PART TWO: EXEGESIS

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Abstract

> "It's too bad she won't live.
> But then again, who does?" – Gaff (Blade Runner, 1982)

While this line in Ridley Scott's 1982 cult-classic film speaks of the threat that will come for the replicant Rachel, it is also suggestive regarding the nature of humanity, love, and precocity of life. My accompanying creative thesis; a novel titled Homonym, draws inspiration from these notions and seeks to, not so much definitively answer the many questions these philosophical ideas may pose, but discuss and probe them through the mode of creative fiction writing. By applying a number of codes from the science fiction genre, and more specifically the cyberpunk sub-genre, Homonym attempts to flesh out ideas around human nature which serve as motivation for the work. In order to provide coherence to the areas discussed throughout this exegesis, it is perhaps first important to provide an outline of the story.

Synopsis

Since the hacking of artificially intelligent androids 20 years earlier, societal function and order have continued to break down. The man-made artificially intelligent androids called 'Homonyms' that had previously come to make up roughly seventy per cent of the blue-collar workforce were infected with a powerful computer virus, causing them to turn on humans. In turn, their existence has long since been illegal. Cade, a former labourer now middle-aged goods trader, has through those years had to do unspeakable things in order to survive the dog-eat-dog world the collapse has manifested. Still struggling to deal with the death of his 12-year-old daughter during an explosion in the early days of the chaos - where he also lost an arm, Cade has become a hard and cold reflection of the unforgiving Darwinian reality that now exists.
Within the central districts of an otherwise long-abandoned city, high walls of concrete keep out the remaining homonym threat. In this city within a city, Balefire Security Services - a division of the former global conglomerate Helios Corporation, have all the control. Their oppressive rule is enforced with the high-tech weapons and vehicles that still remain. Most days Cade simply goes through the motions, running his underground business in the day and drinking heavily in the

evenings, until one day circumstances develop where he must deliver a very important piece of cargo to a distant location outside the high walls of the inner city: a young girl named Aya, who holds the key to wiping out the virus and their hosts. With a high probability of corrupted homonyms still out there in the lawless wilderness, not to mention the other more human-led horrors, Cade knows this journey is fraught with peril. He must decide whether to trust his instincts which have kept him alive for so long or escort Aya safely through the danger that awaits.

Throughout this exegesis, the peculiarities of cyberpunk and science fiction will be explored given their major influence on Homonym. While beginning initially with a comparison of cyber and post-cyberpunk, this exegesis will pay most attention to representation in cyberpunk and science fiction. It will explore the ways in which cyberpunk deals with ideas of capitalism, as well as post-modern theories such as 'the divided self' and post-humanism. Representation in existing creative works which have explored similar areas will also be explored, with particular attention paid to the film Blade Runner (1982). The representation process will be addressed alongside the claim that work within the science fiction genre can be defined as art that achieves the effect of 'cognitive estrangement'. This exegesis will also feature an examination of the use of 'wilderness' in Homonym and science fiction, explaining how it can be utilised as a tool of representation.

Cyberpunk or post-cyberpunk

In categorising a work of fiction into a particular genre, the codes and tropes associated with that genre must be identified. So, in an attempt to search out a place within literary canon, can Homonym be considered a work of cyberpunk? In his article 'Notes Toward a Postcyberpunk Manifesto', Lawrence Person (1999) describes cyberpunk characters as being "marginalized, alienated loners who lived on the edge of society in generally dystopic futures where daily life was impacted by rapid technological change, an ubiquitous datasphere of computerized information, and invasive modification of the human body". There are clear signs here that the protagonist in Homonym, Cade, loosely fits this description. He lives alone, outside the oppressed mainstream, and his biomechanical prosthesis is somewhat alienating, given it is different to most others in the world of the novel. Yet despite this, according to Person (1999), the cyberpunk era has ended, saying "Arguably, science fiction entered the post-cyberpunk era in 1988". The idea that a genre be defined by a time period rather than it's characteristics seems to, on the surface, favour nostalgia over reason. Yet the differentiation between cyberpunk and post-cyberpunk appears to lie in the

projections of attitudes towards the future. Person (1999) in contrast to cyberpunk, describes post-cyberpunk as using “the same immersive world-building technique, but features different characters, settings, and, most importantly, makes fundamentally different assumptions about the future. Far from being alienated loners, post-cyberpunk characters are frequently integral members of society (i.e., they have jobs). They live in futures that are not necessarily dystopic (indeed, they are often suffused with an optimism that ranges from cautious to exuberant), but their everyday lives are still impacted by the rapid technological change and an omnipresent computerized infrastructure”.

When applying these two perspectives to Homonym and more specifically to Cade, the outcome appears to be that the world and protagonist of Homonym tends to lean more towards cyberpunk than post-cyberpunk, given that while having a job may be a post-cyberpunk characteristic, Cade’s business operates outside the mainstream, and is ‘black market-ish’ in nature, which is arguably more of cyberpunk quality. Secondly, the levels of optimism around the nature of the world in Homonym is far from exuberant. In fact, there is little hope reflected in the characters words or behaviours, and are far bleaker than post-cyberpunk characters would embody. It is then fair to assess that based on Person’s (1999) descriptions, Homonym is more a work of cyberpunk than post-cyberpunk.

While it may be tempting to pigeon-hole novels and other works of creative fiction into nice little boxes, there are times where not just one genre can define a story and it’s properties. In addition to cyberpunk and science fiction, Homonym in the context of genre can also be considered dystopian, post-apocalyptic, adventure, thriller, to name a few. Doll and Faller (1986) state that it is more convenient to label such works as “multigeneric”. This term essentially indicates that the creative work “precludes a simple, single, or predominant generic classification” (p. 89). Whether or not one genre predominates over the other is perhaps a subjective concern, yet an argument can be made here, that the cyberpunk qualities of Homonym are more prevalent in the first half of the novel, where Cade and Max are somewhat on the outside of an oppressed hi-tech society with drug-addled dark streets. Conversely, the novel’s more post-apocalyptic qualities are far more prevalent in the second half, where Cade and Aya traverse the vast life-absent and lawless wilderness, where survival senses are heightened, and sweat and blood runs free. This duplicitous dialectic raises questions around the overarching classification of the work and perhaps comes into line with Doll and Faller’s ‘multi-generic’ label.

Speaking of the world

One of the greatest talents of cyberpunk and science fiction is that its tropes and thematic content often possess the ability to reflect the world happening around us, and at times is capable, much like the 'multi-generic' works, of being duplicitous. Kilgore (2017) believes cyberpunk reflects the growing political ambivalence in current western society, and that the supposed anti-establishment attitude of cyberpunk characters is sabotaged by its tendency to glamorise capitalist-driven technology. "Since its inception — debatably in early work by William Gibson and others in the mid-1980s — cyberpunk has remained resolutely equivocal in socio-political commitments. As the "-punk" suffix suggests, the genre dons glamorous anti-establishment garb and presents its protagonists as tilting, often vainly, at the grand windmill of late capitalism. But like this Quixotic trope, the stance also harbours a crypto-normative fascination with technology as strong as the corporate marketplace's, as well as a tendency to accept the machinations of late capitalism as given, rather than to propose alternative systems" (p. 168). This dichotomy between rebellion and capitalism in cyberpunk perhaps reflects the nature of current western society. While the futuristic tech and weaponry may seem idolised or celebrated, it perhaps plays the role of the warning sign, which even the, as Kilgore puts it 'protagonist titling, often vainly at the grand windmill of late capitalism', cannot escape, should it continue.

"Some scholars", writes Kilgore (2017) "have arrived at a consensus that the hacker "cool" aesthetic ultimately renders the entire genre complicit with the late-capitalist propensity that Fredric Jameson identifies: capitalist forces convert any popular stance or act, no matter how revolutionary, into a salable commodity, appropriating and commodifying rebellion. As of this writing, the critical consensus seems to have retreated to a basic postmodernist double-bind: cyberpunk cannot avoid simultaneously celebrating and challenging the technological fetishes of late capitalism" (p. 169). It is indeed difficult to argue that cyberpunk does not in some manner celebrate late-capitalist technology, yet this is perhaps only one shade of cyberpunk's ability to reflect capitalism and it's properties. The cyberpunk environment has the ability to force characters to action. Boşnak (2001) highlights how characters in Blade Runner (1982) exist in a meaningless reality, outside any enlightened path, and are led by raw animalistic wants and desires. Reflecting the potential destination of a material and patriarchal system of capitalism:

"They have to seek meaning, if any, in activity, not contemplation. The positions of both humans and humanoids within the capitalist patriarchy present them with a purpose in life: to work, provide, protect and serve patriarchy. That is why there is no laughter and no family in the film; they seem to have perished in a far distant past. Life outside the boundaries of this system, which actually has no

telos, is destruction, and nothingness" (p. 82). This environment essentially clutches at the characters and holds them tight, amplifying the contrast between their purpose and significance with being a part of the system and the status quo. This leads on to cyberpunk and the wider science fiction genre's ability to question or comment on the nature of human existence and the human experience while suggesting that technological development in a capitalist system may perhaps not be the key to furthering those. Boşnak (2001) states: "The film (Blade Runner), too, projected as it is to the future, has serious concerns about the potential drawbacks of the scientific and technologic development, the mechanical treatment and exploitation of the people by the capitalistic machinery, which does not care an iota about feelings in the persons of the six androids. This film is not about science, but about disaster: the poetics of apocalyptic destruction and the age-old duality of corporeal and incorporeal existence in the life of humanity" (p. 86).
Similarly, in Homonym, it is Balefire, a capitalist product and institution, who have the power due to their ownership and use of advanced technology, yet ironically, it is also advanced technology (virus-infected homonyms) that has spawned the downfall of humanity and civil society.

Post-humanism and cyberpunk

Cyberpunk and more specifically the artificial intelligence trope within is one which can result in a jarring mirroring of human nature. Yet there are specific writing choices that can impact the varying degrees of such a potentially stark reflection. Whether they are called homonyms, replicants, androids, A.I or even robots, their impact as humanoid mirrorings are lessened if they behave like humans without human aesthetics, or are human-looking beings but are emotionless. Williams (1988) highlights that "Scott's Blade Runner deprives us of all such comfort as he systematically scrambles the opposites by presenting us with androids possessing the full range of "human" emotions in a world of debased, robot-like human beings-spiritless, flattened and numbed by the crush and violence of the badly overfreighted world they have been left behind to endure and police" (p. 388). This dynamic is also reflected in Homonym, where the artificially intelligent homonyms are supposedly the great threat to humanity, yet almost all the human deaths in the novel are carried out by human hands. Perhaps this sharp reflection which explores human nature and the self-destructive ability of humanity is one reason why the 'Frankenstein myth' has played such a significant role in the science fiction genre. Doll and Faller (1986) say "Traditionally, the genre invokes a basic paradox: the omnipotence of human science and the fragility of human society. Science fiction reflects a fear of life in the future, particularly a fear that we are destroying

ourselves through science and technology or losing control of aliens or machines. Perhaps this explains why the Frankenstein myth has been so popular in the history of science fiction. It is the ultimate promise of science for man to play God by creating life; it is the ultimate fear when that life is discovered to have no soul and thus no meaning" (p. 89).

For man to possess the ability to duplicate himself then proceed with doing so, raises philosophical questions around what it means to be human, and what other than himself can be considered human. Consequently, what does that mean should man's creation become more human than he.

Morrison (1990) argues that the Frankenstein theme is specifically echoed in Blade Runner. "Consequently, on one level, Blade Runner is about human duplication and empathy. The viewer is thrust into a future in which man can create a being in his own image through genetic engineering, an echo of the Frankenstein theme. This being not only mimics the truly human but begins to exceed its creators in human passion and empathy" (p. 3). The effect of this depiction in works such as Blade Runner is that it creates a dichotomy between human and replicant, and the resulting distinction between human and replicant is blurred. This challenges the reader or viewer's preconception of human representation. Morrison (1990) highlights this process in one of the film's early scenes at Tyrell Corp. "After the opening establishment of the eye motif and dystopian Los Angeles, for example, Holden finds Leon while interviewing for infiltrated renegade replicants at the Tyrell Corporation. The scene sets up the dichotomy of replicant vs. human and blurs the distinction between the two. Antitheses are blended into ambiguity as the blade runner cop is emotionless and perfectly groomed and the suspected replicant is round-shouldered, scruffy, and unshaven with a receding chin and protruding midriff. Immediately the spectator's expectations are frustrated in trying to differentiate the human from the nonhuman" (p. 3). In a sense, this is echoed in part in the dynamic between Cade and Aya, and at times, Aya appears to behave or act or react in a more human way than Cade, whether it be through her reaction to death or just small gestures or in the way she speaks and her choice of words. Yet as opposed to Blade Runner the reader is perhaps unaware of this differentiation until the second part of the novel, where Aya is revealed to be a homonym.

Post-humanism theory often deals in the changing nature of identity and what could be called a subjectivity crisis. Gayadri (2014) writes that "posthumanism, an avant-garde postmodern theory shows the disharmonies that are rising in the subjectivity of a subject, because in the postmodern world, as Scott Bukatman in Terminal Identity points out, the subject has become a "terminal of multiple networks" that poses ontological questions regarding the status and power of the

human" (p. 92). The mere existence or knowledge of artificial humanoid intelligences associated with cyberpunk and science fiction sparks these ontological concerns. In Homonym, this postmodern theory is prodded, perhaps most poignantly in the scene where Cade is talking about Aya with Ash. Here, Ash states that "Even with all her chaos-theory-based system architecture, her digital pulse, her artificial bio-algorithms that grow and age her much like we do" said Ash, "at the end of it all, she's still just another homonym". Here Ash sees a concerned and conflicted look on Cade's face, so attempts to draw him to one side of the argument. The point that Ash makes is one that attempts to dehumanise Aya, which for Cade, conflicts with what he has come to know of her. This arguably highlights a difference between modern and post-modern thought. Gayadri (2014) states that "in the modernist period human beings are seen as universally identical, having total control over nature, and believing everything exists for their survival alone. In the postmodern period, these views of humanism are challenged as humans are no longer considered as autonomous, universal, rational beings" (p. 92). Effectively, Ash can arguably be considered as a character that embodies the modernist perspective, since he claims Aya exists to serve humanity and the causes of human beings. Whereas Cade, on the other hand, tends to reflect the post-modern line of thought, given he is unsure of whether Aya can be considered less human than he or Ash, indicated by Cade looking at a deactivated Aya, then at his own disabled biomechanical prosthetic forearm.

Strengthening the presence of ideas from post-modern theory is Cade's his artificial forearm. The mechanical appendage challenges Cade's own human identity. Wanat (2015) highlights the use of dismemberment in Wendell Berry's Remembering (1988), where "a traditional farmer who has lost his hand in a machine goes adrift in a placeless contemporary landscape. The concept of dismemberment applies not only to his lost hand but also to the depopulation and dissolution of rural communities" (p. 148). The notion of identity and origin can be key in science fiction and cyberpunk works and is also often central to discourses within post-modernism. Gayadri (2014) refers to cyberpunk and it's ability to play with the theory of 'the divided self'. "With new technological innovations like mobile phone and internet that has become commonplace; the way we interact has changed. The self is divided and you are present at two places at the same time. This concept of divided self is explored in cyberpunk writings. The blurring of reality between the 'real' and the virtual world is seen with respect to the impact of mass media where simulations or images are becoming more 'real' than the 'real' world" (p. 94). Here, the concept is reflected through the network world vs the real world, yet in a sense, Cade's arm functions in a similar way. His arm connects him to the artificial world or the identity of homonyms, whereas the rest of his body

connects him to humanity. In a sense, Cade is a physical manifestation of 'the divided self', in that he effectively connects both identities, much like we currently and increasingly are with their virtual (online) and physical (offline) presences.

So, consequently, despite often being set in the future cyberpunk stories tend to reflect the world of today, as Gayadri (2014) identifies."Cyberpunk seems to be relevant to the current scenario where technology has penetrated every aspect of life; it is apt to be called the representative fiction of the late twentieth century and the present" (p. 94). Although some may nostalgically connect the cyberpunk genre as being bound as a 1980's literary and filmic canon due to it originally forming as a response to 'Reaganism' and the wider socio-political implementation of neoliberalism, it has arguably never been so representative of the world today. Burrows (1996) highlights how a changing social relationship between humans and machines is developing in certain cases, such as a newly emerging personality type in Japan known as 'Otaku'. "Otaku people are defined more by their possessions than by their inherent character. They can be described as a concept of personas-information. Travellers to Tokyo are often amazed by the proliferation of vending machines for all sorts of goods and services…research has shown that much of the popularity of these vending machines is due to the preference of young Japanese for interacting with machines instead of with real people" (p. 244). This merging of humanity with technology, while perhaps primitive in its level of social interaction and communication, hints at the beginnings of a developing social relationship between human and machine, causing renewed speculation around the future of such a relationship and where it may lead. Burrows (1996) sees the dynamic between human and machine as an important area of concern in post-humanist theory. One which is emphasised within cyberpunk."In particular, the fictional world of cyberpunk has been seized on by some as a resource of analytic insights into the new dimensions of human, or even post-human existence, which are supposedly now upon us" (p. 235). The potential destination of human-machine relations is what Homonym and other works found within the umbrella of cyberpunk and science fiction tend to ponder, probe and discuss.

Cyberpunk, representation and cognitive estrangement

Whether it be a mechanical forearm, the presence of artificial intelligence, or an oppressive private security force, objects within a fictional narrative are included to operate in different ways and serve different functions. When analysing the process of representation, Young (1999) theorises that

certain conditions must be met in order for the process of representation to occur. “For a start, if something is a representation of some object, it must stand for the object. Second, if something is a representation, it must be intentionally used as a representation. This may be called the intentionality condition. Finally, there is the recognition condition: nothing is a representation of an object unless it can be recognised as standing for the object by someone other than the person (or persons) who intends that it be a representation of the object” (p. 128). On the surface, these three conditions appear fairly logical and straightforward, yet still, raise questions. Young claims that 1) for something to represent something else, it must stand for it. Does that mean it must stand for that object entirely and purely? Or can it represent multiple things at the same time, i.e a number of physical objects and numerous ideas and facets? 2) For it to represent, it must have been intentionally included to do so. So effectively, representation cannot exist in retrospection. This raises questions or even conflicts with ideas around the subconscious as a creative source. And 3) someone other than the author must connect the object with what it represents and accept that it achieves that. To what extent? One other person, or two? Everyone available to interpret the particular representational attempt?

In cyberpunk and science fiction representation can, at times, be harder to penetrate than work in other genres, given its common employment of abstract trappings, or at least objects that ‘represent’ in ways a little more obtuse. In analysing the process of representation in science fiction, Chu (2010) notes Darko Suvin’s influential definition in Metamorphoses of Science Fiction, where “science fiction, according to Suvin, is an art form that achieves the effect of “cognitive estrangement” by way of “an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment” (p. 2). Suvin’s claim that science fiction operates beyond mimesis - beyond an artistic interpretation of the real world, and therefore exists separate to the more mainstream literary genres. Yet as Chu (2010) argues science fiction “…operates fully within the realm of mimesis. The objects of science-fictional representation, while impossible to represent in a straightforward manner, are absolutely real” (p. 3). Essentially, the idea here is that representation in science fiction can indeed be comprehended by the audience, in that the objects or ideas that are being represented by characters, places, and behaviours are tangible because they are ‘non-imaginary’ and born out of the real world.

When assessing Suvin’s ‘cognitive estrangement’ dialectically, the inclusion of the term ‘cognitive’ give’s the science fiction genre, to some degree, a sense of plausibility or rather impossibility. As

opposed to fantasy, which would entirely be encompassed by 'estrangement', or as Freedman (2013) calls it 'pseudo-estrangement' that can, in the context of the reader, be considered irrationally and theoretically illegitimate to their reality. "He (Suvin) goes on to add that estrangement "differentiates [science fiction] from the 'realistic' literary mainstream," while cognition differentiates it from myth, the folktale, and fantasy. In this understanding, then— though Suvin does not put the matter in exactly this way— science fiction is determined by the dialectic between estrangement and cognition" (p. 35). Chu (2010) echoes Freedman's comments on the nature of Suvin's 'estrangement' and how it acts as a distinct barrier to the literary mainstream. "According to Suvin, the presence of estrangement, which 'differentiates SF from the 'realistic' literary mainstream,' is determined by settings and characters that are 'radically or at least significantly different from empirical times, places, and characters of 'mimetic' or 'naturalist' fiction'" (p. 4). It can be argued that the idea of science fiction elements or tropes or motifs committing the act of 'estrangement' is perhaps not so strong as it was when Suvin wrote Metamorphoses of Science Fiction, due to advances in science and technology since it's publication in 1979. As with Homonym, artificially intelligent man-made androids who socialise, hold jobs, have rights, and are aesthetically indistinguishable to humans, are now perhaps not so implausible as they once were, as Chu (2010) notes: "Indeed, the notion of robot rights is as old as is the word "robot" itself. Etymologically the word "robot" comes from the Czech word "robota," which means "forced labour" (p. 215). The notion of artificial intelligences being capable of real choice, or free will, or even some form of love, may perhaps be still considered fantastical, yet in recent AI developments, not so far to be considered pure and outright Suvinian 'estrangement' as it may once have been. Piçarra, Giger, Pochwatko, and Gonçalves (2016) illustrate the developments in social robotics. "Remarkable progresses in artificial intelligence (AI) made possible the development of robots capable of seeing, hearing and communicating in ways similar to humans, i.e. social robots. Capable of using natural language, recognizing and expressing emotional cues, following gaze and gestures, social robots are geared towards the cooperation with humans outside the structured world of the industrial factory" (p. 278). This perhaps emphasises the lessening degree of 'estrangement' in science fiction and cyberpunk works, especially in context of Young's third condition for representation in literature where someone other than the author must interpret something as being intentionally representative of something else.

Regarding Young's (1999) 'recognition condition', where the reader's role comes in to play in the representation process, it "does not require that, in any given case, everyone be able to recognise

what something represents. Members of an audience will need to possess certain abilities if they are to recognise that an object is a representation. Many, perhaps all, representations are created in accordance with some rules or conventions. There are, for example, conventions of pictorial representation, and linguistic representation is entirely dependent on convention. Familiarity with these conventions is a necessary condition of being able to determine what is represented. In general, audience members will also need to be familiar with the object or objects represented, if they are to recognise that something is a representation" (p. 129).

Essentially the reader's experience or prior knowledge from the real world act's as a catalyst for comprehension of representations. This is arguably more vital in cyberpunk influenced narratives, or perhaps even more broadly, work that draws from wider science fiction. This perspective tends to come full circle and symbiotically connect with Suvin's suggestion that science fiction achieves the effect of "cognitive estrangement". In other words, cyberpunk and science fiction's relate-ability to the reader is arguably vitally dependent on how successful it represents objects or idea's that might otherwise be considered 'estranging'.

Yet, if we consider this idea of 'audience familiarity', more specifically it's role in representation, there are difficulties in marrying 'cognitive estrangement' with Jungian theory. Jungian archetypes are described by Leitch (2001) as "a priori, in born forms" (p. 988) which are intuitive in both expression and thought, while accessible, they are tied to "fundamental experiences and universal rites of passage" (p. 988). Effectively all go through these rites of passage which include coming of age, and facing death in later years. Perhaps this idea around shared experience is another key to artificially intelligent humanoids, and other representations in science fiction, being seen as human or 'alive', in that the audience recognises the experiences including growth and death, and to varying degrees can identify and empathise with characters that would otherwise be cognitively estranging to an audience.

Jungian archetypes also conflict with Young's 'intentionality condition', where the author must intend for something to be representative of something else. These archetypes, according to Jung (1978), were the source of creativity, stating that creation and it's process occurs on it's own "without the assistance of human consciousness" (p. 997), and "quite regardless of the personal fate of the man who is its vehicle" (p. 996). The conflict here between Young's 'intentionality condition' and Jung's archetypes tend to tug from either side of the argument over what can be considered representation in literature. Regardless as to whether representation can be intuitive or must be intentional, perhaps the audience may the final say in any case. If the audience does not interpret

something as being representative, then perhaps the process of representation remains incomplete in those particular circumstances.

One use of representation in science fiction occurs through the implementation of the wilderness. Dean (1982) writes that the employment of wilderness in literature helps facilitate values in characters. “For SF the wilderness provides a medium of adventure, a place where an alert protagonist discovers his essential values. Wilderness is another means which the literature of SF uses to bridge the 20th-century gap between the "high" and the "low" novel, the novel of intellect and the novel of action” (p. 68). This idea of connecting novels of intellect and action arguably speaks of genre. In light of Suvin’s claim that science fiction is differentiated from the ‘realistic’ literary mainstream through the genre’s ‘estrangement’ inducing properties, a comprehensive or familiar location or landscape such as the wilderness, counteracts the ‘estranging effect’ allowing for the representation it beholds to function.

When considering the representative properties of the wilderness, Dean (1982) writes that “wilderness may simply be defined as land retaining its primeval character with the imprint of man minimal or unnoticeable” (p. 69). On the surface, this definition may seem fairly minimalist itself, but this primeval quality reinforces the primeval shade that still lies, and perhaps always will lie in humanity. Dean (1982) describes this kind of landscape as representing “a desire to get back, to return to a totally pre-civilized state, before the advent of fire, language, history, or human society. Wilderness is organically pre-human; it precedes civilization. Man enters in as a beast among beasts in the wilderness jungle. He must measure his small, human self in terms of the ancient and unremitting contest according to the ancient and unmitigable rules which voided all regrets and brooked no quarter. This is a real landscape, merciless and premoral, vital and dark, sensuous and brutal” (p. 69). It is these qualities of mercilessness, pre-morality, vitality, darkness, sensuality, and brutality that are held within the wilderness as a landscape, that serve as an important function in Homonym, and it is these qualities that are mirrored in the characters that inhabit it, and are in a sense, engulfed by it. Wilderness is an ideal landscape for representing lawlessness too. The ‘wild’ nature of it, often demands that weather and unforgiving isolation rules in science fiction. Dean (1982) says this also reinforces the absence of help, whether it be divine or otherwise. “In wilderness one relates to the elements on their terms, under their conditions. The ineffable, lawgiving Yahweh does not exist” (p. 70), and the characters are placed in an environment that will either defeat them or bring out the best in them. The wilderness finds out whether you will grow or

wilt. Wilderness works successfully in fostering character development since it is, arguably a timeless, provocative, and minimalist canvas where characters can dominate the reader's attention. As Dean (1982) writes, the wilderness provides characters with much. "They are adversaries. They are gauges. They are places of immediate, intuitive self-knowledge where one rises or falls, triumphs or dies" (p. 70).

The use of wilderness in representing different ideas can be varied. It has the potential to depict a utopian heaven made up of wild beautiful flowers and plants extravagant wildlife and sunshine. Yet this kind of wilderness would represent vastly different concepts than Homonym does. The wilderness in homonym is stark and quiet. It is abandoned by civilisation and feels lifeless for the most part, where all its colours are greyed out. Dean (1982) details how the use of wilderness is brutal and primordial in Jack Vance's The Eyes of the Overworld (1966). "…Vance's wasteland wildernesses are truly apocalyptic: they preface Earth's ultimate quiescence. For Vance mankind has always been obstinate, cruel, and superstitious. The return to nature evokes mankind's truly despicable nature" (p. 71). This idea of the wilderness as a returning to nature in order to symbolise the despicable nature of mankind is the function wilderness plays in Homonym. It's harsh and cruel qualities are embodied in the nature of the religious cult that took over the Collective's camp and which Aya escaped from.

The ability of wilderness to represent the rawness of human nature is not only found in the world around the characters, but also in the characters themselves. Cade, the protagonist in Homonym, is a man capable of acting with brutality, pessimism, and primeval instinct. The wilderness operates as a representation of these qualities in Cade; it reinforces them, gives them weight, and allows for an easier understanding of Cade's nature. Dean (1982) writes that in The Eyes of the Overworld wilderness is symbolic of the protagonist, Cugel, and the use of wilderness "…develops the reader's understanding of a protagonist who is untamed and fundamentally static. Cugel is as unchanging as earth, water, fire, and air. The wilderness is man. Man must nurture what is wild in his own character if he is to survive…Vance's use of wilderness is relentlessly hard. Man lives and dies amid the sullen intricacies of nature" (p. 72). Overall the wilderness can be useful in representing specific aspects within human nature, given that it strips away distractive trappings born of the developed complications of modern and post-modern civilisation. It assists in drawing out some fundamentals in humanity while heightening a survival mode in human nature. In this sense, wilderness represents the part of Cade that exists in it's most raw form and represents the dark brutality in humanity that ends it's slumber when survival is at stake.

Conclusion

When the idea for writing Homonym came about, the aim was to explore how relations between a human being and an artificially intelligent humanoid would unfold, especially in a survival-threatened environment. Although this idea may have been explored previously in, for example, Blade Runner. While Ridley Scott's 1982 film did explore this relationship through Deckard and Rachel as lovers, it arguably did not explore this through the parent-child dynamic as Homonym does through Cade and Aya. While on the surface, this kind of relationship may be difficult to fathom, or perhaps even be 'cognitively estranging', developments in human-machine relationships have reached a point where the premise of Homonym does not seem so infeasible as it once may have. Piçarra, et al. (2016) states that "early examples of this are the three robot wardens tested in a South Korean prison. These three 150 cm robotic prison guards, are equipped with cameras and sensors and are expected to patrol the wards detecting risk behaviours such as violence and suicide among the detainees and thus reducing the workload of the human guards" (p. 278). Along with increasing trends like the Otaku personality type in Japan, it is perhaps not so easy now, to definitively categorise these notions within cyberpunk and science fiction as more cognitively estranging than those within the supposed 'mainstream' literary genres - an attitude which at times, is dismissive of these two genres' value to the human experience of today. But perhaps, given time, cyberpunk and science fiction will cease to be as estranging as some might claim. As science and technology catch up with the conventions that exist within these two genres, representation in science fiction, given the prevalence of their post-modern and post-humanist theoretical spirits, may someday be able to eventually disconnect from Suvin's label. Hopefully, Homonym can serve as a modest example amongst those works within the cyberpunk and science fiction canons, that help accelerate towards this reality.

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