Rewriting Consciousness:
Diversity, Post-Humans and Utopia in
Hannu Rajaniemi's Jean le Flambeur Trilogy

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Humanity is diverse. We can reasonably assume that any post-humanity would also be diverse. Cory Doctorow writes that 'ten thousand years ago, the state-of-the-art was a goat. You really think you're going to be anything recognizably human in a hundred centuries?' (Doctorow 2003: loc. 91-2). This summary of the estrangement of post-humanity highlights the inevitable difference of a future human society from our own due to the inexorable march of evolution. It also broaches the problematic task of imagining the fundamentally different nature of humans in the future. Such subjects are not merely post-human in terms of appearance, biological and technological enhancements, constructed identity or culture, but in the very definitions of consciousness that enable and define the conditions of humanity. Science fiction allows us to stage alternative viewpoints on society, technology and consciousness that can inform

our relation not only to potential futures but also the limits of humanity in our own present.

This article will use an analysis of the nature and function of post-human consciousness in Hannu Rajaniemi's *Jean le Flambeur* trilogy to assess the critical potential for staging a diverse range of (im)possible modes of post-humanity to critique the formation and diversity of humanity in the present and near future. This will use an extension of Fredric Jameson's conception of utopia to posit the role of science fiction in critiquing the present through our desire for staging alternative future perspectives. Gilles Deleuze's notions of difference and minor literature will negotiate such a literary staging's relation to current society and the problem of writing the post-human.

Hannu Rajaniemi's first trilogy of novels – *The Quantum Thief* (2010a), *The Fractal Prince* (2012); *The Causal Angel* (2014) – immediately plunges the reader into a radically different far-future that appears both bizarre and bewildering to current conceptions of science, society and humanity. This post-

human society spans the solar system with a range of factions and enclaves displaying a range of diverse extensions of humanity's possible futures. The setting of the series is a universe in which diverse conceptions of post-humanity have emerged from the development of technologies that enable uploaded consciousness. Human memories and minds can thus be transferred from a brain to a computer or indeed to a host of other simulated and real objects. This includes virtual 'Realms' as real as the physical universe, or the fractal architecture of the protagonist's literal memory palace. Consciousness can be displaced into a variety of embodiments, from enhanced human forms to mechanical constructs and even the vast diamond computers of planet-sized 'guberniyas'. The control over the godlike powers that have become a reality rests with those at the leading edge of the new technologies. The social effects of the technological developments are staged with a host of attendant problems. The fictional setting thus has a dark history of forced uploads, 'gogol' consciousness as computational slave, pirates stealing minds, and the interplanetary 'Protocol War' over the precise rules and applications of post-human consciousness.

This history is revealed gradually through the series, while the setting as a whole is presented as a complete entity in the present of the main narrative, including elaborate scientific concepts from information science and, in particular, quantum mechanics, blending current ideas with a fictional staging of their application. This is not the depiction of concepts at the expense of detailed world-building (the series does not lack detail, merely explanation in its absence of 'info dumps'), but rather the world-building is itself conceptual. As the series opens, the protagonist is caught in a physical manifestation of a game theory thought experiment, the 'prisoner's dilemma', in orbit around Neptune. The physical expression of concepts such as this echoes the spatial representation of memory in the technologies available to embody ideas. This in turn reflects the atemporal form of memory in the narrative that appears, like Jean le Flambeur's own personal history and personality, almost fractal. Flashback interludes of the protagonist's memories merge the fictional world with the fast-paced narrative winding between elaborate hard science and far-flung fiction.

Against this complex backdrop containing diverse post-human forms and experiences, the remnants of civilisation on Earth are a place where humanity and myth have met amidst the ravages of technological progress. Suffering rampant nanotech that can infect both matter and minds, the loss of Earth as the cradle of humanity removes our current situation from the world of the fiction. Described as 'rotten: it makes monsters to survive and feed on souls…live in dirt when others in the System build diamond castles and live for ever" (Rajaniemi 2012: 238), Earth's economic, technological and cognitive collapse asserts the post-human perspective of the writing. By contrast, the mobile city on Mars , 'a place of forgetting' (Rajaniemi 2012: 20)

with its strictly controlled exomemory, provides a closer link to the present with its analogy for contemporary issues surrounding privacy laws, cloud storage and Digital Rights Management. The eternal cycle between living as a human and a 'Quiet' machinic slave, however, removes the mortality that often defines and drives human endeavour while positioning the original human form as a privilege to be earned.

Along with Earth and Mars, another appearing ostensibly human are the Oort: enhanced with wings, adapted to live on comets, but still representing a unique consciousness in a singular biological body. The more direct relation of these groups to current humanity, and their expression of diversity, is seen in the character of Mieli. This Oortian warrior, whose name means 'mind' in Rajaniemi's native language of Finnish, demonstrates the full gamut of current conventional diversity (her gender, skin colour, sexuality and even at various points disability conform to present day issues concerning 'protected minorities'). Yet in this future these categories produce no problems in themselves, and it is rather her emotional connections, the human desires of honour, duty and love, that provide a link between our current perspective and the godlike beings that rule Rajaniemi's universe.

Post-Humans and Humanity

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari delineate a triple impossibility of the literary process: not writing; writing in a major language; writing otherwise (1986: 16). For Rajaniemi this impossibility is of not writing, of writing within the human perspective and of writing the post-human perspective (the human otherwise). The emergence of such a new collective consciousness 'necessarily exists by means of literature' (*Ibid.*), that is, if it is to be thought, it must be written, for thought occurs through human language. Thus staging alternative modes of thought requires an alternative literature. Yet writing from a post-human position outside of current humanity is impossible. This requires a minor literature, an act of writing outside from inside in such a way as to deterritorialise the process of writing (and thinking) itself. In science fiction this utopic process that Jameson describes as 'shifts in the context of the description' (2005: 262) is the desire to write the post-human from a human perspective. The undermining of the position of writing in this process critiques both human and post-human positions in the irresolvable gap created through their mutual estrangement. This is the paradoxical challenge of writing an imaginary position outside of contemporary thought, to critique the coordinates of contemporary thinking from within the literary processes of contemporary thought itself. This is an insertion of internal difference to (re)thinking humanity: the impossibility of post-human consciousness.

The forms of post-humanity that Rajaniemi creates in his series are defined not only by their diversity in relation to one another but by their difference to current humanity. Our present perspective is what remains for his

characters as a limit and evolutionary memory labelled the 'baseline' human form. The utopian function in science fiction refers to estrangement from the present, and the post-human refers to the estrangement of consciousness from the present-day human. Humanity thus forms the limit against which the conflicting societies and conceptions of utopia are spawned. This limit is primarily one of temporality in the far future with a critical distance to our own situation. While the precise date of Rajaniemi's setting remains unclear, the far-future setting suggests the potential for evolution, particularly under rapid conditions of technologically guided advancement.

Yet Rajaniemi's characters remain in many ways all too human, and it is their relation to the fragmentary identity that we label human that instigates their diversity and their conflict. The measure of difference is thus also a mark of possibility in the utopian function of Rajaniemi's work. To Jameson the utopian form is 'a representational meditation on radical difference, radical otherness (2005: xii), and in the *Jean le Flambeur* trilogy this difference occurs in relation to humanity as a label and construct. The impact of diversity at this level of our understanding of consciousness is extrapolated to cataclysmic proportions in Rajaniemi's series in the ongoing conflict between the Sobernost and Zoku both seeking to rule the solar system by imposing their version of post-humanity.

Conflicting Conceptions of the Post-Human

The Sobernost are based around godlike 'Founders' whose personality and will is imprinted upon vast copy clans with rigid hierarchies of protocols and control. They exist in Guberniyas, planet-sized computers for each Founder in which the prime and its highest-level copies can enter heightened speeds of thought in spaces of pure abstraction. This is epitomised in the most powerful Founder, the ruthless Matjek Chen, the 'god-emperor of the Solar System' (Rajaniemi 2014: 21) who exerts an iron grip on his underlings and even the other Founders, in his rage against those who oppose his conception of consciousness. Yet his own virtual spaces exist 'like a zen painting, ink strokes on which paper, brushstrokes becoming words becoming objects' (Rajaniemi 2012: 138), an expression of his vision of consciousness and the fluid, abstract, creative potential of the post-human mind. .

Unlike the Sobernost, the Zoku represent computer gaming clans moving across virtual 'realms' as a collective in which consciousness is entangled at the quantum level for greater cooperation. They appear to bind themselves together in equality and mutual gain, yet form an internal paradox by which 'the more you achieve, the more entanglement you have, and thus more power to impose your will upon the zoku's collective reality. But at the same time, as you advance, you are sculpted by the zoku jewel into a perfect member of the collective' (Rajaniemi 2014: 122). The Zoku's rupture with the present closely follows

Jameson's conception of enclaves, particularly in their representation of online communities and gaming culture. Jameson writes that 'cyberspace is indeed an enclave of a new sort…does away with the "centered subject" and proliferates in new, post-individualistic ways' (2005: 21). This challenges the individualist and hierarchical structures we currently live within, and which the Sobernost embody to a totalitarian extreme. We are offered here two radically divergent systems demonstrating the persistence of ideology based on our conceptions and limits of consciousness.

The conflict between these two powers rests on the uniqueness (Zoku) or the independence (Sobernost) of consciousness. The Sobernost see entanglement as an affront to their identity, even as they force their will upon millions of slave minds. The Zoku are equally appalled at the ability to be copied, using backed up memories only upon death to maintain the singular existence of their minds. The protagonist comments at one point that 'the Sobernost clings to immortality that turns souls into cogs in a machine. The zoku get lost in silly games and Realms that lead nowhere' (Rajaniemi 2014: 214), highlighting a futility to the debate that has escalated to full-scale war.

In opposition to the separation of two forms of ideal society, Jean le Flambeur embodies Deleuze and Guattari's conception of utopian desire as 'revolutionary action and passion' (2004: 71) as he insists that 'we don't have to accept the way things are' (Rajaniemi 2014: 214). The narrative follows the protagonist's position between factions, using the characteristics and locations of each to suit the direction of the plot, the character's own desires, and the author's process of gradually revealing his universe to the reader. The more fluid protagonist uses and assesses the limitations and antagonistic relation of both conceptions of post-humanity. In the debate over the fundamental meaning of humanity itself a critical outsider perspective is thus constructed as a point of critical contact. This outsider perspective, within the more general estrangement from the present, turns the question onto our own situation and what aspects of ourselves we might seek to maintain at the core of an increasingly diverse species.

Diversity and Difference

The process of writing from a post-human perspective in a distant future is am estrangement at the level of the initial conditions of human consciousness. This provokes a shift from diversity in humanity's branching evolution towards a fundamental difference within the nature of post-human consciousness itself. Deleuze insists that 'difference in general is distinguished form diversity or otherness. For two terms differ when they are other, not in themselves, but in something else' (Deleuze 2004, 38). Here this is the move from a diverse range of possible futures to a fundamental difference from the present form of consciousness that imagines and reads such futures.

In Rajaniemi's trilogy, the difference which Deleuze describes is seen in the relation

of post-humanity to humanity, an internal difference in our nature and future that causes a rupture in the terms under which we conceive identity, society and even existence. The Zoku and Sobernost are not merely divergent branches of humanity in simple opposition and mutual otherness. Their difference is in relation to the process of defining the future as a single conception of humanity and the resulting imposition of limits on consciousness. In the scientific framework of the novels this limit not only maintains social order, but secures the constraints of reality that are at stake when godlike consciousnesses overstep their own conditions. It is in relation to such conditions that 'difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse' (Deleuze 2004: 280).

In the literary staging of a post-human society, we can define diversity as the examples of the varying paths the evolution of our species might take. Difference, however, is a schism in the relation of post-human consciousness to its own conditions as separate from human consciousness. This is the fissure of speculative fiction across which the utopic critique is constructed, an attempt to write an alternative world from a perspective inside such a world, inaccessible to the human mind outside of approximations in and extensions of the contemporary imagination. The diversity of the socio-cultural effects of this underlying difference creates a series of parallel perspectives. These provide an insight into the antagonisms of the literary utopia and a new

mode of thinking human consciousness emerging through its estrangement from the present.

The situation in which Rajaniemi stages these post-human expressions of difference in relation to consciousness lies across the abyss of a post-singularity future, an event creating a fundamental shift in humanity's relation to its own nature and the universe. His characters exist in a fictional version of the solar system set after a technological singularity has occurred with the development of the capability to upload, store and copy consciousness. This control over and subsequent splintering of consciousness has led to the diversification of new forms of humanity. This singularity has led to the fulfilment of idealist aims for a post-humanity in which the mind can be re-embodied, copied or enhanced to an almost unimaginable degree, thereby enabling immortality, immateriality and new levels of freedom over reality. New forms of social organisation created by such technologies have emerged and crumbled into an economic crash, war, and a literal singularity destroying Jupiter.

In the timescale of the main narrative in the series the singularity technologies still exist but the utopian potential has been disrupted. The characters can still perform godlike acts, yet the major rift between the Sobernost and Zoku, with its attendant conflict, oppression and manipulation, has given the situation a distinctly dystopian flavour. Diversity is the cause of the problem, not only at the social level upon which Jameson focuses

his analysis but at the level of the very nature of consciousness and humanity itself.

The Nature of Utopia

Jameson describes utopian space as 'an imaginary enclave within real social space' (2005: 15). This is an opening of radical difference within the current situation through science fiction as what Darko Suvin labels 'the *literature of cognitive estrangement'* (1979: 4). Utopia is the combination of a potential and desire for change, a radical difference from the current situation, yet its nature remains open to debate. The separation of both the utopian enclave from pre-utopian society and of parallel enclaves manifesting different forms of utopia, constructs an impression of ideal islands, a 'utopia of structural relationality' (Jameson 2005: 221). The separation of the enclave from the outside world can be read through Deleuze's conception of the desert island, which 'would be only the dream of humans, and humans the pure consciousness of the island' (2002: 10). In juxtaposition to Jameson's historical-social agenda, this cognitive function of physical or political separation reinserts the conditions of humanity as a defining mode of viewing utopia. Placing human consciousness as the initial point of impact for utopian interventions of thought ties more closely with science fiction as a literary practice. For Deleuze, writing and thinking are intertwined in creating and recreating our collective consciousness and therefore our world.

The impossibility, and subsequent minor nature, of science fiction as a literary practice refers to the problem of positioning thought beyond its own limits, which in science fiction such as the *Jean le Flambeur* trilogy is writing from the other side of the singularity. Jo Walton highlights the increasing prominence of those attempting this mode of writing, complaining that 'most SF being written now has to call itself "post-Singularity" and try to write about people who are by definition beyond our comprehension' (2008). While writing characters who would necessarily exist outside of the limits of our thought is problematic, it becomes critically useful and indeed possible through the shifting of the territory in which the writing and thinking occurs. What Walton criticises as a literary paradigm is in fact a literary process that succeeds in its very failure, a necessary estrangement from the present that derives its value as much from forcing the reader to evaluate the fictional universe and its relation to our own as it does from establishing a detailed description of a specific otherness outside of our contemporary perspective. Criticisms (Alexander 2012; Holojacob 2013; Weimar 2013) of the difference and depth of Rajaniemi's series, at the expense of easy accessibility, only show the extreme lengths required for the post-singularity estrangement of writing beyond a utopian perspective.

There is obviously more to Rajaniemi's setting than utopia. The diversity in utopian societies derived from differences in the definition of post-humanity leads to major

catastrophes which necessitate an alternative mode of viewing the utopian framework. Jameson identifies in traditional conceptions of the ideal and utopic a 'commitment to identity coming to seem rather dystopian to us today' (2005: 167). Amidst the changing context of identity as difference and relativity rather than positively asserted absolute, there is a shift from the pursuit of happiness to the pursuit of freedom in evolving manifestations of utopian desire. The tension between happiness and freedom appears in the multiplicity of utopian enclaves. Each one is internally free, yet hegemonic in its necessary isolation from alternative (and therefore undesirable) modes of organisation.

The Limits of Utopia

While utopian enclaves are internally consistent models of ideal social spaces, the mere possibility of the existence of other enclaves with divergent natures highlights the dystopian tract inherent to utopia. The dystopia of utopia stems from the totalitarian nature of a consistent and complete system precluding any alternative. The paradox of utopia is thus between the necessity of an evil in opposition to which utopia can arise, and the need to remove this causal evil in the timeless isolation of utopia from all ills. Jameson acknowledges (2005: 188) and attempts to cover over this situation, whereby utopia must rewrite its own conditions and in doing so remove its purpose, with the possibility of migration between enclaves of diverse utopian systems and ideals. His suggestion of autonomy and isolation of

influence (*Ibid.*: 220) claims to be an ingenious solution, yet relies on a further internal paradox. The non-communication necessary between enclaves in order to sustain their utopian totality would deny dissatisfied members from an awareness of any alternative, thus rendering the possibility of migration moot. Any dissenters would have to leave what they perceive as a total system, forcing them into a limbo state of exile before even the possible existence of an alternative society would be made available to them. A plurality of enclaves where each believes itself to be the only one existing is not a true plurality, simply a juxtaposition of separate yet simultaneous totalities.

Rajaniemi's enclaves, however, do allow for migration, precisely through their knowledge of one another's existence. For example, Mieli first leaves the Oort in a deal with the Pellegrini Sobornost Founder, who she then abandons for the Zoku after regretting allowing her mind to be copied. These enclaves are thus not true utopias: their knowledge of the diversity of potential societies available invalidates their utopian claims. This situation reveals the problematic assumption by Jameson that a utopian enclave would be free from expansionist aims or the desire to conquer.

It is a persistent element of human nature, one that in Rajaniemi's universe has most definitely remained in the transition to post-humanity, to conquer those deemed other. Even the most accepting society has its limits. In the rhetorically permissive Western Liberal Democracy these limits are absolute regimes

such as the totalitarianism sought by neo-Nazism or the Islamic State extremists. In Iain M. Banks's *The Culture* series the same problem exists in the Culture's limit of the existence of aggressive societies. The internally peacefully anarchist and utopian society holds so strongly to this limit that, although 'utopia spawns few warriors' (Banks 2008b: loc. 72), the mass devastation and eventual victory in the Culture-Idiran war (Banks 2008a) and other such conflicts paradoxically asserts the Culture's military power in order to remove expansionist military societies. In Rajaniemi's work this limit is the very nature of humanity, to an equally absolute extent for both Zoku and Sobernost enclaves. Rajaniemi's and Banks's fictional universes can both thus be labelled post-utopias. Their utopian societies, which do indeed seek to rewrite their own histories and conditions to the exclusion of all alternatives, turn plurality into conflict as the whole of reality becomes the target for the utopian desire. Post-utopia is the limit of resolving the internal difference of its enclaves, the possibility of alternative enclaves, and the impossibility of writing complete utopias from our decidedly non-utopic current situation.

The constraint on Jameson's position is the current conception of humanity, and the task falls to the literary works of science fiction themselves, such as that of Rajaniemi or Banks, to look beyond this ultimate constraint on writing outside of our contemporary perspective. Indeed post-humans are seldom mentioned in Jameson's volume, and often only in passing, perhaps due to such beings seeming

for Jameson 'more distant and impossible than ever!" (2005: 211). This same dilemma can be seen in Andy Miah's response to Nick Bostrom's 'Letter from Utopia' (2008), which complains that 'you seemed quite distant from our current situation' (Miah 2008: 2) while objecting to the notion that 'there is anything that is beyond my own imagination. Such a proposition seems something of a challenge to my intelligence' (4). Yet it is this problematic rupture of distance and the need to change the entire scope of our imagination to which writing the post-human must aim. Indeed, Jameson does admit an instructive role for post-humanity, in that 'it is probably on the side of the imagining of the post-human and even the angelic that Utopian otherness is likely to find its productivity' (2005: 175). We must once more assert the importance of writing the post-human as the ultimate deterritorialisation of current modes of thought which Deleuze and Guattari define as the first characteristic of minor literature (1986: 18) and through which we might gain the most effective critical distance towards the problems of the present.

Jean le Flambeur as a Post-Human Identity

The method by which Rajaniemi most effectively stages critical distance towards our own present modes of thinking humanity and its relation with society and reality is, appropriately, the series' eponymous protagonist Jean le Flambeur. This character, the interplanetary gentleman thief, is Rajaniemi's mediator for cognitive

estrangement. While Jean claims to understand how people think, and how to manipulate them, and makes great use of the various post-human capabilities available in this fictional universe, he is himself perhaps the most 'human' in his motivations. Beyond a nostalgic cliché of 'humanity' as humanity's greatest strength and greatest weakness, Jean allows for connections across the distance between the novel and our present, with which to critique our own relation to technologies, self-hood and indeed the fabled construct we call 'humanity'. By utilising the technological extensions and identities of all factions, while remaining outside any single commitment to a specific nature of consciousness, Jean exploits the fluidity of diverse post-humanity as he mutates and shifts his manifold identities through time. He states, 'it's amazing what you can do if you look past ideological differences and combine technologies in creative ways' (Rajaniemi 2014: 235), emphasising not only the productive potential of diversity but also the underlying internal difference from which humanity – in the fictional future, in our present and as a general concept – can be deterritorialised and rethought.

The identity of Jean, aside from certain visual cues such as his favoured blue sunglasses, remains ever mutable. Through choice or necessity, he takes on new faces, new bodies and new modes of consciousness, appearing at times in Zoku Realms or disguised as a Sobernost Founder. His one constant is his occupation as a thief, extending the familiar hacker protagonist of cyberpunk fiction far beyond the hacking of systems and economies, although he still employs such methods. This includes breaking into locked quantum puzzle boxes (Rajaniemi 2012: 7-8), stealing time to bring someone back from death (Rajaniemi 2010a: 214f, 229f) and establishing a transportation pyramid scheme (Rajaniemi 2014: 19). His thefts comment not only on current issues surrounding the nature of objects, ownership of intellectual property, and the digital storage and theft of identity, but also on the fundamental interplay of taking and losing inherent to desire. When applied to the body and consciousness this not only stages prevalent fears of the extension of humanity but the complex processes by which a personal utopia in contemporary society could appear as a desire for a centred, complete and psychologically resolved self. Towards this aim, Jean's greatest schemes come from hacking cultures, identities and consciousness itself, aided by his own flexibility and the performative nature he applies to the conditions of his post-humanity. His commitment to such fluidity blurs the reception of his very existence, with characters even remaking that 'this creature you are talking about is a myth' (Rajaniemi 2012: 34).

Jean's construction is a constant creative process, and indeed he compares the role of a thief to that of an artist (Rajaniemi 2010a: 200). He responds to the production of new relations within internal difference as his diverse embodiments result from a constant difference from his own elusive self. Daniel Smith writes of the importance of constantly

rewriting the conditions of human identity, stating that 'if identities were already pre-given, then there would in principle be no production of the new (no new differences)' (Smith 2007: 1). This role of Deleuzian difference in the continual rethinking of our own conditions is the mode of existence that Jean applies to his own consciousness, repeatedly rewriting and deterritorialising his humanity across a diverse range of post-humanities.

This fluid identity, however, is also fractured. In the time of the novels' main action, Jean is a fragment of his former self(/ves), the remnants of a post-human with godlike abilities who at one time acted purely on whim and desire. This desire in the present of the narrative is displaced onto the search for himself, echoing in his personal quest the general image of post-utopia that Rajaniemi paints in the fictional setting. His memory has been splintered across the solar system by his former self to hide the secrets of his greatest treasures and worst flaws: physically stored on Mars, in the stories of Earth, as both a mythical evil and past acquaintance to various key figures of the Sobernost and Zoku. This draws Jean's 'current' state at the start of *The Quantum Thief* only as a series of relations to others. Through this character's own journey of self-(re)discovery we see a new approach to the assemblage of the post-human emerge that embodies the post-utopian regime in all its internal conflicts and critical potential.

Chris Land expands on Deleuzian difference in the specific context of rewriting human identity through technology, stating that 'if we allow ourselves to question even the foundations of human being we may find that we need new concepts of existence and subjectivity' (Land 2005: 33). The new forms of society in a post-utopia require new forms of humanity in the post-human, a process that takes Jean the course of the three novels to uncover. The formation of Jean's identity as a process rather than a being, a series of impressions and memories left in others, produces a new mode of constructing his personality as it develops through the series. He escapes from a game theory prison where many iterations of himself play the prisoner's dilemma with one another. He recovers memories quite literally hidden with friends on Mars. He becomes a disembodied myth of Earth responsible for the collapse. His complex interactions with both the Zoku and Sobernost powers, particularly his former self's love for the Pellegrini that caused him to instigate the collapse, enable him to move between sides in the system-wide war for the nature of humanity.

Difference and Resolution

He does not return to his former godlike post-human self, but rather achieves a new state of being that is at once more and less human, reconnecting with an idea of humanity in his relationship to others, such as the refugees of Earth he steals to save, or Mieli his formerly begrudging but increasingly emotionally connected companion. The new form of consciousness Jean constructs is

formed of pure difference to himself and diversity in his assemblage of connections with others, sustaining a constructive conflict of desire and loss for both humanity and post-humanity.

A resolution is reached when, at the end of the series, Jean sacrifices himself to save the entire universe. Firstly, he sets in motion an idiosyncratically elaborate plan to end the conflict between Sobernost and Zoku. On a more personal level this saves Mieli and the remnants of Earth who, beyond his responsibility for their plight, can be respectively seen as his closest single human connection and the lost foundation of humanity in general. He himself then enters a dangerous gambit with reality at stake. The All-Defector, a game theoretic glitch from the dilemma prison, seeks to consume the entire universe. This dark echo of the worst of post-humanity has the ability to absolutely mimic its opponents, and in so doing bend them to its will of domination. Jean defeats the expression of pure dystopia given conscious form through a further process of post-utopic thinking. By forcing many iterations of himself, bringing out the many fractured memories side by side in superposition against the All-Defector, he uses self-diversity in an atemporal milieu to bring his own internal conflict to bear. The pure difference that bombards the All-Defector is successful; hero and monster cancel one another out so that the various post-humanities can continue to exist. The post-utopic post-human forms a mirror, critique and negation of the destructive tendencies of humanity. The resolution of post-utopia can bring forth the conditions of difference to generate genuinely new expressions of consciousness.

Despite Jean's sacrifice, the post-utopian societies of the novel reach no such resolution at the series' conclusion. Jean himself manages to reach a new level of consciousness that can hack the universe and move beyond the constraints of our current reality. The warring factions, however, are merely separated rather than achieving a new form of post-humanity, perhaps an all too human solution to the dilemma of conflicting enclaves. The Zoku, along with Earth and Mieli, enter an adjacent reality, leaving the Sobernost to claim our system and resolve their own internal conflicts. The Pellegrini even states that she will simply take an alternative Jean from the dilemma prison and make further attempts to break reality (Rajaniemi 2014: 287), without rethinking her own nature. This ultimate expression of the enclave, at the level of reality, undermines Jean's achievements in overcoming both his own dystopian and post-utopian (in his many) natures: the distortion of utopian post-human power in a selfish personality and the simultaneous fragmented iterations each with their own perspective on what it means to be Jean le Flambeur. He becomes in his final moments something other, a gesture of critical difference not only to the various diverse post-humans of the fiction but also to the construction of humanity in general with resonances in our present situation where technological potential can lead us into any one (or several) of almost limitless futures.

The impossibility of carrying Jean's task into humanity in general displays the impossibility of writing a post-human perspective. It is instructive that his new state must be instantly destroyed. We as readers are left with the task of imagining a genuinely post-human utopic space, yet through attempting such an impossible conundrum we might reach new critical perspectives on our own conceptions of humanity. To fully understand humanity, we must construct a position of estrangement from history, from ourselves and from our entire formation of consciousness in its relation to reality. We must reframe the terms of the discussion, we must rewrite consciousness.

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