is no more use for gods that demand sacrifice. He talks to the Shrike in his dream where it beckons him to sacrifice his daughter:

There will be no more offerings, neither child nor parent. There will be no more sacrifices for anyone other than our fellow human. The time of obedience and atonement is past.

(Hyperion, 223)

Weintraub says that the time for the actions the Shrike is asking him to take is *past*; therefore the Shrike's godhood can be viewed as a remnant of the past. The fear and obedience the Shrike church shows it is characteristic of a past time, and Weintraub's character deems the Shrike as god from the past.

The Time Tombs are also referred to with the word pagan: "*Mystery*. The strangeness of place so necessary to some creative spirits. A perfect mixture of the classical utopia and the pagan mystery" (Hyperion: 155), says King Billy, Silenus' patron, whilst discussing the nature of the Time Tombs. In this quote, the Time Tombs and the Shrike are associated with a pagan past when science had not yet revealed the secrets of nature for the human race; the Time Tombs and the Shrike are a "pagan mystery" because no one understands them, and therefore their intrigue stems from a state of mind humans occupied in the past. This trait of the planet Hyperion, of bringing people into a pagan state they inhabited in the distant past, raises the question of how progress and the colonization of the universe can have a regressive effect on the human race. This is a point raised elsewhere in *The Cantos* as well, and I will be looking into it in more detail in part 5.3.

The Shrike's liminality is present not only in its physical form and its concrete actions, but also in the spiritual attributes that the citizens of the Hegemony associate it with. By representing not only a monster through its canonical monstrous ancestry, but also an angel and a god through its role as the worshipped deity of the Shrike Church, the Shrike embodies the religious panic that the seemingly secularized humanity is experiencing in *The Cantos*. Furthermore, by representing monstrous ancestry, paganism and futuristic artificial intelligence all at the same time, the Shrike's liminality incorporates fears of the past and the future also in this spiritual sense; past sources of anxiety, ancient monsters and pagan religions worshipping fearful gods, combine with artificial intelligence godhood in a mixture of spiritual fear from both the past and the future.

Fear of the future is not, however, limited to the fear of a time-travelling killing machine traveling back in time in *The Cantos*. Fear of the future is a multifaceted cause of anxiety that manifests in several different ways in the novels. Fear of technological progress in general is a source for such anxieties as fundamental changes to the way people live and loss of humanity. I will move on to looking at how fear of the future in general and fear of progress and the development of artificial intelligence in particular can be observed in the novels.

5. Fear of progress and dystopia

Having established how the Shrike is linked to fear of the past through being closely related to pagan gods and mythical monsters, I will now move on to examining how the Shrike represents fear of the future. I have already explained that fear of progress is a prominent element of Simmons' *The Cantos*. This fear of the future stems from a more profound fear: loss of humanity. In the novels, technological progress and especially the development of artificial intelligence poses many risks to what is perceivably considered human. As a liminal monster that is part organic part machine, the Shrike represents the conflict between humanity and technology, and it is exactly the fear of this conflict that generates fear of the future in the novels. In this chapter I will examine how the fear of the future and loss of humanity intertwine in *The Cantos*, and how the Shrike ties all these fears together through its monstrous body.

5.1. Fear of progress in *The Cantos*

Whereas the Shrike specifically represents the conflict between human and machine that is happening and will happen to a tragic extent in the implied future of *The Cantos*, as a monster it also symbolizes fear of progress in general. Cohen combines the monster with the fear of progress:

From its position at the limits of knowing, the monster stands as a warning against exploration of its uncertain demesnes. ... [C]uriosity is more often punished than rewarded.

(Cohen 1996: 12)

Cohen means that the monster often appears as a result of pushing the boundaries of human knowledge, as a punishment for going too far. He means that the monster lurks at the frontier of understanding as a warning against pushing past the familiar. In science fiction in general and in *The Cantos* in particular, artificial intelligence is the boundary, and the Shrike is the monster that appears as punishment for going too far.

The Shrike's function as a monster is representing the conflict between humanity and technology in general and the development of artificial

intelligence and its humanity-threatening power in particular through its liminal hybrid body:

[I]n most cases technology works in science fiction either directly or obliquely to collapse together the machine and the organic. The bulk of SF technology articulates **the trope of the Cyborg**, the machine/organic hybrid that is both a special instance of technology and **the emblem for all** of it.

(Roberts 2000: 147, emphases added)

Roberts says that the hybrid is an “emblem for all” technology, which partly applies to the Shrike as well. As a part of the TechnoCore godhood travelling back from the future and executing the TechnoCore’s orders, the Shrike is the delegate of TechnoCore and represents the threat of the artificial intelligence on the human Hegemony, therefore symbolising technology. However, as I established in part 4.3., as a liminal monster the Shrike symbolises the conflict between the human race and technology, leaving the role of the Other to technology and artificial intelligence; it is both organic and artificial, comprising both sides of this conflict in one monstrous body. I would argue that in the light of the evidence I have collected, the Shrike’s particular monstrosity embodies specifically this conflict, leaving it unable to function as an “emblem” of technology. In order to establish the Shrike’s role as a representative of this conflict, I will now give concrete examples of how the fear of technological progress is realized in *The Cantos*, and how the negative influence of technology on the lives of the Hegemony citizens is exemplified.

The fear of information technology is a fundamental factor in the fear of future that is prevalent in *The Cantos*. Of the three aspects of technology fear by Urbanski I introduced in part 3.1., all are present in the novels. The first one is extended from a fear of being replaced by computers to a fear of becoming organic hard drives for the computers that not so much replace as cleanly wipe out the major part of the human race that they do not use for their purposes. Fear three, that of relying too much on technology, is evident in the fear of regression that combines the fears of past and future in the novels: the human race has stopped evolving because of their reliance on technology. Fear two, cyberspace changing the way we live, is present only in minor characters; the

cyberpukes, who are plugged into cyberspace for the majority of their lives, find reality too slow and boring to deal with.

The fear of a fundamental change in the way people live is, however, prominently present in the novels, because it does not adhere only to surfing in cyberspace. This fear is combined with fear three in the novels: relying too much on technology has brought about a complete change in the way people live. For example, rich Hegemony citizens live in luxury apartments that are comprised of rooms all located on different planets, the doorways between the rooms being farcaster portals. Silenus describes his farcaster home as follows:

My home has **thirty-eight rooms on thirty-six worlds**. No doors: the arched **entrances are farcaster portals**, a few opaqued with privacy curtains, most open to observation and entry. Each room has windows everywhere and at least two walls with portals. ... The huge sleeping room Helenda and I share rocks gently in the boughs of a three-hundred-meter Worldtree on the Templar world of God's Grove and connects to a solarium which sits alone on the arid saltflats of Hebron. ... The architect ... has incorporated several small jokes into the house's design: the steps *go down* to the tower room, of course, but equally droll is the exit from the eyrie which leads to the exercise room on the lowest leves of Lusus's deepest Hive, or perhaps the guest bathroom, which consists of toilet, bidet, sink and shower stall on an open, wall-less raft afloat on the violet seaworld of Mare Infinitus.

(Hyperion: 142-143, emphases added)

From Silenus' description it becomes clear that technology is physically ripping apart the personal lives of the Hegemony citizens; they spend their mornings on a different planet than their nights, traveling vast distances already before commuting to work. Whereas these extreme homes are only available for the rich, they communicate the extent to which technology is capable of changing the lives of these people, and to which they are ready to rely on technology.

Relying on the farcaster portals to serve as normal doors does turn out to be a grave mistake. When the farcaster system is destroyed at the end of *The Fall* the consequences of becoming too reliant on technology hit the Hegemony citizens:

Father or mother had 'cast off to work as usual, say from Deneb Vier to Renaissance V, and **instead of arriving home an hour late this evening, would be delayed eleven years** ... Well-to-do family members listening to Gladstone's speech in their fashionable multiworld residences looked up to stare at each other, separated by only a few meters and open portals between the rooms, blinked, and **were separated by light-years and actual years**, their rooms now opening on to nothing. Children a few minutes away at school or camp or play or the sitter's

would be grown before they were reunited with parents.

(The Fall: 749, emphases added)

This example of the extensive influence technology has on the Hegemony citizens' lives illustrates clearly how becoming reliant on technology can lead to losing that which people hold most dear: their family. Loved ones being wrenched light years apart by the destruction of the farcaster system is an act done in the name of preserving humanity, but its disastrous consequence can be interpreted as a lesson against progress going too far. The fact that the sudden absence of technology renders people unable to communicate with their loved ones may also be interpreted as an allegory to the way personal face-to-face communication is declining due to technology. This allegory serves in favour of the argument that technology makes us lose our humanity: it makes us lose the natural ability to communicate with another human.

I have already established that science fiction deals with fears of the future and issues warnings about what might happen due to technological development. The fear of technology that manifests in *The Cantos* takes anxiety about technological development further than merely the fear of the destruction of the human race.

[T]here are those who argue that organic life – even man – is just a stage in the development of inorganic life; that is, inorganic matter needed to evolve life so that humans could evolve so that they could create machines which would evolve through their generations to intelligence so that the ultimate computers could rule the Earth. In this view, human life recedes into insignificance.

(Scholes and Rabkin 1977: 131)

The view presented in the quotation above applies to the implied future in *The Cantos*. Scholes and Rabkin introduce the idea that the human race has developed only to generate a further stage of development: the machine. According to this idea, the machines are to develop into inorganic life, thus continuing the evolution in which the human race only occupies an intermediate level. This idea is the same that Simmons presents as a dystopian future in *The Cantos*. In the implied future the characters of *The Cantos* are trying to prevent, a war between an artificial intelligence godhood and the god developed by the human race is taking place. This artificial intelligence godhood not only strives to destroy the human race and their god, but also to destroy the

artificial intelligences that came before it, thus replacing all that came before it. Therefore the computers that humans created and the artificial intelligences those computers evolved into are also only an intermediate level in the evolution of the artificial intelligence godhood. However, the evolution of the computers in *The Cantos* to their godhood, the Ultimate Intelligence, is seen as unnatural and wrong. The threat of this future that becomes clear to the characters in the course of the novel is seen as an abomination, a future that must be stopped. The type of future humanity is heading towards in *The Cantos* is a dystopia, and I will now turn to look at how this utopia-turned-dystopia is constructed, and how the Shrike represents this future through its liminal body.

5.2. Dystopian utopia

In the present of the novels the reader witnesses a world where technology has made life as easy as it can possibly make it. Vast distances can be travelled via teleportation devices known as farcaster portals, advances in medicine enable humans to prolong their lifespan many times over, and a neural implant allows anyone to access information anytime, anywhere. The times are not explicitly gloomy, as they are in, for example, Orwell's *1984*. Humanity seems to have achieved exactly what it always wanted without any obvious repercussions. This would, initially, seem to be a utopia. However, as the narrative progresses, and especially in the implied future of the novels, it becomes clear that the utopia in fact seems more like a dystopia. Humanity has managed to progress into a dystopian utopia scenario, from which its CEO is desperately looking for a way out.

Whereas technological development and the creation of artificial intelligence have to do with scientific utopia, *The Cantos* is one of the many works of science fiction that shows us what might happen in this perceivably utopian future.

[I]n popular depictions of cyborgs and bioengineered creatures, dystopian fears predominate. Our representations of the techno-imaginary often warn us "Be careful about what you wish for because you might get it."

(Kraus 2004: 204)

Kraus concisely explains how our pursuit of technological dreams translates into nightmares in speculative fiction. Wishing for the ability to create artificial life can be a dangerous thing. The utopia of having that kind of power is often realized as a dystopian scenario. The dichotomy of repulsion and attraction applies to visions of the future as well as the monster (part 2.1.). Utopia attracts and dystopia repulses, but the two are not that far apart.

In *The Cantos*, humankind has made giant leaps in scientific and technological research, being attracted to the possible future free of disease, death and manual labour, but the future also terrifies and poses tangible threats to lives of citizens of the Hegemony. The technological progress so yearned for by the population renders them addicted and helpless, creating a dystopian utopia. While humanity has achieved all it has ever wanted, it has become an enslaved race, and a more severe enslavement is in store in the implied future, where the Ultimate Intelligence reigns. Furthermore, the human race has stopped evolving, both because of the technological aides they utilise in their everyday life and also because the utopia of peace for all mankind has come to pass, and as Fukuyama puts it: “[s]ocieties that face no competition or aggression stagnate and fail to innovate” (2002: 98).

In part 3.3. I demonstrated how fear of totalitarian social order is not only a tangible and believable subject for dystopian fiction, it is also something that can be connected to the fear of artificial intelligence and technology. Gladstone alludes to the overwhelming presence of technology in the lives of the Hegemony citizens as “the foulest and most soul-destroying tyranny ever to stain the annals of history” (*The Fall*: 559). Therefore the text itself indicates that the machine supremacy is nothing more but another tyranny, another “totalitarian” system, only the ruling entity is an artificial intelligence instead of a state. Gladstone also describes the condition of the Hegemony as “*the inertia forced upon us by the Core*” and the citizens’ relationship to technology as a “*fatal attraction to the toys granted us by our own creations*” (*The Fall*: 479).

The quotation above from Gladstone includes the word “history”, which is a direct indication that similar scenarios have taken place before in the past of humanity. Gladstone acknowledges that a familiar development, albeit a more critical one, has come to pass. When connecting this observation to the comparisons made between human colonisers of North America and the TechnoCore (see part 4.1.), it can be deduced that history is, in a way, repeating itself. A threat familiar from the past resurfaces when artificial intelligence rises to oppress humanity. Therefore, the potential dystopian fiction has for representing fear of the past (see part 3.3.) is utilised in *The Cantos*: a feared past scenario of totalitarian rule is repeating itself in the future, the only difference being that the ruler is an artificial intelligence instead of a human dictator.

Furthermore, Gladstone uses the words “fatal attraction” when describing humanity’s relationship to technology in the novels. A fatal attraction is exactly what a monster possesses; since a monster attracts as well, a direct parallel can be drawn between the Shrike and the technology Gladstone is referring to. She also specifically refers to the technology created by the artificial intelligence entities, therefore indirectly referring to the Shrike as well. The Shrike is a part of this technology that is a “fatal attraction” to humanity. Because she explains how the technology created by artificial intelligence is fatally attractive, Gladstone’s words can be read as a direct reference to technology as monstrous. It follows that the Shrike as the monster of the narrative embodies the danger and lure of creating artificial intelligence.

The Shrike symbolises the dystopian utopia by representing something humanity both strives for and fears: an artificial intelligence that has turned against humans. Therefore the Shrike’s liminality serves again as a reflection of how both the hopes and fears of humanity are manifested in the future; it is both a technological breakthrough and the doomsday machine of the computer age. In a way, the Shrike is a creature of dystopian utopia, since it incorporates the dream of human achievement and the nightmare of what might happen as a

consequence of creating “life”, playing God. Being a monster, an entity that both repulses and attracts, the Shrike is the symbol of both a future where the utmost technological goals have been achieved and a future where humanity has stopped evolving and faces extinction by its own creations.

5.3. Visions of dystopia and utopia

I have now established the liminality of the dystopian utopia that manifests in *The Cantos* and shown how the Shrike represents this dichotomous state that humanity faces in the narrative. I will now look more closely at the nature of a dystopian utopia, and see how it is exemplified in the novels. Gordin et al. write about how utopia and dystopia are always connected, the one lurking in the shade of the other:

Every utopia always comes with its implied dystopia – whether the dystopia of the status quo, which the utopia is engineered to address, or a dystopia found in the way this specific utopia corrupts itself in practice.

(Gordin et al. 2010: 2)

The Cantos exhibits both kind of dystopias Gordin et al. mention. First of all, “the dystopia of the status quo” is in the implied future of the novels: the status quo being humans and machines, the dystopia has flipped it around, and instead of machines serving humans it is the other way around. Secondly, the corrupted utopia is the present time of the novels, where technology has eliminated the majority of the problems of everyday life, but at great cost: humanity is regressing.

A monster is a handy construct to utilise when creating dystopian scenarios. As I wrote in part 2.1., a monster warns, and so does a dystopia:

Whereas utopia takes us into a future and serves to indict the present, dystopia places us directly in a dark and depressing reality, conjuring up a terrifying future if we do not recognize and treat its symptoms in the here and now.

(Gordin et al. 2010: 2)

The Shrike serves as a symptom of a dystopia that the characters of *The Cantos* are left to “recognize” and start “treating”. Since it has travelled back in time from a future where the Ultimate Intelligence reigns, it is concrete evidence of

the doom humanity is heading towards. Through the first realization of this symptom of a dystopia, the characters are able to recognize other symptoms as well, and subsequently annihilate the artificial intelligence that is on its way to develop into a machine godhood.

In addition to serving as a symptom of a dystopia, the Shrike also acts in a way that allows information about the implied future to reach the characters. The pilgrims get separate snippets of information on the dystopia that awaits in the future, but the most vivid vision of the dystopia is shown by the Shrike to Father Duré:

At first I thought they were crowds of living people, a river of heads and shoulders and arms, stretching on for the kilometers I could see, the current of humanity broken here and there by the presence of parked vehicles all of the same rust-red color. As I stepped forward, approaching the wall of jam-packed humanity less than twenty meters from me, I realized that they were corpses. Tens, hundred of thousands of human corpses stretching as far down the corridor as I could see; some sprawled on the stone floor, some crushed against the walls, but most buoyed up by the pressure of other corpses so tightly were they jammed in this particular avenue of the labyrinth.

(The Fall: 603)

Later on Gladstone explains that discarded bodies buried in the mystical underground labyrinths of many Web planets are there in the vision because the computers are planning to use them as organic hard drives:

The Core has no more use for the Web. From now on, the Volatiles and the Ultimates will keep a few million slaves penned underground on the nine labyrinthine worlds while they use human synapses for what computing needs remain.

(The Fall: 724)

While Father Dúre did not have a clear idea of what the bodies were doing in the labyrinth, the Shrike still acted in a way that allowed Dúre to recognize the threat of artificial intelligence. Therefore the Shrike functions not only as a symptom of dystopia, but also as monster that quite literally warns about the future.

In addition to functioning as a symptom of dystopia and a monster that warns, the Shrike also serves as a present-time allegory for the dystopian future through its actions as the Angel of Atonement. The Shrike executes its

punishments by suspending the punished on his tree of thorns, puncturing them and leaving them on the tree to suffer eternal pain. At the end of *The Fall*, Silenus and Lamia find out that the tree is actually a holographic projection, and that the people seemingly hanging from the tree reside in one of the Time Tombs, hooked into a computer by a cable attached to their brains. Lamia finds the unconscious bodies:

[T]he interior was a space larger than the valley itself. A dozen tiers of white stone rose rank on rank and stretched into the faded distance. On each tier of stone, human bodies lay, each garbed a different way, each tethered by the same sort of semiorganic, semiparasitic shunt socket and cable which her friends had told Brawne she herself had worn. Only these metallic but translucent umbilicals pulsed red and expanded and contracted regularly, as if blood were being recycled through the sleeping forms' skulls.

(The Fall: 727)

This scenario, of human beings hooked into a computer, can be interpreted as foreshadowing of the future dystopian image the Shrike showed to Father Duré. Therefore the Shrike is reflecting a future scenario in the present time of the novels.

In *The Cantos*, technological progress represents a dystopia of machine rule and arrested human development. The stagnation of the human race has already started in the present of the novels. The relationship between the human race and the TechnoCore is described as being a “sinful symbiosis” by one of the mysterious Templars:

Man and his machine intelligences. Which is a parasite on the other? Neither part of the symbiote can now tell. But it is an evil thing, a work of Anti-Nature. Worse than that, Duré, it is an evolutionary dead end.

(The Fall: 658)

Here technology is being described as something that defies the laws of nature, “Anti-Nature”, that is such a corruptive force that it even renders evolution to a halt. As I explained in part 2.5., a monster violates the laws of nature; it follows that technology is being described as monstrous here, through its nature-defying qualities. Furthermore, the Templar uses words such as “symbiosis” and “parasite”, which signify a merging between two entities. This symbiosis is between human and machine, organic and artificial, the clash of extremes that the Shrike itself stands for. Therefore the humans that are using this technology

are becoming monstrous themselves; the monstrous power of the artificial intelligence is causing loss of humanity.

This idea of losing humanity is typical of dystopias, and it is not only through merging with technology that the loss of humanity occurs. There are more subtle ways to represent this loss through technological achievement:

[D]ystopia's critical sensibility is taken up by authors who look beyond technology and the authoritarian state and turn to the especial imbrication of the economy and culture that capitalism has achieved at the cost of diminishing the complexity and potential of all humanity and the earth itself.

(Moylan 2000: xii)

Moylan says that some authors focus on looking at how the seemingly utopian developments actually start to eat away what it means to be human. Whilst the threat of artificial intelligence subjugating humanity as a totalitarian figure is present in *The Cantos*, what Moylan calls “diminishing the complexity and potential of all humanity” is demonstrably happening and has happened to some extent in the present time of the novel. It is, however, technology-induced, which is where it differs from the kind of capitalism-induced circumstances Moylan is describing, but the same principle applies, since technological progress has resulted in a type of change in the culture. This change is what causes the more subtle loss of humanity in *The Cantos*. I will look at this matter in more detail in the next part of this thesis.

Artificial intelligence eats away at humanity in the novels. Its form that is described as “Anti-nature” represents the parts of the status quo that gets flipped around by the out-of-control development of the AI: organic human life and artificially intelligent machine life. As the representative of artificial intelligence in the novels, the Shrike serves as the symbol of the corruption of the utopia humanity once envisioned to come about due to technological progress. The corrupt utopia takes place not only as the “big picture” of the novel, but also as individual instances in the tales of the pilgrims. Some of them experience their personal corrupt utopia that is provided for them by the Shrike. I will now move on to examine these individual instances of corrupt

utopia, and see how the Shrike represents the destructive artificial intelligence that regresses humanity by granting its wishes.

5.4. Pilgrims' tales; losing humanity

Technological progress causes regression in the human condition on many levels in *The Cantos*. The individual tales of the pilgrims exemplify this regression as they tell their life stories and as they encounter the Shrike. Silenus' tale sheds light on the wider condition of the citizens of the Hegemony, and it is reflected through Silenus' values and opinion on what constitutes as definitive human characteristics. I will also look at three encounters with the Shrike that symbolise the conflict between humanity and technology in general: the Shrike provides these three pilgrims a way to achieve their goals, but at the price of losing their humanity. Father Dúre craves the revival of the Christian faith; Kassad craves to be a great warrior and Weintraub craves to believe again, as he has lost his Jewish faith. The three all get what they want; their wishes are granted by the Shrike.

Silenus' tale brings forth concern about the regression of human sophistication through the changes technological progress has brought about in the culture of the Human Hegemony, which I briefly mentioned in the previous part. In Silenus' tale, the loss of art is closely linked to the loss of humanity, because Silenus sees art, especially poetry, as the very essence of what it means to be human: "To be poet, I realized, a *true poet*, was to become the Avatar of humanity incarnate; to accept the mantle of poet is to carry the cross of the Son of Man, to suffer the birth pangs of the Soul-Mother of Humanity" (Hyperion: 139). Silenus explains how technology caused a decline in literary art: "In the beginning was the Word. Then came the fucking word processor. Then came the thought processor. Then came the death of literature. And so it goes" (Hyperion: 130).

Whilst discussing the publication of his new epic poem (aptly named as *The Hyperion Cantos*) with his agent Silenus hears the following words:

[T]he population of literate people has been declining steadily since Gutenberg's day. By the twentieth century, less than two percent of the people in the so-called industrialized democracies read even one book a year. And that was before the smart machines, dataspheres, and user-friendly environments. By the Hegira, ninety-eight percent of the Hegemony's population had no reason to read anything. So they didn't bother learning how to. It's worse today. There are more than a hundred billion human beings in the Worldweb and less than one percent of them bothers to hardfax any printed material, much less read a book.

(Hyperion: 146)

Silenus' agent explains that due to the technologies available to the citizens of the Human Hegemony, no-one seems to have the need to read anymore. This has led to a considerable decline in the percentage of literacy among the population. Literacy being one of the primary measures of development used by the Western countries, this excerpt communicates the concern about the regressive influence technology might have on humanity. This view indicates a bias on the written word over spoken, since spoken language thrives in the Hegira time as well as it does in the real world. Measuring humanity's regression according to the decline of the written word can, in my opinion, be disputed; language itself does not disappear even if it is not read from a page. In any case, this view presented in *The Cantos* is yet another indicator of the variety of ways technological progress threatens the very nature of humanity.

The Shrike grants the wishes of the three pilgrims I mentioned in the beginning of this part. Through having their wishes granted, through achieving what they thought would be their personal utopia, these three characters experience a loss of humanity when what they perceive as definitive human characteristics are compromised. Father Dúre discovers a cave full of what he calls *cruciforms*: parasites shaped as a cross that have the power to resurrect their host indefinitely. He sees this as proof for his faith, but is horribly disappointed when he finds out how the resurrection process renders the host mentally disabled. As he sees it, the cruciform is responsible for destroying the soul of the host. Therefore, by getting his wish granted, he realizes that a horrible regression in the human condition has occurred, and it leads to the loss of that which, in the opinion of Father Dúre, makes one human: the soul.

Kassad's wish of being a great warrior is granted by the Shrike through lending him its power of manipulating time. In a battle with the Ousters on Hyperion, Kassad becomes an unbeatable soldier who can kill all the enemies by moving faster than them and by possessing superior armour and weapons. Whilst engaged in this conflict, Kassad realizes he is losing that which is most important to him: honour (Hyperion: 120-125). The Shrike has again granted a wish and by doing so destroyed a part of Kassad that he sees as defining his humanity. What happens to Kassad is an example of what technological progress does to warfare: it makes it extremely unequal.

Weintraub's tale about the time sickness of his daughter Rachel connects with the Shrike's role as a god figure. Weintraub is a man whose wish it is to have faith, as he is "waiting to" believe in God (Hyperion: 183). His daughter, an archaeologist, studies the Time Tombs and contracts an illness that makes her age backwards. While Weintraub's despair about the fate of her daughter grows deeper, he starts to feel a slight rekindling of his Jewish faith: "Sol was surprised to find himself still carrying the yarmulke, passing the cloth from hand to hand" (Hyperion: 200). Furthermore, the Shrike starts to appear to him in dreams and instructs him to sacrifice Rachel at the Time Tombs. The Shrike has started to grant Weintraub's wish to believe again by cursing his daughter with a horrible disease, and it offers Weintraub a religious way out of his plight; when no other alternative proves to have any effect on Rachel, Weintraub can make a religious sacrifice and give up his torment. He does not, however, want to comply; during his scholarly pursuits he has studied the legend of Abraham and come to the conclusion that there is no use for a god that wishes to receive human sacrifice:

After fifty-five years of dedicating his life and work to the story of ethical systems, Sol Weintraub had come to a single, unshakable conclusion: any allegiance to a deity or concept or universal principle which put *obedience* above decent behavior toward an innocent human being was evil.

(Hyperion: 212)

Since he is a scholar of ethics, "decent behaviour" is what defines humanity for Weintraub. The Shrike offers him a chance to grant his wish, to have faith again,

but Weintraub sees his option of sacrifice as a deed that would compromise his humanity.

As a monster, the Shrike attracts the pilgrim characters to lose their humanity by giving them what they want or seem to need. As a killing machine, and a god the Shrike grants or tries to grant the wishes of the pilgrims that would render them to lose their humanity. A monster that represents artificial intelligence has the ability to destroy the humanity of each character individually as well as demolishing all of mankind. These specific aspects of the narrative serve as an allegory to the theme of the novels: technological progress results in the decline of humanity, the creation of an artificial intelligence will only lead to the regression and destruction of the human race. This is the dystopian image that the narrative weaves for the reader to absorb. However, whenever there's a dystopia, there is also a utopia, and I will now move to examine the implied utopia written into the novels as an alternative future.

5.5. Implied utopia

The liminal body of the Shrike, its composition of half machine half organic, serves not only as a representative of the past and future and of the conflict between humanity and artificial intelligence; it also symbolises the liminality of dystopia and utopia in the novels. A clear distinction is drawn in the text between a machine dystopia and an organic utopia. The implied utopia of the Ousters is a paragon of organic triumph: the evolution of the human race has rendered the species more beautiful and powerful than ever. The dystopias, both the one present in the novel and the one implied, are marked with human potential being squashed by technology and artificial intelligence. The utopia, therefore, is purely organic, achieved through evolution and biosciences, whereas the dystopia is the result of the development of artificial intelligence. Since I have already examined the machine dystopia, I will now discuss the organic utopia.

By including two dystopian scenarios, the world that is only implied in *The Cantos* is the utopia humanity failed to long for. It is a future without technology, where human beings develop only through biological evolution. This utopia is shown in the form of the Ousters, the separatist section of the human race that refused to live in the Web. The Consul discusses the Ousters:

I will not try to describe the beauty of life in a Swarm – their zero-gravity globe cities and comet farms and thrust clusters, their micro-orbital forests and migrating rivers and the ten thousand colors and textures of life at Rendezvous Week. Suffice it to say that I believe the Ousters have done what Web humanity has not in the past millennia: evolved. While we live in our derivative cultures, pale reflections of Old Earth life, the Ousters have explored new dimensions of aesthetics and ethics and biosciences and art and all the things that must change and grow to reflect the human soul.

(Hyperion: 340)

The Consul emphasises the core of utopian thinking in the novels: evolution is beautiful, its results “reflect the human soul”, and change allows this to happen. It is important to note that the Consul mentions the “biosciences” as one of the virtues of the Ousters; clearly scientific progress can be a good thing, as long as it is not connected to technology. Human curiosity is, therefore, not deemed as the source of corruption, but curiosity towards playing God, towards creating artificial life, is the true origin of destruction.

The character who experiences a glimpse into the utopian future is the soldier Kassad, when he is taken there to regroup for future battle with the Shrike. He meets the future representatives of a version of the human race whose evolution was not hindered by technology.

They were human – he knew in his heart that they were human – but the variety was staggering **Their anatomy was as varied as their coloration:** the healer’s Shrike-sized girth and massive bulk, his massive brow and a cascade of tawny energy flow which might be a mane . . . a female next to him, no larger than a child but obviously a woman, perfectly proportioned with muscular legs, small breasts, and faery wings two meters long rising from her back – and not merely decorative wings, either, for when the breeze ruffled the orange prairie grass, this woman gave a short run, extended her arms, and rose gracefully to the air.

(The Fall: 670-671, emphasis added, second ellipsis original)

It becomes clear from this quotation that in a future without artificial intelligence humanity has biologically developed features for which the citizens of the Human Hegemony (and we in the Western world) use technology.

Medical care is administered by a natural ability to heal, and wings are used for easier traveling instead of aircrafts.

Since the dystopia presented in *The Cantos* is one of the stagnation of human development and of being enslaved by an artificial intelligence, the utopian counterpart presents a world in which human beings have developed biological aptitudes to perform tasks for which humanity used to rely on technology and medicine. Kassad is healed by one of the future humans by touch only, the woman described in the quotation takes flight without an airplane, and Kassad observes these new humans to have organic armour. This is a future where evolution has eliminated the need for technology and medicine, and where – importantly to Kassad’s character – honour is restored to warfare, of which the organic armour serves as an example.

Since evolution, the biological form of progress, is considered to be a positive and truly utopian circumstance, progress in itself is not a thing to be feared. Through analysing the utopian future where humans have developed biological aptitudes to replace the need for technology, it can be deduced that evolutionary progress does not mean loss of humanity, even if human beings develop into different forms. Using technology to facilitate life leads to loss of humanity, but evolutionary development of attributes that eradicate the hardships of life does not. The utopia is a world where the conflict between man and machine is not in any way resolved, but a world where that conflict does not exist. Visions of this evolutionary utopia seep into the machine dystopia of the present time in the novels, creating a liminality between organic utopia and artificial dystopia. As an organic machine, the Shrike is a fitting representative of this liminality.

6. Conclusion

Like many other works of science fiction, Dan Simmons' *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion* tell the story of humanity crossing the boundary of creating artificial intelligence and of the consequent conflict between human and machine. Conflicts and crossings of boundaries elicit fear and anxiety, but also attraction; like the monster, the feared and the forbidden both repulse and attract. This conflict and the fears and anxieties it elicits are presented through a narrative filled with liminalities, which are two extremes overlapping: self and Other, organic and artificial, past and future, monster and god, repulsion and attraction, and utopia and dystopia. To tie all these liminalities – these crossings of boundaries and conflicts – together, Simmons creates a monster that represents all this through its liminal body that is half organic, half machine, travels from the future but represents the past, and that is seen as both a monster and a god.

A conflict is feared, and one of the most common sources of fear is the Other. Fear of conflict and fear of the Other are linked, since conflict often follows tension between self and Other. The Shrike represents the conflict between human and artificial intelligence because of its liminal nature. The machine in general and artificial intelligence in particular represent the Other in contemporary science fiction. Artificial intelligence is the Other that originates from within the self, since artificial intelligence is created by man. The Shrike occupies the gap between self and Other, it crosses the boundary between organic and artificial, thus embodying the conflict that ensues between these two extremes. That is why the Shrike is a monster to be feared: it is composed of the conflict between self and Other, which is an age old source of fear.

Because the Shrike is so tightly woven into both the past and the future in the text, it is strongly implied as being a monster of both past and future. Through its monstrous genealogy and spiritual connotations with pagan deities the Shrike carries with it fears from the past and reawakens them in the present

time of the novels by projecting the fears onto future threats. The Shrike serves as a liminal agent of fear, traveling backwards in time but actually bringing past fears into the future.

Fear of the past and fear of the future are represented by the liminal Shrike, and upon closer inspection it becomes clear that the fear of the future this monster represents is actually a form of fear of the past. Thus these fears form one of the liminalities of the narrative: the fear is both of future and past. The particular fear of the future represented in *The Cantos* is one of being oppressed and enslaved by artificial intelligence. While the scenario of this threat is something that has not happened in the past, the threat itself has; being oppressed and enslaved is something humanity has experienced and inflicted upon others time and time again. Therefore the future scenario is new and represents fear of the future, but the threat of being oppressed and enslaved represents fear of the past since it is a fear of the past repeating itself.

Oppression and enslaving totalitarian rule is a common theme for dystopian fiction, since it draws from the totalitarian horrors of the past. It becomes clear through the narrative of *The Cantos* that what we might perceive as a technological utopia is actually a regressive dystopia. Technological progress might bring us to the brink of destruction, and even if it does not, it has the potential to strip off our humanity through covert oppression. The threat of this scenario of oppressive rule, a threat from the past, taking place again in the future, is an instance of fear of the past becoming fear of the future. Furthermore, by making the fear of progress into fear of regression, Simmons manages to combine fear of the future with fear of the past, since a loss of human achievement in the future reflects the fear of returning to an earlier state of being humanity occupied in the past. As technological progress is something humanity craves and as the narrative shows how said progress leads to totalitarian oppression and the regression of humanity, a seemingly utopian scenario of a life made easy by technology actually proves to be a dystopian

future. The utopia transforms into dystopia, forming a liminal dystopian utopia scenario.

The liminalities of self and Other, of organic and machine, of utopia and dystopia, and of past and future create the interplay of threats and possibilities, of repulsions and attractions that make this novel and its monster an embodiment of contemporary fears and anxieties. The western world is glad to be rid of past horrors such as totalitarian dictatorships, slavery and the fear of the unknown, but at the same time it is gripped by the terror of these past horrors coming to pass again in the future. Totalitarianism, slavery and the unknown are all threats that science fiction strongly links with technological progress and especially with the development of artificial intelligence. Fear of being ruled and oppressed by machines and the general fear of not knowing where artificial intelligence might lead us awakens fears that initially seem new but are in fact fears humanity has been feeling for millennia. The conflict between man and machine is a threat that awakens the fear of losing humanity, and out of this fear the Shrike is born. A monster that warns, the Shrike's liminal body communicates the intricacies of this fear and ties all the components of this narrative together.

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Finnish Summary

Johdanto

Tieteiskirjallisuuden saralla käsitellään usein yhteiskunnallisia pelkoja ja ahdistuksia. Nykyajan suosituimpia tieteiskirjallisuuden- ja elokuvien teemoja on tulevaisuudenpelko sekä koneiden nousuun liittyvät ahdistukset. Tulevaisuus, tieteellinen kehitys ja tekoälyn luominen herättävät moninaisia pelkoja siitä, miten ihmiskunnalle ja ihmisyydelle käy, kun koneet valtaavat elämäämme yhä enemmän ja enemmän. Usein genressä turvaututaan hirviöön, joka on fiktiivisenä rakenteena voimakas pelkotilojen heijastaja. Hirviöt ovat omiaan edustamaan myös konflikteja, jollaista ihmisten ja koneiden yhteisessä tulevaisuudessa myöskin pelätään.

Tutkielmassani tarkastelen ihmisten ja koneiden välistä konfliktia ja siihen liittyviä pelkoja ja ahdistuksia Dan Simmons'n kaksiosaisessa teoksessa, joka koostuu romaaneista *Hyperion* ja *The Fall of Hyperion*. Teoksessa esiintyvä hirviö, Shrike, on puoliksi orgaaninen ja puoliksi keinotekoinen, jolloin sillä on kyky edustaa mainitsemaani konfliktia liminaalisen kehonsa kautta. Koska Shriken kehossa on edustettuna molemmat osapuolet, se toimii konfliktin symbolina. Tutkielmassani osoitan, että Shriken liminaalinen keho symboloi paitsi tätä konfliktia, myös kaikkia niitä vastakkaisuuksia, joiden kautta tämän konfliktin aiheuttamat pelot ja ahdistukset tulevat ilmi. Nämä vastakkaisuudet ovat: itseys ja toiseus, menneisyys ja tulevaisuus, jumala ja hirviö, vastenmielisyys ja houkutus sekä utopia ja dystopia. Näiden vastakkaisuuksien kautta ilmi tulevat pelot ja ahdistukset nivoutuvat yhteen Shriken liminaalisessa kehossa, jolloin Shriken voidaan katsoa olevan teoksen keskeisin elementti.

Hirviö, tieteiskirjallisuus ja pelko

Hirviöt ovat pelkotilojen heijastajia. Niiden katsotaan edustavan pelkoja pääasiallisesti kahdella tavalla: toiseutensa ja liminaalisuutensa kautta. Hirviö edustaa Cohenin (1996: 7) sekä Baumgartnerin ja Davisin (2008: 1) mukaan

toiseutta; erilaista, jonka vastakohtaksi itseys määritellään. Toiseus on yleinen pelon aiheuttaja, sillä erilaisuus synnyttää ahdistusta. Liminaalisuus taas tarkoittaa kahden toisistaan eriävän asian välisellä kynnyksellä olemista (Asma 2009: 40). Hirviö löytyy usein kynnykseltä, oli se sitten elämän ja kuoleman, ihmisen ja eläimen tai orgaanisen ja keinotekoisien välillä. Koska hirviö on liminaalinen, sitä on vaikea määritellä, ja määrittelemättömyys aiheuttaa pelkoa (Cohen 1996: 6). Lisäksi kahden toisiaan hylkivän, toisensa vieraina näkevän asian välisellä kynnyksellä oleminen mahdollistaa sen, että hirviö kommunikoi näiden osapuolien väliset jännitteet oman kehonsa kautta (Cohen 1996: 4). *Hyperion*-romaaneissa Shriken liminaalinen keho kommunikoi nimenomaan ihmisten ja koneiden välisestä jännitteestä.

Hirviö on myös sekä luotaantyöntävä että houkutteleva. Koska hirviö edustaa rajojen rikkomista ja näin ollen kielletyn hedelmän saavuttamista, se houkuttelee (Cohen 1996: 17). Luotaantyöntävyys taas muodostuu hirviön pelottavuudesta ja liminaalisuudesta. Luotaantyöntävyyden ja houkuttelevuuden vastakkaisuus samassa olennossa on sekin liminaalinen ominaisuus, ja usein hirviön edustamaan pelkoon liittyy myöskin houkutteleva aspekti. Shrike symboloi koneiden ja ihmisten välistä konfliktia, joka pelottaa ja ahdistaa, mutta teknologian helpottama elämä myös houkuttelee. Tekoälyn luominen, jota voidaan luonnehtia myös jumalan leikkimiseksi, houkuttelee ja pelottaa, ja sitä kuvastaa orgaanisen ja keinotekoisien kynnyksellä oleileva hirviö (Scholes ja Rabkin 1977: 136).

Tieteisfiktioillakin on kyky kertoa pelosta, erityisesti tulevaisuudenpelosta, lukijoilleen. Tieteiskirjailijat voivat käyttää kognitiivista vieraannuttamista, jolloin he kirjoittavat nyky maailmaa vaivaavasta sosiaalisesta ongelmasta, mutta siirtävät sen vieraaseen ympäristöön, esimerkiksi ulkoavaruuteen tai tulevaisuuteen (Parrinder 1980: 72). Tällöin lukijalla on tuore näkökulma ongelmaan, ja hän saattaa suhtautua siihen eri tavalla kuin oikeassa maailmassa. Tieteisfiktio on myös omiaan kertomaan teknologisen kehityksen pelosta, sillä teknologia ja tieteen kehitys yleensä ovat keskeisiä tieteisfiktio

teemoja. Etäännyminen luonnosta ja yhä enemmän lisääntyvä teknologiaan luottaminen aiheuttavat ihmisissä ahdistusta ja pelkoa (Svendsen 2008: 64). Kun tieteisfiktiossa yleiset aiheet, sosiaalisten ongelmien käsittely kognitiivisen vieraannuttamisen kautta ja teknologian kehitykseen liittyvät pelot, yhdistetään vielä pelkoja heijastavaan hirviöön, teoksessa voidaan havaita selkeä nyky-yhteiskunnan tulevaisuudenpelkojen kokonaisuus.

Tulevaisuudenpelko saa usein dystopian muodon: dystopia on utopian vastakohtana tulevaisuuskuva, jossa yhteiskunta on jollain tasolla sortava ja epäoikeudenmukainen. Dystooppisiin tulevaisuusnäkyymiin kuuluu usein nimenomaan kansalaisiaan sortava hallinto, mistä johtuen dystopiat ammentavat historiallisista tragedioista, kuten esimerkiksi kansanmurhista ja diktatuureista (Moylan 2000: xi). Totalitarismin ollessa dystopian yleinen teema se yhdistyy teknologian kehittymisen aiheuttamaan tulevaisuudenpelkoon koneiden ylivalloituksen muodossa. Teknologisen kehityksen spekuloidaan usein johtavan koneiden ylivaltaan, ja tunnetuin esimerkki tästä onkin George Orwellin *1984* (Fukuyama 2002: 3-5). Dystooppisessa tulevaisuudenkuvassa on kuitenkin kyseessä pelko siitä, että menneisyyden uhat toistuvat, vaikka kyseessä olisikin konehallitsija; uhan luonne saattaa muuttua, mutta pelko totalitaristisen hallinnon alle joutumisesta on vanha ja itseään toistava. Tällöin pelko esimerkiksi ihmisiä alistavasta tekoälystä on samalla sekä tulevaisuuden että menneisyyden pelkoa.

Hyperion ja Shrike

Hyperionissa ja *The Fall of Hyperionissa* pelon aiheuttajana on teknologia. Toisaalta teknologia on vallannut huolestuttavan paljon alaa ihmisten yksityisestä elämästä ja toisaalta päähenkilöille valkenee juonen edetessä kauhukuva tulevaisuudesta, jossa tekoälyjumala käyttää ihmisten aivoja kiintolevyinä. Teknologinen kehitys etenee kirjoissa kolonialismin tavoin, vaikka valloitettavana onkin tällä kertaa ihmiskehot. *Hyperionissa* teknologian eteneminen rinnastetaankin suoraan ihmiskunnan menneisyydessä tekemiin

vääryyksiin kolonialismin saralla, sekä kirjojen fiktiivisessä menneisyydessä planeettojen valloittamiseen (*Hyperion* 337-340) että oikeassa maailmassa Pohjois-Amerikan alkuperäiskansojen sortamiseen (*The Fall*: 699-700). Historia siis toistaa itseään; kolonialismin uhka toistuu jälleen tulevaisuudessa, vaikka valloittajana toimii tällä kertaa ihmisten sijaan tekoäly.

Jälkikoloniaalisissa teoksissa esiintyy usein hybridiys, joka rinnastuu liminaalisuuteen siksi, että molemmissa on kyse kaksiosaisesta kokonaisuudesta. Jälkikoloniaalinen käsitys hybridistä identiteetistä liittyy hahmoihin, jotka ovat identiteetiltään puoliksi kumpaakin toisiaan vastustavaa etnistä ryhmää, ja tästä syystä näillä hybrideillä on kyky paljastaa ryhmien väliset jännitteet (Bhabha [1994] 2006: 296). Koska ihmiskunnan tilanne *Hyperionissa* ja *The Fall of Hyperionissa* esitetään jälkikoloniaalisin keinoin, on luontevaa, että kuten hybridihahmot jälkikoloniaalisessa kirjallisuudessa paljastavat etnisten ryhmien jännitteet, myös liminaalinen olento tieteisfiktiossa paljastaa ihmisten ja koneiden väliset jännitteet.

Shriken liminaalius on sen keskeisin piirre. Sitä kuvaillaan aina niin, että sen todellinen olemus jää epäselväksi; se on enkeli ja paholainen, jumala ja hirviö, viikatemies ja pelastaja (*Hyperion*: 162). Paitsi fyysiseltä olemukseltaan puoliksi orgaanisena ja puoliksi koneena (*Hyperion*: 14), Shrike on liminaalinen myös teoiltaan. Se uhmaa fysiikan lakeja ja manipuloi aikaa (*Hyperion*: 6 ja 121) sekä matkustaa tulevaisuudesta menneisyyteen, rikkoen rajoja joita ei pitäisi voida ylittää. Vaikka Shrike onkin tulevaisuudessa syntynyt tekoäly, se sidotaan tekstissä tiiviisti kirjallisuuden kuuluisimpien hirviöiden sukupuuhun, mikä tekee Shrikesta sekä tulevaisuuden että menneisyyden edustajan. Shrike yhdistetään *Beowulfissa* esiintyvään Grendeliin (*Hyperion*: 130-131) ja Mary Shelley'n Frankensteinin hirviöön (*Hyperion*: 162). Erityisesti Grendeliin yhdistäminen tekee Shrikesta osan hirviöiden sukupuuta, sillä Grendeliä luonnehditaan Raamatullisen veljensurmaaja Kainin jälkeläiseksi, ja näin ollen osan sukupuun jäsenten muodostamaa "hirviön paradigmaa" (Waterhouse 1996: 34). Koska Shrikella on näin selkeät sukujuuret mytologisessa hirviöiden

menneisyydessä, se edustaa myös menneisyyttä ja samoja pelkoja, joita hirviöt menneisyydessä edustivat.

Tulevaisuudenpelko, dystopia ja utopia

Koska Shrike edustaa ihmisten ja koneiden välistä konfliktia liminaalisuutensa kautta, tämä konflikti muodostaa *Hyperionissa* ja *The Fall of Hyperionissa* suurimman pelon ja ahdistuksen aiheuttajan. Konflikti elää sekä romaanien nykyhetkessä ja kertomuksessa ilmi käyvässä tulevaisuudessa. Urbanskin (2007: 39-40) mukaan tietotekniikan pelon voi jakaa kolmeen osaan, joissa pelätään seuraavia asioita: että tekoäly korvaa ihmisyyden, että kyberavaruus muuttaa elämäntapamme kokonaan, ja että yleisesti ottaen luotamme liikaa teknologiaan. Nämä kaikki kolme pelkoa ovat läsnä *Hyperionissa* ja *The Fall of Hyperionissa*. Romaaneissa esitetyn tulevaisuuden dystooppissa kuvauksissa tekoälyjumaluudet ovat syrjäyttäneet ihmiset, ja teknologiaan luotetaan liikaa romaanien nykyhetkessä sillä tekstistä käy ilmi, että ihmisrotu on lakannut kehittymästä. Kyberavaruuden uhka tuodaan esiin hahmojen kautta, joiden koko elämä rajoittuu kyberavaruuteen, sillä he kokevat oikean maailman liian pitkävetoiseksi.

Koska teknologinen kehitys on romaaneissa poistanut useat arkipäiväiset ongelmat, kuten taudit ja vanhenemisen, ihmiskunnan voidaan katsoa saavuttaneen tietynlaisen utopian, johon tie on pyrkinyt. Kutsun tätä utopiaa tutkielmassani dystooppiseksi utopiaksi, koska tavoitteet on saavutettu ja elämää helpotettu, mutta helpon elämän taustalla piilee taantumus ja hidas alistuminen koneiden valtaan. Dystooppinen utopia on siis tulevaisuus, johon ollaan pyritty, mutta joka ei osoittautunutkaan niin hyväksi kuin sen toivottiin olevan. Utopia dystopian taustalla onkin yleinen ilmiö, ja usein dystopiaan päädytään kun tavoitteena on utopia joko koko kansalle tai vain eliitille (Gordin et al. 2010: 1). Ihmiskuntaa on houkutellut teknologian helpottama elämä, mutta sen todellinen luonne osoittautuikin luotaantyöntäväksi; tulevaisuudenkuvat näennäisestä teknologisesta paratiisista ovatkin usein

varoituksia siitä, mitä voi tapahtua, jos ihmiset saavat haluamansa (Kraus 2004: 204).

Selkeä dystopia häämöttää romaanien tulevassa ajassa. Tekoäly on onnistunut kehittämään itselleen jumaluuden, joka syrjäyttää paitsi ihmiset, myös sitä edeltävät tekoälyolennot. Näin koloniaalinen uhka toistaa itseään uudestaan ja uudestaan; se, mitä ihmiskunta teki toisilleen Pohjois-Amerikassa, *Hyperionin* ja *The Fall of Hyperionin* menneisyydessä ja mitä teknologia on hiljalleen tekemässä romaanien nykyhetkessä, toistuu uudestaan tulevaisuudessa, kun tekoälyjumala syrjäyttää ihmiset syrjäyttäneet edeltäjänsä. Totalitaarinen hallinto toteutuu ensin ihmisten kustannuksella, sitten ihmisiä sortavien varhaisempien tekoälyjen kustannuksella. Näin dystopian perusluonne toteutuu: menneisyydestä tuttu uhka käy toteen yhä uudestaan ja uudestaan, ja tulevaisuudenpelko osoittautuu menneisyyden peloksi.

Dystopia ja dystooppinen utopia ovat romaaneissa teknologian valtaamia. Eräs hahmoista kuitenkin matkustaa ajassa tulevaisuuteen, jossa hän todistaa ihmiskunnan utopian; tulevaisuuden ilman teknologiaa, jossa ihmiset ovat evoluution kautta kehittäneet ominaisuuksia, jotka ajavat teknologian asian (muun muassa kyky lentää ja parantaa kosketuksella). Lisäksi ihmiskunnan valtavirtakulttuuria vastustava joukko on kehittynyt ja biotieteiden avulla löytänyt tapoja välttää teknologian käyttämistä. Näitä elämänmuotoja kuvaillaan biotieteiden ja evoluution kautta saavutetuiksi (*Hyperion*: 340), mikä korostaa niiden orgaanista luonnetta. Utopia on siis romaanien mukaan orgaaninen, kun dystopiaa varjostaa teknologia ja tekoäly. Näitäkin vastakkaisuuksia edustaa Shrike puoliksi orgaanisella ja puoliksi keinotekoisella kehollaan.

Lopuksi

Dan Simmons'n *Hyperionissa* ja *The Fall of Hyperionissa* kuvataan ihmisten ja koneiden välistä konfliktia, ja tämän konfliktin taustalla olevia pelkoja ja ahdistuksia symboloi liminaalinen hirviö Shrike. Liminaalisen kehonsa kautta Shrike ilmentää pelkoja vastakkaisuuksien välisten jännitteiden muodossa. Näitä vastakkaisuuksia ovat: itseys ja toiseus, houkuttelevuus ja luotaantyöntävyys, orgaanisuus ja keinotekoisuus, menneisyys ja tulevaisuus sekä dystopia ja utopia. Teknologian ja tekoälyn edustaman toiseuden ihannointi johtaa ihmiskunnan dystooppisen utopian kautta selkeään dystopiaan, jossa evoluutio on pysähtynyt ja tekoälyjumaluus suunnittelee ihmisaivojen käyttämistä kiintolevyinä. Dystopiassa hämöttää vanhojen pelkojen uudelleentoteutumisen: totalitaarinen hallinto, jossa tekoäly alistaa ihmisiä. Toivona on orgaaninen utopia, jossa teknologian sijaan elämä on helpottunut evolutiivisen kehityksen kautta. Shrike edustaa tätä kaikkea olemalla paitsi puoliksi orgaaninen ja puoliksi keinotekoinen, myös olemalla luotaantyöntävä ja houkutteleva hirviö, ja ilmentämällä sekä tulevaisuutta että menneisyyttä. Hirviöiden sukuun viimeisimpänä jäsenenä Shrike edustaa pelkoja, joita hirviöt ovat edustaneet jo tuhansia vuosia.