



REALISTIC SPECULATION ABOUT THE THEORY OF ORIGIN OF UNIVERSE IN R. J. SAWYER'S *FOSSIL HUNTER* (1993)

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ABSTRACT

Science fiction is the sub genre of popular fiction. Speculation of scientific theories is the base of science fiction. Critic Robert Heinlein used 'realistic speculation' as one of the features of science fiction. The present paper aims at disclosing the realistic speculation of theory of origin of universe used by R. J. Sawyer, a Canadian Science Fiction writer in his book *Fossil Hunter* (1993) as Musing of Watcher. It depicts an Earth like world on a moon which orbits a gas giant inhabited by a species of highly evolved sentient Tyrannosaurs called Quintanglio among various other creatures from the late cretaceous period imported to this moon by aliens 65 million years prior to the story. Musing of the Watcher is the sub plot of *Fossil Hunter*. Musing of the Watcher is God like entity which explores realistic speculation of scientific theory of origin of universe. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the use of realistic speculation in science fiction and theory of origin of universe. The second includes the brief introduction of the author and the analysis of *Fossil Hunter*. The third part of paper concludes the perfection of the author in the use of realistic speculation about the theory of origin of universe in his novel *Fossil Hunter*.

Key Words: Realistic speculation, theory of origin of universe, science fiction, popular fiction, Big-bang theory.

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Science fiction is the sub-genre of popular fiction emerged in early 20th century. It is multidimensional and multifaceted which covers different subjects and issues. Realistic speculation is one of the features of Science fiction. Robert Heinlein, a famous critic and writer relates speculation in science fiction with more elaborate term 'realistic speculation' while defining science fiction in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2008) as, "realistic speculation about possible future events based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and one through understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method." (5) According to Heinlein, science fiction

is not based on arbitrary imagination but it is based on the reality.

Use of established scientific theories with some alteration, modification and molding is the characteristic of science fiction. The original scientific theory is reality and further modification is speculation. Science fiction writer use realistic speculation of scientific theories as a base of their plot. R. J. Sawyer used theory of origin of universe as realistic speculation in *Fossil Hunter*.

To search the origin of universe is a great mystery for both literature and science. Many theories regarding this are expressed. But no theory is perfect or without doubt which is accepted by the

scientists. However, Big-bang theory is widely accepted by the scientists all over the world. Still this theory is not free from doubts. They assume that the great explosion of an infinitely small, dense matter was exploded and from that explosion all the galaxies and planets are formed. For this explosion, mathematical concept of singularity is assumed. The basic problem or doubt still remains unanswered that what was there before the big bang? Why should we assume the singularity? What is the Origin of time? etc.

In this context the *Oxford dictionary of science* (sixth edition 2010) mention under the origin of the universe as "this view of the origin of the universe is called the Big-Bang theory, first put forward by George Lamaitre in the 1930s. The theory suggests that the universe originated as a minute but very hot body and that the temperature has been falling as the expansion has continued. In several papers in the 1940s George Gamow along with Ralph Alpher and Robert Harman predicted that there should be a microwave background corresponding to a black body temperature a few degrees above absolute zero. This microwave background was discovered 20 years later. The Big-Bang theory also explains the amount of helium in the universe.

In 1992, the COBE satellite discovered that there were very small variations in the microwave background. This discovery helped to explain why the universe formed into galaxies and stars. The noninformatilities that began the nucleation of galactic matter in the early universe now appear as the small variations in the microwave background. In 1998, it was discovered that the expansion of the universe is accelerating." [87] This theory is further speculated by R. J. Sawyer in the form of 'Musing of the Watcher'.

R.J. Sawyer is one of the Canada's best known and most successful science fiction writers born in Ottawa, Canada, April 29, 1960. He is the only Canadian Science fiction writer who won all three of the top international awards for Science fiction viz 1995 Nebula Award for *Hominids*, 2003 Hugo Award for *Hominids*, 2006 John W. Campbell memorial Award for *Mindscan*. He was obsessed with space travel since his young age. He was

influenced by the television Apollo mission and inspired by Classic film 'A space odysseys'. He began writing science fiction in High School Club which he co-founded with NASFA. A prolific writer R. J. Sawyer has published 13 novels, 3 trilogies and 2 books of short stories.

R. J. Sawyer's *Fossil Hunter* (1993) deals with an Earth like world on a moon inhabited by a species of highly evolved Quintanglio among various other creatures to this moon by aliens 65 million years prior to the story. The main plot has subplot as 'Musing of the Watcher' a god like scientific entity explains the secrets of the creation of the universe through 'Big Bang Theory'. The watcher is omnipresent and omnipotent. It is clearly a scientific theory which has nothing to do with the Quintanglio culture. Musing of the Watcher is told in flashback from the first person perspective of a god like entity whose consciousness has survived from the previous cycle of creation. 'The watcher' is imagined as a personified Nature. He is rational and not spiritual. He unfolds the beginning of this universe as 'Big Bang' of the cosmic egg. It governed the physical laws of science.

Origin of this universe is a big challenge before the science. Many scientists and theoretical researchers have given different theories about it. As we have seen the Big Bang theory is most accepted theory regarding the origin of universe. R. J. Sawyer, a Science Fiction writer fictionalized this theory in his *Fossil Hunter*. His imagination is based on the existing scientific theory. But it provides answers to the unanswered questions and broken logical links behind this theory. To explain the most complex theory of origin of universe, he imagines an omnipotent and omnipresent consciousness who narrates the story of the origin of universe. He says, "Universes come and go. I am the sole survivor of the previous cycle of creation of the universe that existed prior to this. My body has ceased to have material substance countless millennia before the end of the old universe but with fore thought and determination and not a small amount of luck. My consciousness managed to survive reasonably intact through that universe's contraction into a cosmic egg and the subsequent Big Bang that gave rise to this latest iteration of everything." (*Fossil Hunter* 23)

The author being a student of science, tried to answer every logical question behind the theory of universe. Firstly, many scientists like Elbert Einstein also assumed that for the systematic, calculated and scientific functioning of this universe; there must be an unknown power behind this working. R. J. Sawyer imagines a consciousness without material body which creates, governs and destroys this universe again and again. It is a cycle which has no beginning or not the end. Secondly, the scientists have discovered that the present universe is expanding that is going away from an imaginary center point of time. At a certain point of time this expansion will stop and the universe will contract into a single mass. Again this infinitely dense mass will explode into a Big Bang which will be the beginning of the new universe.

Though, R. J. Sawyer has used the Big bang theory as the base of his novel, he has altered it. His immortal 'Watcher' a non-physical entity having consciousness narrates that the beginning of this universe is not the single incident but it occurs again and again from time unknown. It is the cyclical motion of the event which he calls 'the latest interation of everything'. It further answers the question – what was before the Big bang? as nothing and everything. It is because cyclical motion has neither origin nor the end. Moreover, it also answers the maze of origin of time in the same way.

The modified use of Big bang theory by R. J. Sawyer is based on the deep meditation. Before using it, he might have studied the weakness of the theory. Then, he has modified it and presented in his novel creating an imaginary character 'Watcher' who is immortal, without physical body and having consciousness. It is the great skill of the author that his modification of the said theory is logical, scientific and also stated by some scientists. Hence, R. J. Sawyer's theory is probable. In this way, as a mature science fiction writer, he uses realistic speculation superbly in his novel *Fossil Hunter*.

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