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The Function of Intertextuality in the Shaping of the *Übermensch*

in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*

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ABSTRACT

[English]

This essay analyses the figure of the *Übermensch* by Friedrich Nietzsche by studying the extent to which the main characters in the polyphonic novel *Cloud Atlas*, by David Mitchell, can be said to overcome themselves. In order to do so, it is necessary to use Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality and to read the novel and Nietzsche's conceptualisation in the light of it. It is then argued that the function of intertextuality in the shaping of the *Übermensch* as depicted in *Cloud Atlas* is that of fulfilling the hegemonic drive to capsize any situation of bondage. Therefore, it is only by becoming an intertext that the *Übermensch* can succeed in exceeding his own temporality and the relations of power that crisscross it.

Key words: *Übermensch*, intertextuality, *Cloud Atlas*, temporality

[Català]

Aquest assaig analitza la figura del superhome de Friedrich Nietzsche tot estudiant fins a quin punt es pot dir que els protagonistes de la novel·la *Cloud Atlas* de David Mitchell arriben a convertir-se'n. A tal fi, és necessari aportar el concepte d'intertextualitat de Julia Kristeva i així llegir la novel·la i la conceptualització de Nietzsche a la llum d'aquesta idea. Seguidament, es defensa que la funció de la intertextualitat en la formació del superhome que es duu a terme a *Cloud Atlas* és la d'acomplir l'impuls hegemònic per capgirar qualsevulla situació de repressió. Així doncs, només mitjançant la transformació en un intertext que el superhome pot reeixir la seva pròpia temporalitat i les relacions de poder que la travessen.

Paraules clau: superhome, intertextualitat, *Cloud Atlas*, temporalitat

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INTRODUCTION

Julia Kristeva once wrote that the novel is the intertextual literary form par excellence. She said so as it is easier to write trans-generically, trans-historically and intertextually in novels; in other words, only novels manage to combine self-referentiality and exceed in meaning towards past texts, while mixing genres: only the novel can be polyphonic. And certainly, if there is a novel that instantiates these words is David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*.

Cloud Atlas unfolds in six short stories that are interrupted before the subsequent commences, except for the last one, whose end gives way to the resuming of the others in inverse order as they were first presented. Furthermore, each story belongs to a different time period and a different genre at the same time. Thus, we begin with a "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing", a travel narrative starring a lawyer who crosses the Pacific ocean back to San Francisco from the Chatham Isles while writing a journal; we continue with "Letters from Zedelghem" and Robert Frobisher, a disinherited young composer who flees to Belgium to work for a now withered celebrity and writes letters to his lover; it is followed by "Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery", a thriller about a young reporter who tries to uncover an energetic conspiracy; which continues with "The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish", a picaresque tale portraying a cranky old man who finds himself locked in a nursery home for the elderly; which gives way to "An Orison of Sonmi~451, with an enslaved clone bred to serve as a waitress in a dystopian future who is interviewed before pending execution; and we end—not the narrative, syuzhet, but as story, fabula goes—with "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After", a post-apocalyptic account featuring Zachry, a young and troubled shepherd threatened by a cannibalistic tribe. The novel lends itself to be understood as the untimely journey of the same soul, reincarnating in five of the six main characters and the deuteragonist of the sixth one, repeating the same struggle for freedom from a context of bondage and confinement.

This essay will take advantage of the Matryoshka-like structure and its overarching plot to analyse the extent to which each of them try and fail to achieve freedom and revolutionise their time—in other words, how each of them becomes an *Übermensch*. Particularly, we'll study the effect by which their need to overcome their situation—by exceeding themselves—is triggered by and only achieved after their reading of the account that precedes them. Indeed, each of the protagonists are inspired by the narrative depicting

the previous story. My thesis will therefore be twofold: first, the *Übermensch* only comes into being through intertextual relationship with other texts; and, secondly, that success is only possible, precisely, through intertextualisation.

Hence the essay will display two parts: first, I will analyse how Nietzsche and the novel relate to each other as to the drive to self-overcoming—to becoming an *Übermensch*; to that end, I will present an account of Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch* with aid of some historical linguistics and classical conceptualisation to better understand the meaning and the scope of the term. Concurrently, we will see how this drive is timely doomed to fail. The second part, on the other hand, will depict the function of intertextuality in the shaping of the *Übermensch* as a successful inspiration for untimely self-overcoming.

1. THE FAILURE (OR THE *ÜBERMENSCH*'S DRIVE TO EXCEED *MENSCHLICHKEIT*)

When Achilles was mulling over going to the Trojan war, his mother and sea-goddess Thetis warned him that, if he went, he would die soon—but his name would never be forgotten; whereas, if he stayed, he'd have a long and peaceful life, but no 'deathless renown' [κλέος ἄφθιτον] (*Iliad* 9.413)[1]. Indeed, Detienne explains the relationship between renown—or better, 'glory', immortality and oblivion through the differentiation between two Greek concepts, κλέος [*Kléos*] and κῦδος [*Kudos*][2]. κλέος is needed to reach out to the gods—and there is much more merit in it, for κῦδος is randomly given (downwards), while only those truly worthy deserve the 'renown'—*louange*—through the word of the poets, the '*serviteurs des Muses*' who elevate them *upwards*. A praise that only when worded brings about true immortality, understood as 'historical' memory; concurrently, not to be poetically praised leads to oblivion: '*L'oubli ou le silence, qui est le pouvoir de la mort qui s'élève contre le pouvoir de la vie, la Mémoire, mère des Muses…Seule la Parole d'un chantre permet d'échapper au Silence et à la Mort*' (Detienne 75)[3]. All in all, Achilles has chosen to die prematurely and gloriously so as to *exceed* his mortality—a deed only claimed by the gods.

This idea of excess—capital for the length of this essay—is also present in the deontological manifesto of the *Übermensch*[4]. In the very first apparition of Zarathustra, the Persian poet wanders the streets with a lit lantern at broad daylight, seeking God, and claiming that He is dead. Then he asks: '*Müssen wir nicht selber zu Göttern werden, um nur*

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[1] As translated by Alexander Pope. For the whole passage where Achilles reminisces his mother's forewarning, see Homer 180 [9.410-6].

[2] '*…dans la sphère du combat, le guerrier aristocratique paraît comme obsédé par deux valeurs essentielles, Kléos [κλέος] et Kudos [κῦδος], deux aspects de la gloire. Kudos est la gloire qui illumine le vainqueur ; c'est une sorte de grâce divine, instantanée. Les dieux l'accordent à l'un et la réfusent à l'autre. Au contraire, Kléos est la gloire telle qu'elle se développe de bouche en bouche, de génération en génération. Si le Kudos vient des dieux le Kléos monte jusqu'à eux. À aucun moment, le guerrier ne peut s'éprouver comme l'agent, la source de ses actes : sa victoire est pure faveur des dieux et l'exploit, une fois accompli, ne prend forme qu'à travers la parole de louange. En définitive, un home vaut ce que vaut son logos. Ils seront les maîtres de la Louange, les serviteurs des Muses, qui décideront de la valeur d'un guerrier; ce sont eux qui vont accorder ou refuser la «Mémoire»*' (Detienne 74).

[3] Concurrently, not to be poetically praised leads to oblivion: '*L'oubli ou le silence, qui est le pouvoir de la mort qui s'élève contre le pouvoir de la vie, la Mémoire, mère des Muses…Seule la Parole d'un chantre permet d'échapper au Silence et à la Mort*' (75).

[4] I have opted for not translating this concept since I do not feel comfortable with the most widespread translation *Superman*, with too many cultural resonances, for one; but especially because I do not consider it the better translation, as I will argue below.

[God's death] *würdig zu erscheinen?*' (FW-125)[5]. Next time we see the Persian profet, this scene is repeated: he comes out of his self-reclusion in the mountains and descends Jesus-like to the men [*die Menschen*] to preach the coming of the *Übermensch* (Za-I-Vorrede-1). However, in the first occasion Nietzsche proclaimed that '*Gott ist todt*' [God is dead] and wondered if now we should become gods so as to live up to the deed—namely, the death of God; now Zarathustra brings *Menschen* the *Übermensch*, that who is beyond man and so *exceeds* his humanity [*Menschlichkeit*], and comes nearer to the gods. Therefore, the Greek hero and the Nietzschean *Übermensch* are crisscrossed by the idea of excess of one's limits, that is, by the notion of ὕβρις [*Hybris*][6]. But not only this; for certainly the gods do take a bit of an offence when someone tries to come near them.

In consequence, in this first part of the essay we shall see how, in the space between this two clashing forces (upwards and downwards, excess and flattening) does the figure of the *Übermensch* play out; and also, how *Cloud Atlas* presents us with a depiction of such unfolding. Each story is led by a character who is driven—by whom? We shall see—to *overcome* their starting point of bondage or submission in order to become someone else and revert their initial situation.

1.1. Díke *or the order of the world*

So what is to be exceeded by the *Übermenschen* of *Cloud Atlas*? Heraclitus, the ancient sage to whom Nietzsche found himself closer[7], wrote: 'The sun will not exceed his boundaries; if he does, the Erinyes, handmaids of Justice, will find him out'[8]. Indeed, the Greeks thought there was a cosmo-ontological order enforced by Justice [Δίκη], which puts beings and objects into place, that is, *adjusts* them in a certain way and guarantees such adjustment. The Greeks saw the universe as limited by sectional cuts to which beings must be restricted.

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[5] 'Must we not ourselves become Gods, merely to seem worthy of [God's death]?'

[6] For philological accuracy, and despite English having its equivalent in 'hubris', as of this point I will be using the Greek transliteration '*Hybris*' for ὕβρις.

[7] '*Ein Zweifel blieb mir zurück bei Heraklit, in dessen Nähe überhaupt mir wärmer, mir wohler zu Muthe wird als irgendwo sonst. Die Bejahung des Vergehens und Vernichtens, das Entscheidende in einer dionysischen Philosophie, das Jasagen zu Gegensatz und Krieg, das Werden, mit radikaler Ablehnung auch selbst des Begriffs „Sein" — darin muss ich unter allen Umständen das mir Verwandteste anerkennen, was bisher gedacht worden ist*' (*EH* GT 3). For more on Nietzsche's inheritance of Heraclitus' thought see Przybyslawski 88-95.

[8] 'Ἥλιος οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται μέτρα· εἰ δὲ μή, Ἐρινύες μιν Δίκης ἐπίκουροι ἐξευρήσουσιν' (DK B94). Note the use of μέτρα [measures] instead of the translation used, οὔρους [boundaries]. For more on that distinction, see Finkelberg 63*n*.64.

There were then 'limits in relation to what is above and what is below. It takes the true measure of man as opposed on the one hand to the divine and the heroic and, on the other, to the bestial and the monstrous' (Vernant 1986:135). Therefore, we find ourselves humans in the second floor of a three-storied structure: on top, the gods; on the bottom, animals; and between them, humankind[9]. All in all, like the sun, humans cannot overstep or exceed its boundaries or limits/limitations. For then it would cease to be human—and become something else.

This sectional cosmic structure—which is repeated in the human domain of the city-State—seems to apply also, though secularised, to Nietzsche's depiction of his Enlightened culture. Said society is claimed to be ravaged by nihilism; that is to say, that the death of God has taken place—by which all Christian values and the selfsame existence of any *Hinterwelt* [backworld, namely the Christian Heaven or the Platonic world of Ideas] have now come to naught; however, there remains a Platonic-Christian cosmo-ontological conception between the individual and reality that directs their perception[10]. In other worlds, although we have killed God, we have merely replaced it with another idol: take Reason, Science, the State, Man… Therefore, the sectional cuts of the structure of the world remain unscathed. The atheist still lives theistically inasmuch as they follow a rational morality that keeps them in their place—an individual described as '*nothwendig, einförmig, gleich unter Gleichen, regelmässig und folglich berechenbar zu machen*' (GM-II-2)[11].

Representations of sectional and nihilist societies appear in the six stories of *Cloud Atlas*, and constitute the point of departure for the attempt in excess by their six main characters. Firstly, Adam Ewing comes into contact with two Aboriginal cultures in Old Rēkohu (Clatham Island): the Maori and the Moriori, the latter being the original dwellers of the island but later suffering invasion and enslaving from the former. Moriori are depicted as

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[9] Furthermore, humans are described by Aristotle as political animals, which means, first, that we differentiate ourselves from beasts in our capacity of living together around the organisation of a *polis* or city-State; and second, that 'a man that is by nature and not merely by fortune citiless is either low in the scale of humanity or above it (Idem). Hence, for humans to share the common space of the public sphere that constitutes their humanity they must abide by the *nomoi* or laws of the city, which are but translations of the cosmic law: '…in social practice or theory, the polar structure of the superhuman and the subhuman is aimed at giving a more precise picture of the specific features of the field of human life as defined by the body of *nomoi* that characterise it. The relationship between the above and the below is merely that between the two lives that clearly define the boundaries within which man is contained' (Vernant 1986:139).

[10] Nietzsche develops this view in several places, but the most explanatory would be "Inwiefern auch wir noch fromm sind" (FW-344), where he develops the notion of a *Wille zur Warheit* [Will to Truth] that, having been originated in the Christian discourse, crisscrosses science and is still at work in a perfectly rational, Enlightened society as his. See also *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne* (*WL*) and "Der europäische Nihilismus" (NF-1886,5[71]).

[11] 'necessary, uniform, equal between equals, regulated and consequently calculable'.

a peaceful community under strict rules that contain human impulsivity[12]. This rule of thumb demanding self-restrain in order to save their *mana* or soul went so far as to impede them from defending themselves from the Maori[13]. Significantly enough, this general demand is configured in rules or *tapu*, like 'despoiling holy sites' (13) or 'forbidding strangers to touch canoes' (30), which convey the idea of boundaries or sectional cuts in a structured cosmos— namely the divine, the human and the animalistic or barbaric (stranger). As regards the Maori, they also believe in possessing a *mana* and therefore in a delimited world structure, but with relevant differences. To wit, they 'thrive on wars & revenge & feudin', but peace kills 'em off' (33). Apparently, this opposes the idea of self-restraint shown by the Moriori; however, they impose unsurpassable limits, like inbreeding: Moriori must mix with Maori in order to prevent their *mana* from becoming weak (31). Therefore, differentiation between what Maoris consider equal is forbidden: 'Henceforth Moriori unions were proscribed & all issue fathered by Maori men on Moriori women were declared Maori. The earliest transgressors were executed in gruesome ways' (31-2)[14].

This very same arrangement is developed in the sixth story[15]. Zachy belongs to the tribe of the Valleysmen, followers of the deified Sonmi who teaches that everyone possesses a soul that is duly reincarnated after her: '…when a truesome 'n' civ'lized Valleysman died she'd take his soul an' lead it back into a womb somewhere in the Valleys' (255). Just like the Moriori, certain crimes prevent you from reincarnation: 'See, murderin' was forbidded by Valleysmen law, yay, if you stole another's life no un'd barter nothin' with you nor see you

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[12] For instance, '…the Moriori's priestly caste dictated that whosoever spilt a man's blood killed his own *mana*—his honor, his worth, his standing & his soul. No Moriori would shelter, feed, converse with, or even see the persona non grata. If the ostracized murderer survived his first winter, the desperation of solitude usually drove him to a blowhole on Cape Young, where he took his life' (*Cloud Atlas* 12).

[13] The Goodly Samaritans chose instead to share the diminished abundance of Rēkohu in preference to destroying their *mana* by bloodletting & nursed the sick & dying Maori back to health…for as long as the Moriori preserved their mana with their land, their gods & ancestors would deliver the race from harm (14-5)

[14] This display of a hierarchical structure with two castes seems a reflection of the genealogical study of morality by Nietzsche. In *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Ancient Greece is depicted as having a warrior caste, like the Maori, that creates their own moral code by affirming what they do—following their unrestrained instincts, passions and wishes in an unconcerned way—as good, and therefore characterising any other course of action as bad [*Schlecht*] in a mere sense of different from good (GM-I-2ff). On the other hand, the domineered class is, like the Moriori, a sacerdotal caste, due to their incapability for being passional and impulsive, and out of resentment [*Ressentiment*] (10), react against the aristocratic morality and invert their values, beginning by affirming that what *others* do—namely, the warrior caste—is bad [*Böse*], perverse or wicked, and therefore what they do must be good—that is, restraining themselves. This moral is driven by a will to equality [*Wille zur Gleichheit*] (Za-II-Taranteln), that is to say, to erase differences of potency between people. However, we see that in this point the comparison ceases to work. We have seen the Maori, belonging to the warrior caste, forbid inbreeding and impose equality, while the more religious caste, the Moriori, originally having belonged to the same culture, left the original group and differentiated themselves—pushed out, exceeded, their boundaries.

[15] It would be interesting to analyse the extent to which the fact that the Zachry story resembles so much the one Ewing is told about how the Moriori came to be dis- and replaced by the Maori hints at a circular timeline.

nor nothin' 'cos your soul was so poisoned you may give 'em a sickness' (316). And if Sonmi sets the boundary above, another figure, namely the devil-like figure Old Georgie, sets it below[16]. Therefore, limits between godliness and animality are set so that one's soul—like the Moriori's *mana*—keeps one whole, keeps one human. Said confinement is ensured through the following of sectional rules called the 'Civ'lised'. On the other hand, the Kona tribe creeps up on the other inhabitants of the island, slaughtering and enslaving them, and possibly eating them[17].

Back to the Ewing story. He comes from a Western culture thriving in colonisation. Such drive for territorial and economic expansion—called 'civilisation' throughout the novel—is, for one, carried through with the imposition of a religious worldview that allegedly equates all human beings[18]; for another, the rationalisation—and thus secularisation—of a discourse on a hierarchical onto- and anthropology. If we are to follow Nietzsche, both are as a matter of fact one and the same discourse of legitimating an unsurpassable structure of dominion by which scientific methodology takes on the role of naturalising said hierarchy that, incidentally, assimilates blacks to animals and so maintains the three-storied organisation of the cosmos; the very same Ewing refers to Autua as moving with 'simian dexterity' (36).

Such '"natural" order of things' (528) is significantly attested by both the religious man, Preacher Horrox and his theory of 'The Civilisation Ladder' (506)[19], and the scientist, Dr Goose, who apparently contradicts the former's discouse. However, the doctor disagrees not on the whole picture but the divine motive at the bottom of the colonising-civilising impulse, and he therefore punctuates and underpins Horrox' theory rather than undermines it. In a perceptive staging of the death of God, the doctor argues that humankind is driven not so much by a God-given mission but 'rapacity… [since] All peoples are predatory' (509). Such bracing of the 'glorious order' (507) built by Western societies is specialised in the 'Goose's Two Laws of Survival' (507), namely 1) 'The Weak are Meat the Strong do Eat' (Idem) and

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[16] 'Unless Old Georgie got your soul, that is. See, if you b'haved savage-like an' selfy an' spurned the Civ'lize, or if Georgie tempted you into barb'rism an' all, then your soul got heavy 'n' jagged an' weighed with stones. Sonmi cudn't fit you into no womb then. Such crookit selfy people was called "stoned" an' no fate was more dreadsome for a Valleysman.' (*Cloud Atlas* 255)

[17] 'The chief licked Pa's blood off the steel' (*Cloud Atlas* 251).

[18] See D'Arnoq's answer to Ewing asking 'if such an ill as "too *much* civilisation" [is] possible' (*Cloud Atlas* 10).

[19] 'I have always unswervingly held, that God, in our Civilizing World, manifests himself not in the Miracles of the Biblical Age, but in Progress. It is Progress that leads Humanity up the ladder towards the Godhead. No Jacob's Ladder this, no, but rather 'Civilization's Ladder,' if you will. Highest of all the races on this ladder stands the Anglo-Saxon…Lower down, we have the Negro.' (*Cloud Atlas* 506-7).

2) 'Eat or be eaten' (509). In fact, Ewing is prey to Goose's predation as the doctor progressively poisons him with the pretext of curing him of his Ailment. Hence cannibalism—be it metaphorical or literal—is constantly presented as a form of ensuring civilisation but also as the epitome of savagery and otherness[20].

This structure of sectional submission as clearly stated in Ewing's story is repeated in the other stories in a micro or macro scale—namely, the main character finds themself embedded in a situation of confinement or bondage to a public or a private extent. As to the first instance, firstly we find Robert Frobisher, who is confined in the place of the second son even though his older brother died in the First World War; disinherited by the father, he cannot elevate himself to the position of heir—again, the figure of the death of God is here played out. Secondly, we find Timothy Cavendish, locked in a nursery home for the early as a vendetta from his brother for having had an affair with his sister-in-law[21]. There he is forced to become an 'Undead' (179). On the macro scale of the domination structure, apart from Ewing and Zachry's stories, we have Luisa and Sonmi's. On the one hand, Luisa finds herself prey to the conspiracies of a multinational company with a predatory discourse[22]. Also, she is stuck in a low-ranking position as a journalist in a second-rate magazine, thus being unable to live up to the figure of her deceased father, a journalistic celebrity. On the other hand, Sonmi was bred in a wombtank and is fed with Soap—a substance that represses human cognition (191) and so maintains them fabricants below the anthropological section of humankind. Furthermore, this dystopian society is strictly stratified depending on the money you have; and below the strata, those who have none are called *untermensch* and inhabit either the lowest parts of the city or the suburbs. As in Ewing's journal and Zachry's tale, what makes one human are Souls (187), although Souls are now chips implanted in one's

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[20] The novel opens with Dr Goose digging up on a beach that used to serve as a 'cannibals' banqueting hall' (*Cloud Atlas* 3), looking for teeth, that savages 'would spat out, as you or I would expel cherry stones' (Idem). Also, Ewing is afraid Autua will eat him after the stowaway reveals himself (29). However, Goose's line is mirrored by Sonmi when she tells the capturing of a little boy by Yoona, another fabricant, and justifies her by saying she was not going to 'eat him and spit out his bones' (201). This response to Goose's tale deactivates the possibility of actual cannibalism among the so-called savages. Instead, predation on humans is apportioned to the so-called civilised party: when disinherited, thrown-out Frobisher must endure 'all those cannibals, feasting on my dignity' (484); Cavendish mocks the residents of the nursery home referring to the 70s film *Soylent Green* where food is made out of human biomatter (179); and above all, in Sonmi's story the almost final revelation is that fabricants are slaughtered and liquified to become other fabricant and purebloods' nourishment (359).

[21] As it is hinted at not in Timothy's story, but in Frobisher's: 'Adultery is a tricky duet to pull off, Sixsmith–as in contract bridge, eschew partners clumsier than oneself or one winds up in a ghastly mess' (*Cloud Atlas* 70).

[22] 'Power. What do we mean? 'The ability to determine another man's luck.' You men of science, building tycoons, and opinion formers: my jet could take off from LaGuardia, and before I touched down in B.Y. you'd be a nobody. You Wall Street moguls, elected officials, judges, I might need more time to knock you off your perches, but your eventual downfall would be just as total' (*Cloud Atlas* 131)

index finger, containing the individual's ID and, most importantly, their money. Furthermore, this dystopian society—whose governing power is called Unanimity—is strictly stratified depending on the money you have; and below the strata, those who have none are called *untermensch* and inhabit either the lowest parts of the city or the suburbs (331ff).

All things considered, a starting point of submission for each story is set at their beginning. Be it bondage in a literal (Ewing, Timothy, Sonmi) or figurative sense (Frobisher, Luisa, Zachry), all the main—and some secondary—characters suffer from it and attempt to overcome it in some way. Before turning to the extent to which such attempt at exceeding the boundaries of a limited, 'natural' order can be achieved, it is necessary to analyse how the characters try to transgress those limits—or in other words, how they become *Übermenschen*.

1.2. Hybris*, the Dionysian drive or the expansion movement of the will to potency*

When it comes to the Greek tradition, in this three-storied social and cosmic organisation, heroes are out of joint; most significantly, Vernant puts them above humans but below gods (1986:135)—yet it is a three-rate order, and so they inhabit but the boundaries. As shown above, 'the majority of [human] actions…would appear to be performed as a result of the automatic, almost robotic, fulfilment of human customs or *nomoi* (Harrison 144-5); we humans always mind our station, just as Nietzsche despises uniformity above all[23]. However, some cannot but attempt overstepping, *exceeding* those human limits, those *nomoi*, as the Attic tragedy explores[24]. Hence, the figure of the tragic hero transgresses the boundaries of its own humanity and approaches godliness in its differentiation from the rest of humans—for they are now equal to themselves[25].

Such drive for self-overcoming or self-exceeding is precisely what characterises Nietzsche's *Übermensch*[26]. Interestingly enough—especially considering the scope of this

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[23] See Za-I-Kriegsvolk.

[24] 'In Sophocles, the superhuman and the subhuman meet and become confused within the same figure. And, given that this figure is the model of man, the boundaries that contained human life and made it possible to establish its status without ambiguity are obliterated…[man is found to be] enigmatic, without consistency, without any domain of his own or any fixed point of attachment, with no defined essence, oscillating between being the equal of the gods and the equal of nothing at all' (Vernant 1986:139).

[25] Compare this to Nietzsche's injunction 'Become what you are' [*Du sollst der werden, der du bist*] in *FW*-270.

[26] As does he hero according to Herodotus. Vernant explains that the Herodotean succession of races throws into relief a linear temporality marked by not so much as progress but rather regress. Each race brings along degradation and decadence insofar as there is an increase of ὕβρις [*Hybris*] and a decrease of Δίκη [*Díke*]

essay, the prefix ὑπέρ- [*hupér-*], which constitutes the word '*Übermensch*'[27], can be related to *Hybris*[28]. Though the etymological relationship, however obvious, has not been definitely proven, the sense of both words do relate[29] as to the reference to excess; Chantraine defines ὑπέρ as meaning '*au-dessus de*', '*au-delà de*', '*en dépassant*' and, significantly, '*de façon excessive*' (1157)[30]. Therefore, the hubristic man is a *hyperman* inasmuch as he is 'above humanity, more powerful than a man' (Aristotle in Idem); and to be a hero is, then, to act 'stand[ing] out from…patterns of custom, of reaction or of forced action, that are clearly and individually motivated' (Harrison 146), that is, someone who shatters the cosmic system of humane-godly adjustment[31].

That drive for boundary-transgression is then what configures the basis for the shaping of the *Übermensch*. In early texts, Nietzsche calls it the Dionysian drive, an instinct found in nature and therefore humankind (GT-1). It is stated to be an impulse for exceeding one's individuality and merging into the whole of existence; for the Dionysian drive provokes a forgetfulness of the self [*Selbstvergessenheit*][32]. Indeed, Dionysus is the god of inebriation, understood as 'blissful ecstasy' [*wonnevolle Verzückung*] thanks to which the human being

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(1965:22ff). Furthermore, the age of the heroes is characterised by a perfect balance between *Hybris* and *Díke* (39). For more on *Hybris*, see below.

[27] Hyper-, ὑπέρ-, *über-* and over- are all cognates from descending from PIE *upér 'over, above' (Gk. hupér) > Gmc. *uber > OHG obar, OE ofer /over/. See Mallory, J. P. and D. Q. Adams. *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World,* table 18.2.

[28] The word '*Hybris*' is said to come from PIE *ut-qweni, meaning 'exaggerated strength' (Pokorny 476), and Chantraine defines it as '*violence injuste provoquée par la passion, violence, démesure, outrage, coups ports à one persone*' (1150). Notice the adjective used '*injuste*', as it opposes *Hybris* to *Díke*, justice. Also, '*démesure*' literally means going beyond measure or boundaries, and so conveys an idea of unjust—meaning not-adjusted to its limits—*excess*. Chantraine goes further to define its verbal form thus: '*commettre des excès, des violences, user de démesure, maltraiter, commettre des crimes*' (Idem). Indeed, an action sprung from *Hybris* is said to absolutely lack any moderation (Vernant 1986:27) and instead filled with arrogance.

[29] '*Des hellénistes ont pensé à rapprocher le mot de ὑπέρ, ce qui serait satisfaisant pour le sens, mars rests inadmissible*' (Chaintraine 1150).

[30] Hence Oedipus, par excellence the tragic hero overcome by *Hybris* or a drive to excess, equals to himself inasmuch as he finds no equality with other men, for his actions—incest and parricide—are only allowed to gods like Zeus, who overthrows his father and marries his sister. Indeed, heroes are *isotheos*, 'equal to gods': '[Aristotle] says that if a man oversteps the common level in virtue and in political skill, he cannot be accepted on an equal footing with the rest of the citizens: "Such being will in effect naturally be as a god among men"' (Vernant 1986:135).

[31] To relate Herodotus' myth of the races to Detienne's concept of *Kléos*. The age of the heroes constitutes then a moment of such *Hybris* that they exceed their own time insofar as they achieve immortality in the Elysium, the Island of the Blessed (Vernant 1965:27) and their names survive in the memory of humankind for they are celebrated by the poets (*n*.24).

[32] '*Entweder durch den Einfluss des narkotischen Getränkes, von dem alle ursprünglichen Menschen und Völker in Hymnen sprechen, oder bei dem gewaltigen, die ganze Natur lustvoll durchdringenden Nahen des Frühlings erwachen jene dionysischen Regungen, in deren Steigerung das Subjective zu völliger Selbstvergessenheit hinschwindet*' [It is either under the influence of the narcotic draught, of which the hymns of all primitive men and peoples tell us, or by the powerful approach of spring penetrating all nature with joy, that those Dionysian emotions awake, in the augmentation of which the subjective vanishes to complete self-forgetfulness] (GT-1).

becomes not an artist, but a work of art[33]. Later, Nietzsche will reframe his characterisation of the human drive for self-creation and towards otherness and call it will to potency[34]. As a matter of fact, Nietzsche repeatedly defines life as will to potency[35], that is to say, that which ever must overcome [*überwinden*] itself[36]. Potency [*Macht*] thus means growth (NF-1887,9[145]), understood as increasingly 'producing effects' (NF-1888,14[81]) over others and oneself—that is to say, overcoming oneself, becoming someone other—better, stronger, understood as more potent, more capable of following one's instincts, of not restraining oneself, not letting oneself be taken in. In other words, the drive to potentiate oneself if but an 'instinct for freedom' [*Instikt der Freiheit*] (GM-II-17f).

Consequently, Nietzsche appoints the will to potency—as instinct for freedom—as that which drives the *Übermensch*'s actions. Mankind is to be overcome [*überwinden*] by the *Übermensch*: '*Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen. Der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden soll. Was habt ihr gethan, ihn zu überwinden?*' (Za-I-Vorrede-3)[37]. That means that, through self-work understood as self-excess—Dionysian ecstasy, humankind can exceed the boundaries of the three-storied ontological structure: '*Der Mensch ist ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Thier und Übermensch, — ein Seil über einem Abgrunde*' (Za-I-Vorrede-4)[38]. In another passage, the *Übermensch* is depicted as undergoing an upwardly process of transformation by which they come to forfeit both their animality and their humanity

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[33] '*Der Mensch ist nicht mehr Künstler, er ist Kunstwerk geworden*' [Man is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art] (GT-1)

[34] In German, *Wille zur Macht*. The usual translation for this concept is 'will to power'; however, I have considered it defective insofar as the notion of 'power' can be misleading. Certainly, *Macht* has nothing to do with political power—as another term, *Gewalt*, is used to refer to it. The will to potency should not be equated to wishing political power, authority, domination—as, incidentally, is understood by important characters in *Cloud Atlas* like Alberto Grimaldi: 'the will to power. This is the enigma at the core of the various destinies of men. What drives some to accrue power where the majority of their compatriots lose, mishandle, or eschew power?' (32) and Morty Dhont: 'What sparks wars? The will to power, the backbone of human nature. The threat of violence, the fear of violence, or actual violence is the instrument of this dreadful will' (462). In what follows, I will therefore use the term 'will to potency' to refer to the *Wille zur Macht* (as it is done in French and German, where it is translated by *puissance* and *potenza* respectively) and 'will to power' when referring to its use by characters in the novel. For the definitions of *Macht* and *Gewalt* in German, see *Duden* 2018 [Online].

[35] '*…Leben eben Wille zur Macht ist*' […Life is will to potency] (JGB-259).

[36] '*Und diess Geheimniss redete das Leben selber zu mir. „Siehe, sprach es, ich bin das, was sich immer selber überwinden muss*' [And this secret spake Life herself unto me. "Behold," said she, "I am that which must ever overcome itself] (Za-II-Ueberwindung).

[37] 'I teach you the *Übermensch*. Man is something that has to be overcome. What have you done to overcome Man?'.

[38] 'Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the *Übermensch*—a rope over an abyss'. And then it continues: 'What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal: what is lovable in man is that he is an over-going and a down-going' [*Was gross ist am Menschen, das ist, dass er eine Brücke und kein Zweck ist: was geliebt werden kann am Menschen, das ist, dass er ein Übergang und ein Untergang ist*]. It is in this line that the incapability of accurately translating the prefix *über-* calls for the need for not translating it at all: as we have seen, it shares origin with Greek *hyper-*, which is possibly what Nietzsche had in mind; and it means both above, over and beyond, excessive. *Hyper-* can take the accusative, meaning that it can come to signify movement beyond. Super- seems to fail to contain all this ranging significations.

[*Menschlichkeit*] (Za-I-Verwandlungen). Firstly, a *Mensch* starts off as a burdened camel, whose hunch epitomises all the traditional values, the *nomoi* that confine and contain it. It would be the uniformed, the homogeneous, the undifferentiated—in one word, the impotent [*ohnmächtigste*], those who cannot potentiate themselves, whose will to potency is repressed, *enslaved* (GM-I-7). The burden the camel carries is that of *Schuld*, which can be translated into 'guilt' and 'debt': indeed, the Christian worldview apportions humankind the guilt of the fall from Heaven, and thus each of us must pay our debt in order to re-enter it through good actions; and the process by which any of us does not follow one's instincts but repress them in order to behave socially, morally, is the feeling of guilt, understood as holding oneself responsible for actions one did not commit (GM-II-1ff). In the second transformation, the camel turns into a lion; and the hunch of *Schuld* becomes a great dragon called 'Du-Sollts' [You-Should][39], whom it must fight by saying 'I will' [*Ich will*]—that is to say, by affirming life as will to power, as exceeding itself—and 'Nay', which means that it must destroy all the given values, *nomoi*, showing its illusionary necessity—its profound contingency[40]. Finally, once the lion has won its freedom, it must become a child; for the child is above all innocent [*unschuldig*], without guilt nor debt: they have forgotten what they owed [*schuldete*][41] and so can begin to create their own new values[42]. All in all, the hubristic process of becoming an *Übermensch* encompasses two excesses: first, denying one's station; second, elevating oneself to an upper station.

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[39] Interestingly enough, 'should', '*sollten*' and '*Schuld*' are related to Proto-Germanic **skuldiz* 'guilt, obligation' (Pokorny 2689).

[40] '*Was ist also Wahrheit? Ein bewegliches Heer von Metaphern, Metonymien, Anthropomorphismen kurz eine Summe von menschlichen Relationen, die, poetisch und rhetorisch gesteigert, übertragen, geschmückt wurden, und die nach langem Gebrauche einem Volke fest, canonisch und verbindlich dünken: die Wahrheiten sind Illusionen, von denen man vergessen hat, dass sie welche sind, Metaphern, die abgenutzt und sinnlich kraftlos geworden sind, Münzen, die ihr Bild verloren haben und nun als Metall, nicht mehr als Münzen in Betracht kommen. Wir wissen immer noch nicht, woher der Trieb zur Wahrheit stammt: denn bis jetzt haben wir nur von der Verpflichtung gehört, die die Gesellschaft, um zu existiren, stellt, wahrhaft zu sein, d.h. die usuellen Metaphern zu brauchen, also moralisch ausgedrückt: von der Verpflichtung nach einer festen Convention zu lügen, schaarenweise in einem für alle verbindlichen Stile zu lügen*' [What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and; anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions—they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins. We still do not yet know where the drive for truth comes from. For so far we have heard only of the duty which society imposes in order to exist: to be truthful means to employ the usual metaphors. Thus, to express it morally, this is the duty to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone..] (WL)

[41] It is in this sense that Nietzsche says Zaratustra, the *Übermensch* par excellence, is bound to be the true redeemer of humankind (GM-II-24f).

[42] Interestingly, this innocence as forgetfulness of the debt-guilt appears in *Cloud Atlas* in its purest form, when the boy in Papa Song's asks his mother about fabricants (192). The answer of the mother, giving a distorted account of the happiness of fabricants—by which their enslavement is disguised—elucidates the process by which tradition as a lie is transmitted through generations (see *n*.40).

That is what overcoming oneself, transgressing, exceeding one's boundaries boils down to. But how is this general outline of boundary-transgression enacted in *Cloud Atlas*? Firstly, Ewing struggles throughout his narrative to free himself from forces that he cannot see[43], namely the Western culture he inhabits and its predatory specification in Dr Goose's poisoning. Right at the start, the novel forestalls what is in store for him when Goose and he attend mass in Chatham Island and Adam nominates Luke ch. 8: 'And they came to him, & awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, & rebuked the wind & the raging of the water: & they ceased, & there was a calm' (*Cloud Atlas* 8)[44]. Hence his mission is already sketched out as becoming the saviour of Autua the stowaway, and subsequently arising from his comfortable station in the middle section of the 'natural' order and fighting against a predatory system. At the end of the novel, after being saved by Autua from Goose's claws, Ewing decides to join the abolitionist movement in the United States as his voyages have shown him that 'we've made slaves out of free people' (510) and so the truly cannibalistic is to be found not among the so-called savages but the civilised. For his actual hubristic act of overcoming himself lies in his realisation of the conventionality of thought and discourse: the cosmological order by which humanity has killed God and occupied His place, that we thought was necessary and natural—so have all the religious, philosophical and scientific discourses been arguing—is in fact the result of the clashing of human relations of power. In other words, the political force that rises to victory ends up giving names—conceptualising—to the objects of the world they come to rule[45]. Hence, white dominance has taken place because, as Goose had wisely explained, they have the numbers to impose their domineering worldview or *perspective* through violence (*Cloud Atlas* 508)[46]. All things

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[43] In Luisa's story, we are told that 'Power, time, gravity, love. The forces that really kick ass are all invisible' (412).

[44] On the other hand, Goose's choice of Psalm the Eighth is also telling: 'Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou has put all things under his feet: all sheep & oxen, yea & the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air & the fish of the sea & whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas' (8).

[45] Incidentally Nietzsche says that '(…) *nein, gerade Thatsachen giebt es nicht, nur Interpretationen.(…) Soweit überhaupt das Wort „Erkenntniß" Sinn hat, ist die Welt erkennbar: aber sie ist anders deutbar, sie hat keinen Sinn hinter sich, sondern unzählige Sinne „Perspektivismus"…Unsre Bedürfnisse sind es, die die Welt auslegen: unsre Triebe und deren Für und Wider. Jeder Trieb ist eine Art Herrschsucht, jeder hat seine Perspektive, welche er als Norm allen übrigen Trieben aufzwingen möchte*' [No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations…In so far as the word "knowledge" has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is *interpretable* otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings ("Perspectivism"). It is our needs *that interpret the world*; our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to dominion; each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm] (NF-1886,7[60]). See *n*.40 and 42.

[46] A notion that is shared by Meronym in Zachry's story: '*It ain't savages what are stronger 'n Civ'lizeds,* Meronym reck'ned, *it's big numbers what're stronger 'n small numbers. Smart gived us a plus for many years, like my shooter gived me a plus back at Slopin' Pond, but with 'nuff hands 'n' minds that plus'll be zeroed one day*' (318).

considered, Adam finally drops the cultural debt by understanding this natural order is not natural but contingent; in his words:

> Belief is both prize & battlefield, within the mind & in the mind's mirror, the world. If we believe humanity is a ladder of tribes, a colosseum of confrontation, exploitation & bestiality, such a humanity is surely brought into being, & history's Horroxes, Boerhaaves & Gooses shall prevail (528).

So, if humanity manages to *believe* in another order, that is to say, create a new worldview and a new code of values, the tables may turn: 'If we believe that humanity may transcend tooth & claw…such a world will come to pass' (Idem).

Secondly, Frobisher runs a similar path to Ewing when it comes to apprehend the contingency of any truth and norm. To amend his situation of disinheritance and, significantly enough, indebtedness—as well as to overcome his filial second place, he decides to travel to Zedelghem and become Vyvyan Ayrs' amanuensis so that the latter can 'tutor me, shooting through the musical firmament, winning fame and fortune commensurate to my gifts, obliging Pater to admit that, yes, the son he disinherited is *the* Robert Frobisher, greatest British composer of his time' (45). There, however, he will find himself trapped again into a romantic affair with his host's wife Jocasta and also a vampiric relationship of alleged tutoring with Ayrs himself. The latter sucks out Robert's talent so as to revitalise his music without any recognition but, on the contrary, holding him back (55) and taking advantage of it by relaunching his decayed musical career (84). However, in this context of subordination and artistic repression, Robert manages to create a work of his own, composing a revolutionary piece of music. That hubristic, ground-breaking composition springs from the comprehension that

> Boundaries between noise and sound are conventions, I see now. All boundaries are conventions, national ones too. One may transcend any convention, if only one can first conceive of doing so. Take this island, midstream between timbre and rhythm, not down in any book of theory, but it's here! Hear the instruments in my head, perfect clarity, anything I wish for. When it's finished, there'll be nothing left in me, I know, but this king's shilling in my sweaty palm is the philosopher's stone! (479)

All in all, Robert grasps the same notion as Ewing—and Nietzsche—that to become more, to become *different*, he must push out the boundaries that confine, restrain him, by bringing forth their perspectivism, their contingency.

Thirdly, we see again this wake-up call to the perversities of a fixing and naturalising discourse in Luisa's story. At the onset, her boss tells her that 'Anything is true if enough people believe it is' (99), a teaching that seems to sink in. Later in the story, she finds herself

in a conversation with businessmen that advocate for a corporate-empire in which 'run the country' (420)—a reference to the consumer-driven corpocracy depicted in Sonmi's narrative—and Luisa is asked what would she ask to a man with power. To that she answers: 'I ask three simple questions. How did he get that power? How is he using it? And how can it be taken off the sonofabitch?' (Idem). And that is exactly what she does: she brings to light the incriminatory report that calls into question the safety of a nuclear power plant.

Fourthly, Timothy is also forced to escape from his creditors, and so he takes refuge in Aurora House without knowing what it is. After he is taken into custody by the nursery house, he does not assent to his station and ceaselessly attempts at escaping his *de facto* imprisonment. However, his hubristic deed consists of not so much the escape attempt but the fact that he refuses to accept *what is expected of someone of his age*: 'Not behaving the way an old man should–invisible, silent, and scared–was, itself, sufficient provocation' (74). In that respect, he is offered a way in: to collaborate with the ruling power. Resisting to that coercion to yield is, rather than escaping, what constitutes Timothy Cavendish's moment of overcoming.

Fifthly, it is in Sonmi's narrative when the whole process of becoming an *Übermensch* is exceedingly sketched out. On the one hand, fabricants' cognition is subdued by Soap, which reduces their speech capacity; then they are given a set of rules, called catechisms, by which they must abide. Significantly, their employer is the one that dictates those catechisms, placing themself in a god-like position; also, fabricants are taught that they are born into a debt, called Investment (198), namely the one it took to breed them. They repay their *Schuld*, in Nietzschean terms, by slaving over service for twelve years, when they are allegedly granted Xultation, that is, freedom, and so they are taken to Hawaii, a paradise for fabricants. On the other hand, she is given a special formula along with her Soup that brings about ascension, which 'frees what was suppressed by Soap… [for] fabricant's minds differ greatly, even if their features and bodies do not…all fabricants, even same-stem fabricants, are singulars as snowflakes' (191). Sonmi is not the first fabricant to be ascended as part of a university experiment; her companion Yoona is too, as she develops hubristic 'ideas above [her] strata' (200). Their strata, incidentally, is that of a Soulless clone, which means they are not humans, as opposed to purebloods. Yoona is then the first to realise the illusory necessity of their station as she claims that 'better Soulless clone than a Souled roach' (199). Indeed, it is suggested that social compartmentalisation comes 'not from genomics or inherent xcellence or even dollars, but difference in knowledge' (231), which

means that Yoona and later Sonmi's *Hybris* lies in their acquisition of cognition and thus free will[47]. Her ascension is nonetheless abruptly interrupted, quite literally, when she is shot to death while trying to escape through the elevator from the café were they serve to the surface city (201). Conversely, Sonmi succeeds were Yoona failed and is brought to the university campus where she meets Wing~027, another fabricant who compels her to 'create Catechisms of your own' (215). That she will do: after being recruited by Union, a resistance movement against Unanimity, she is given a Soul, which represents her ascension into the pureblood stratum (335), taught the truth about Xultation and the final destination of fabricants—becoming Soap (359) and so she finally understands that laws 'are whatever is willed by the most powerful' (360). After recognising the contingency of the social *nomoi* governing everybody's lives, she enters the last transformation and proceeds to fulfil Wing's will: she writes her *Declarations*, engendering a new worldview by which 'fabricants *are* purebloods… [and] ascended fabricants must fight' (362) to empower—*potentiate*— themselves and overcome their slavery. All in all, Sonmi~451 may epitomise the *Übermensch* better than any other character; for not only has she undergone the three metamorphoses—Soulles assenting camel, rebellious lion, creator child—but also becomes what Nietzsche asked of the *Übermensch* in '*Der Tolle Mensch*': to become a god.

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[47] It is interesting to see that Nea So Copros, the corpocracy were Sonmi's story takes place, have taken to the letter Nietzsche's idea of each individual becoming a work of art inasmuch as they 'facescape', that is to say undergo aesthetic surgery, every now and then; what is more, the more upstrata they are, the more frequent they facescape. At this point, it is appropriate to broach Pascal when he says that '*ce sont deux excès également dangereux, d'exclure la raison, de n'admettre que la raison*' [There are two excesses equally dangerous: exclude reason and only admit reason] (Pascal 18). Nietzsche then understands that nowadays there is a kind of *Hybris* as excess of rationality: '*Hybris ist heute unsre ganze Stellung zur Natur, unsre Natur-Vergewaltigung mit Hülfe der Maschinen und der so unbedenklichen Techniker- und Ingenieur-Erfindsamkeit; Hybris ist unsre Stellung zu Gott, will sagen zu irgend einer angeblichen Zweck- und Sittlichkeits-Spinne hinter dem grossen Fangnetz-Gewebe der Ursächlichkeit (…) Hybris ist unsre Stellung zu uns, — denn wir experimentiren mit uns, wie wir es uns mit keinem Thiere erlauben würden, und schlitzen uns vergnügt und neugierig die Seele bei lebendigem Leibe auf: was liegt uns noch am „Heil" der Seele*' [*Hybris* today characterises our whole attitude towards nature, our rape of nature with the help of machines and the completely unscrupulous inventiveness of technicians and engineers; *Hybris* characterises our attitude to God, or rather to some alleged spider of purpose and ethics lurking behind the great spider's web of causality…*Hybris* characterises our attitude towards *ourselves*, – for we experiment on ourselves in a way we would never allow on animals, we merrily vivisect our souls out of curiosity: that is how much we care about the 'salvation' of the soul!] (GM-III-9). This excess of rationality is equated to and further developed in the use of Weber's *Weltentzauberung* [Disenchantment of the world] by Adorno and Horkheimer, whereby cruelty and predation is brought to an emotionless society (see 2006). Incidentally, this view is what Adam fears will make civilisation become extinct ('one fine day, a purely predatory world *shall* consume itself. Yes, the Devil shall take the hindmost until the foremost *is* the hindmost. In an individual, selfishness uglifies the soul; for the human species, selfishness is extinction', *Cloud Atlas* 528) and what Meronym claims to be the reason why civilisation has become extinct in her time ('Old'uns tripped their own Fall…[by not mastering] a hunger in the hearts o' humans, yay, a hunger for more…Oh, more gear, more food, faster speeds, longer lifes, easier lifes, more *power*…that human hunger birthed the Civ'lize, but human hunger killed it too', 286).

Indeed, Sonmi becomes the goddess governing the existence of Zachry's tribe. However, this narrative does not feature the same individual who has been reincarnating throughout the novel as the main character. Instead, Meronym, as it is hinted by the comet-shaped birthmark she sports (319), the same as all the other protagonists. As it is, she seems to have already taken some of the required steps towards moral transvaluation: she asserts that 'Old Georgie weren't real for her, nay, but he could still be real for [Zachry]' (286), acknowledging the Nietzschean perspectivism whereby there are no facts but interpretations of facts. Moreover, at a certain point she is compared to a god-like figure by Zachry[48]. Nevertheless, it is him who undergoes the most relevant transformation. Initially bound by the religious discourse in which he is embedded, both from above (the goddess Somni's) and from below (the devilish figure called Old Georgie), he manages to free himself from those boundaries after Meronym tells him about Sonmi being not a god but a former slave who died (291), that is to say, killing God. It is then that he disobeys Old Georgie's command to kill Meronym (295) and Sonmi's *tapu* against killing—in addition to ignoring her second *augurin'*[49]; for he is now transformed into Nietzsche's lion: '*Nay*, I answered my en'my, an' I stroked my blade thru his throat…like I said a while back, in our busted world the right thing ain't always possible' (316). With that act, Zachry both seals and escapes his fate as the Kona's slave and becomes free to start a new life.

In a nutshell, all six characters, driven by a need to exceed themselves—call it *Hybris,* Dionysian drive, will to potency or instinct for freedom, endeavour to become someone else: to mark their difference from the rest. And, in doing so, they capsize their initial situation of bondage… but do they? The extent to which their success to overcome that which they are—which they are made to be—is such must be revised so as to assert the possibilities for true resistance an *Übermensch* holds.

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[48] 'Anxin'n'proudful at one time hearin' them words made me, like a pa, an' like she an' me weren't so diff'rent as a god an'a worshiper, nay' (*Cloud Atlas* 285).
[49] '*Enemy's sleeping, let his throat be not slit*' (*Cloud Atlas* 258).

1.3. Phthónos*, the Apollonian drive or the conservation movement of the will to potency*

Indeed, the ancient Greeks knew that transgression of boundaries did not come unanswered. For *Hybris* arouses the feeling of anger or envy from the gods (Sanders 50). Particularly, this feeling is called Φθόνος [*Phthónos*][50]. Thus, it is an anger towards 'transgressing men' (Sanders 52) who must be lowered or put into place (43). All in all, the gods maintain cosmic homeostasis by holding a phthonotic relationship by which they respond with vengeance to any violation of the sectional cuts of the system that limits humanity. It is in this sense that divine envy or '*Phthónos* of the gods provoked by [*Hybris*] is not unjust but just' (Lloyd-Jones 51)[51].

Nietzsche also elaborates on a twin drive or movement that appears as a reaction to the Dionysian drive or the expansion of the will to potency. On the one hand, he states that nature and by extension the human being is also driven by a second impulse, the Apollonian (GT-2). This drive acts phthonotically on the individual inasmuch as flattens them, keept in their place, as an individual[52]. Opposite Dionysus, whose impulse tears the confinement of the *principii individuationis*, stands Apollo, god of reason, shape and appearance, and restraint[53]. Therefore, when both drives, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, clash within the individual—wishing at the same time exceeding themself and recognising themself as the same—they suffer such contradiction in consequence (GT-9); for '*wir also den Zustand der Individuation als den Quell und Urgrund alles Leidens, als etwas an sich Verwerfliches, zu betrachten hätten*' (GT-10)[54].

Similarly, Nietzsche this double movement in the concept of the will to potency. Thus, he conceives the human being '*als eine Vielheit von „Willen zur Macht"*' (NF-1885,1[58])[55]; specifically, Zarathustra is depicted as ever being drawn both upwards—

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[50] Which Chantraine defines as '*"malveillance" des dieux abaissant l'home dont le bonheur est excessif*' ["Malevolence" of the gods which puts down the men whose good fortune is excessive] (1202).
[51] '...φιλέει γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα πάντακολούειν' (Herodotus 7.10E) ['All things that stand out the god is prone to cut down', translation in Sanders 159]. Notice the use of '*hyperechonta*' for 'stand out' and the appearance of the prefix *hyper-*.
[52] It equates to the Schopenhauerian *principii individuationis* that delimits the *Mensch* as it apportions a '*maassvolle Begrenzung*' [restrained limitation] (GT-1) that is not possible to 'overstep' [*überschreiten*] (Idem)
[53] '*Apollo, als ethische Gottheit, fordert von den Seinigen das Maass und, um es einhalten zu können, Selbsterkenntniss*' [Apollo, as ethical deity, demands due restraint of his disciples, and, that this may be observed, he demands self-knowledge] (GT-4).For instance, Prometheus was crashed by the envy-rage of the gods because of his '*übermäßigen Weisheit*' [excessive wisdom]. Notice that the German word for 'excess' is '*Übermaß*'.
[54] '…we must therefore regard the state of individuation as the source and primal cause of all suffering, as something objectionable in itself.'
[55] 'as a multiplicity of "wills to potency".'

towards the *Übermensch*—and downwards—towards his *Menschlichkeit*, as he is driven by a double will[56]. Hence, the expansion movement of the will to potency is followed by an ensuing and necessary counter-movement of integration of that which has been strengthened, potentiated (NF-1887,9[145]); therefore, such movement of conservation must come as a consequence of the expansion (NF-1885,2[68]) towards the final overcoming [*Überwindung*] of the self (NF-1887,9[91]). In other words, the will to potency, when split into a drive towards self-conservation, becomes will to truth[57], namely the drive towards '*nicht „erkennen", sondern schematisiren, dem Chaos so viel Regularität und Formen auferlegen*' (NF-1888,14[152])[58]. It is then an impulse to make things equal insofar as erasing difference between similar objects make them recognisable. Thus, we can survive in this world (NF-1888,14[93]) by becoming subjects[59]. All in all, this phthonic movement to sameness, namely return to the self for its survival appears as a necessary reaction to the exceeding drive for differentiation; a process, it has been said, of pain and suffering.

That is precisely what happens to the characters in *Cloud Atlas*, once they follow their will to potency and fight the forces that keep them stationary. As a matter of fact, the novel does sport a pessimistic end if we look at it from the point of view of the fabula. Indeed, the chronological order of the story does end with Zachry and Meronym fleeing Big Island, chased by the blood-thirsty Kona. Zachry has lost the Valleys, his home, and not to mention all his family and fellow tribesmen and women. On the other hand, Meronym is told that all her people in the isle of Prescience, including her son, have succumbed to the rampaging plague that had been diminishing their numbers. Just a handful of survivors make it to a new home; a Pyrrhic prize for having disobeyed Sonmi—for Old Georgie had already warned him that hubristic acts of dissidence might wreak havoc in the Valleys (*Cloud Atlas* 295f). As for the syuzhet, the fact that the narrative finishes with Adam Ewing taking the hubristic,

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[56] '*Nicht die Höhe: der Abhang ist das Furchtbare!*

    Der Abhang, wo der Blick hinunter stürzt und die Hand hinauf greift. Da schwindelt dem Herzen vor seinem doppelten Willen' [Not the altitude: it is the declivity that is terrible! The declivity, where the gaze shooteth downwards, and the hand grasps upwards. There does the heart become giddy through its double will] (Za-II-Klugheit).

[57] '*Aber diess bedeute euch Wille zur Wahrheit, dass Alles verwandelt werde in Menschen - Denkbares, Menschen - Sichtbares, Menschen - Fühlbares! Eure eignen Sinne sollt ihr zu Ende denken!*' [But let this mean Will to Truth unto you, that everything be transformed into the humanly conceivable, the humanly visible, the humanly sensible! Your own discernment shall ye follow out to the end!] (Za-II-Inseln)

[58] 'not "knowing", but schematising, imposing regularity and form on chaos.'

[59] For '*[d]er Wille zur Wahrheit ist ein Fest-machen, ein Wahr-Dauerhaft-Machen*'[The will to truth is a fixed-making, a truely-permanent-making] (NF-1887,9[91]). Also, in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Nietzsche claims that mankind '*hat den Glauben an das indifferente wahlfreie „Subjekt" nöthig aus einem Instinkte der Selbsterhaltung, Selbstbejahung heraus, in dem jede Lüge sich zu heiligen pflegt*' [needs to believe in an indifferent "subject" by virtue of an instinct for conservation, for self-assertion, in which every lie is pontificated] (GM-I-13)

empowering decision of joining the abolitionist cause may seem to cheer up a bit what it otherwise would be a novel about failure. However, the reality of the story is different; in the very ending, Adam discerns the possibility of pain and defeat: 'Naïve, dreaming Adam. He who would do battle with the many-headed hydra of human nature must pay a world of pain & his family must pay it along with him!' (529). Certainly, that occurs to Zachry. But in addition to that, we know that failure comes to visit; for in the immediately ensuing story, namely Frobisher's, we are told so: 'Happy, dying Ewing, who never saw the unspeakable forms waiting around history's corner' (479).

As for the other stories, something similar happens. As seen, Robert flees to Belgium, literally indebted and restrained by fatherly pressure; however Ayrs will hold him back still. And, even when he succeeds in overcoming himself and beginning to create—which coincides in time with Eva's parallel transformation and her apparent confession of love—he sees with impotence how he cannot stop Ayrs from plagiarising his work. Again, Robert cannot escape the restrictions of his class society: 'Any society's upper crust is riddled with immorality, how else d'you think they keep their power?', Ayrs spats at him (475). He cannot but flee again, in search of that which has made him better than he was: the love of Ayrs' daughter Eva. The revelation that she did not declared and he had misunderstood her comes not as a disappointment but as the *coup de grâce* of a crashing force against those who transgress the rules of society—'All those cannibals, feasting on my dignity' (484). His final line, *sunt lacrimae rerum*[60]*,* seems to underpin the suffering caused by a chaotic, entropic, instinct-driven world. On the other hand, Luisa's story ends with the hero triumphant. However, a close reading may lead us otherwise. At the near end of her narrative, she is told that a by-product of the energy corporation whose defective nuclear reactor she attempts and manages to expose is 'weapons-grade uranium' (447). Later on, in Somni's orison and in Zachry's tale, we get to know that the radiation-torn world of Nea So Copros was born after the 'Skirmishes', a set of nuclear wars that poisoned the planet to the extent of provoking the Fall. In actual fact, Luisa instantiates what Adam tells himself on behalf of his father-in-law: ''& only as you gasp your dying breath shall you understand, your life amounted to no more than one drop in a limitless ocean!' (529). Despite all her efforts, and even after winning the battle she actually fights, Luisa fails on the whole as she, like Ewing, cannot overcome what she is: just a human being, enclosed in a given time by a given set of unsurpassable rules.

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[60] 'There are tears of [or 'for'] things'. The translation and meaning of this quotation from Book I, line 462 of the *Aeneid,* by the Roman poet Virgil, is very controversial. For more on this, see Wharton 259-79.

Timothy's is, perhaps, the less pessimistic of the stories—as it is the lightest. Nevertheless, even if he happily managed to get away from Aurora House, there is no escape from his archenemy: age. At the end, he states that 'Middle-age is flown, but it is attitude, not years, that condemns one to the ranks of the Undead' (403); certainly, he avoids that, and it is in that sense that he attempts to overcome himself, to beat himself. But he does not manage to liberate the other residents, nor at least make the collaborationists wake up from the voluntary enslavement. Comparably, Sonmi, who successfully undergoes all the Nietzschean transformations towards self-overcoming, trips at the last step: she fails to spread her word to the other fabricants. For all has been a setup by Unanimity to stage her capture and so dissuade future dissidence. As Timothy explains in his own story in anticipation of what is to come to Sonmi: 'Prisoner resistance merely justifies an ever-fiercer imprisonment in the minds of the imprisoners' (183). All in all, the '*über*plan' (343) to trigger a revolution of the fabricants does not take place, and she is then executed, as Meronym tells Zachry (291).

By the end of the novel's fabula, all the characters are dead; some, like Robert and Sonmi, die right after their own narratives; all of them failing at achieving what they had endeavoured so tirelessly; they have become different, but failed to subvert the sectional structure they inhabit. Nonetheless, perhaps there may be still an open window for understanding that their efforts were not utterly in vain.

2. THE SUCCESS (OR THE *ÜBERMENSCH*'S DRIVE TO EXCEED TEMPORALITY)

In *Ensaio sobre a cegueira*, Jose Saramago wrote:

> *Os bons e os maus resultados dos nossos ditos e obras vão-se distribuindo, supõe-se que de uma forma bastante uniforme e equilibrada, por todos os dias do futuro, incluindo aqueles, infindáveis, em que já cá não estaremos para poder comprová-lo, para congratular-nos ou pedir perdão, aliás, há quem diga que isso é que é a imortalidade de que tanto se fala, Será, mas este homem está morto e é preciso enterrá-lo*[61].

Hence, humans must face the drive to escape one's station in an enclosed, stratified ontological and social world; nevertheless, and as we have seen, it is a pointless, however *glorious*, task—for humans cannot escape that which make them humans, namely their mortality. Such failure in Nietzschean terms means that one cannot effectively become an *Übermensch*—for the phthonic, Apollonian forces—i.e. the political and social relations of power crisscrossing and crashing us—respond too heavily to our Dionysian *Hybris*. Yet, such failure may not be complete; as Saramago says, our actions and, of course, we ourselves must perish, but the consequences of our actions may reverberate throughout temporality. Perhaps the only immortality we might aspire to lies on how potent our actions are—so that they should project their effects way ahead of ourselves.

Indeed, Somni tells Hae-Joo that 'losers can become winners in the long term' (234). That is by all means Nietzsche's purpose for the *Übermensch*; in the first apparition of Zarathustra, we saw he was calling for someone to become a god—because God, like the innocent [*unschuldig*] child, owes none nothing, and so the *Übermensch* must create a new worldview and a new moral afresh: for the will to potency is a founder of religions (EH-Vorwort-4). However, perhaps it is precisely *their death* what enables the *Übermensch* to speak their voice '*über Jahrtausende hinweg*' [across the ages] (Idem). *Cloud Atlas* shows that the means for voices to cross oceans of time is yet another transformation; becoming a text that insofar as it will be set in a sequence of other texts—behind and ahead— will achieve a new signification—as the *Übermensch*, once (inter)textualised, will enable to bring about the breakdown it yearned in life.

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[61] 'The good and the evil resulting from our words and deeds go on apportioning themselves, one assumes in a reasonably uniform and balanced way, throughout all the days to follow, including those endless days, when we shall not be here to find out, to congratulate ourselves or ask for pardon, indeed there are those who claim that this is the much-talked-of immortality. Possibly, but this man is dead and must be buried.'

2.1. Hybridisation or the Übermensch *as a hypertext: the untimely friend*

Nietzsche does apportion untimeliness as both a drive and a deed to both the tragic hero and the *Übermensch*. On the one hand, the Dionysian hero is said to achieve its supreme activity through passivity; an activity that is said to spread far beyond their life and break the boundaries between past and future[62]. On the other hand, Zarathustra subverts the Christian commandment to love your neighbour; instead, he commands us to love the furthest and future ones (Za-I-Freund). After all, it is our incapability of loving ourselves (of desiring our potentiation) that makes us compensate for it by coming closer to the other—namely, one and the other becoming equals, homogeneous. It is, after all, a call for differentiation: love yourself first—expand, grow, desire, become different—and then love the different ones; thus you will become the *Übermensch*, thanks not to the neighbour, but the friend. The friend must not be approached, but resisted: 'In seinem Freunde soll man seinen besten Feind haben. Du sollst ihm am nächsten mit dem Herzen sein, wenn du ihm widerstrebst' (Idem)[63]. For the most different friends are by all means the furthest, i.e. in time. All in all, the friend is the necessary condition for the *Übermensch* to come as they themselves are the *Übermensch*: they create worldviews and one must speak to those future worldviews; they are the individual motivation to overcome themself. But in turn, once the *Übermensch* is come to be, they become a motivation for the friend to overcome themself: '*du sollst ihm ein Pfeil und eine Sehnsucht nach dem Übermenschen sein*' (Idem)[64].

In the end, Nietzsche's overcoming process is that of affirming and then growing one's difference—through untimely desire. It is in this sense that true excess only comes when in contact with future and past otherness: only when we resist the uniforming drive of the totality do we affirm our singularity, and cultivate it. And, much as it seems a futile

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[62] '*(...) der Held in seinem rein passiven Verhalten seine höchste Activität erlangt, die weit über sein Leben hinausgreift (...) Es giebt einen uralten, besonders persischen Volksglauben, dass ein weiser Magier nur aus Incest geboren werden könne: was wir uns, im Hinblick auf den räthsellösenden und seine Mutter freienden Oedipus, sofort so zu interpretiren haben, dass dort, wo durch weissagende und magische Kräfte der Bann von Gegenwart und Zukunft, das starre Gesetz der Individuation, und überhaupt der eigentliche Zauber der Natur gebrochen ist, eine ungeheure Naturwidrigkeit — wie dort der Incest — als Ursache vorausgegangen sein muss...*' […in his purely passive attitude the hero attains his highest activity, the influence of which extends far beyond his life…There is a primitive popular belief, especially in Persia, that a wise Magian can be born only of incest: which we have forthwith to interpret to ourselves with reference to the riddle-solving and mother-marrying Œdipus, to the effect that when the boundary of the present and future, the rigid law of individuation and, in general, the intrinsic spell of nature, are broken by prophetic and magical powers, an extraordinary counter-naturalness—as, in this case, incest—must have preceded as a cause…] (GT-9).
[63] 'In one's friend one shall have one's best enemy. You shall be closest unto him with your heart when you withstand him.'
[64] 'for you shall be unto him an arrow and a longing for the *Übermensch*.'

enterprise, for death awaits us all, it projects us further in time[65]. Desiring difference through times past and future is but desiring the Eternal Recurrence, to wit: the eternal repetition of oneself[66]. Ultimately, the *Übermensch* only becomes so when such desire takes place, for then they have become a giant who '*ruft dem anderen durch die öden Zwischenräume der Zeiten zu, und ungestört durch muthwilliges lärmendes Gezwerge, welches unter ihnen wegkriecht, setzt sich das hohe Geistergespräch fort*' (HL-9)[67]. All in all, the *Übermensch* can but come into being when *unzeitgemäß* [untimely][68]—in one word, the *Übermensch* is ever to come, never inhabiting one's present.

This notion of *Unzeitgemäßheit* does become more understandable when approached to Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality[69]. As we have seen, the *Übermensch* is not a self-contained individual, but gains signification as equal to himself, that is to say, different from the flock. In *Cloud Atlas*, each character becomes textualised—just as Nietzsche wrote himself into Zarathustra[70]. In other words, they become an intertext for the subsequent story; or rather, a hypotext: for, as there comes up a one-to-one intertextual relationship between written character and reading character—who is, at the same time, a written character in turn,

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[65] '…*die Geschichte wird nur von starken Persönlichkeiten ertragen, die schwachen löscht sie vollends aus*' [only strong personalities can endure history, the weak are extinguished by it](HL-5). Notice that, in the light of the argumentation, 'strong' must be understood as singular, different, potent [*mächtig*], and 'weak' as those who are '…*Eine Heerde! Jeder will das Gleiche, Jeder ist gleich: wer anders fühlt, geht freiwillig in's Irrenhaus*' […one herd! Every one wants the same; every one is equal: he who is different goes voluntarily into the madhouse] (Za-I-Vorrede-5).

[66] See FW-341 for the first development of the thought of the Eternal Recurrence.

[67] 'calls to another across the waste spaces of time, and the high spirit-talk goes on, undisturbed by the wanton noisy dwarfs who creep among them.', the dwarves being the camels, the high spirits being the *Übermenschen*—whose task overcomes their own time. How could it not? Zarathustra, after wandering the streets preaching the Death of God, has to come back to his reclusion: for he realises he has come too early (FW-125)

[68] Notice that 'proportion, measure, moderation' stands for German '*Maß*'; therefore, *unzeitgemäß* would literally mean 'the time being out of joint, of proportion, or out of place'.

[69] Overall, it questions the idea that meaning is stable, as well as the very same relationship between signifier and signified (Kristeva 84). When we read a given text, we are thrown into a net of significations; each text is, then, a segment in a chain of relationships that meaning comprises (Martínez 281). A meaning that, therefore, is not independent but the result of those relationships. It is in this sense that every text is an intertext; when reading, we are always referred to other text (Stam 201). As for the author, they no longer put meaning into the text, across time and space; rather it escapes the intention of the author (Martínez 278). It falls to the reader to negotiate meaning with the text, as between the former and the latter there are other texts that shape the reader's gaze, their standpoint. As a result, the text's meaning does change over time and space. All in all, the subject is dissolved in discourse (Idem) insofar as, for one, the author themself becomes a text (277)—although Bakhtin does not rid his theory of the subject (274), and, for another, nothing remains outside the text (276)—not even history, for we gain access to it through text (Kristeva 36).

[70] Most likely, he saw himself as an *Übermensch*: '*Ich kenne mein Loos. Es wird sich einmal an meinen Namen die Erinnerung an etwas Ungeheures anknüpfen, — an eine Krisis, wie es keine auf Erden gab, an die tiefste Gewissens-Collision, an eine Entscheidung heraufbeschworen gegen Alles, was bis dahin geglaubt, gefordert, geheiligt worden war. Ich bin kein Mensch, ich bin Dynamit*' [I know my destiny. There will come a day $ when my name will recall the memory of something formidable—a crisis the like of which has never been known on earth, the memory of the most profound clash of consciences, and the passing of a sentence upon all that which theretofore had been believed, exacted, and hallowed. I am not a man, I am dynamite](EH-Schicksal-1).

Gérard Genette's modification of Kristeva's intertextuality seems to account for said relationship to a certain extent[71]. The hypertext does not exist without the hypotext (Genette 12), and at the same time 'the former transforms, modifies, elaborates or extends' (Stam 209) the latter. Like the *Übermenschen*'s, hypertextuality denotes a bidirectional relationship of mutual transformation (210).

Such hypertextual relationship is therefore reflected on Mitchell's novel in the successive writing and reading of all the characters. Indeed, Adam becomes a hypotext of Frobisher as the latter reads his journal. As a matter of fact, the first time Robert mentions Adam (*Cloud Atlas* 64), he interprets the text and, in spite of the fact that Adam's narrative is not very obvious to this respect, Robert seems to take the hints at Goose poisoning the lawyer. As the narrative is split and Robert's interpretation is embedded between the two and, significantly, before the confirmation of the doctor's betrayal, it certainly conveys Genette's idea that the hypertext modifies the hypotext. At any rate, it is this reading of Adam's first narrative that later moves Robert to escape Ayrs' claws. On the other hand, after acquiring (and presumably reading) the second half of the journal, Robert realises the dark outcome of every human endeavour—'the unspeakable forms waiting around history's corner'(479). The extent to which such realisation comes to trigger the suicidal tendencies that he had already shown on the early stages of his narrative (46) is guesswork, though worth mentioning.

The same hypertextual process seems to be at work in the rest of the narratives. However, Somni's is perhaps the most interesting regarding our discussion of the intertextual shaping of the *Übermensch*. For she fulfils all the requirements: she hubristically attempts at overcoming herself, exceeding her station as fabricant, creating a new set of values, but fails—in her lifetime—inasmuch as she dies; and she has to die to finally succeed[72]. However, centuries later she is revered as a goddess: her teachings, however distorted by time and discourse, governs the lives of the Valleysmen and women; she has literally founded a religion—and all through her orison, not her *Declarations*; it is given to understand that the *Declarations* never saw the light since they were part of Unanimity's plan; but in textualising herself in the orison she may inspire, trigger, the only other at her reach: the archivist, who

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[71] Indeed, Genette uses the term hypertextuality to refer to the '*relation unissant un texte B (que j'appellerai* hypertexte*) à un texte antérieur A (que j'appellerai, bien sûr,* hypotexte*)…J'appelle donc hypertexte tout texte dérivé d'un texte antérieur par transformation simple (nous irons désormais* transformation *tout court) our par transformation indirecte : nous dirons* imitation*…'* [relationship that brings together a text B (which I will call *hypertext*) and a preceding text A (which I will call, of course, *hypotext*)…I will therefore call hypertext every text derived from a preceding text through simple transformation (from now on we will just say *transformation*) or through indirect transformation: we will say *imitation*…] (Genette 11-4).

[72] 'A short 'n' judased life Sonmi had, an' only after she'd died did she find say-so over purebloods 'n' freakbirths' thinkin's.' (*Cloud Atlas* 291)

during the interview is told the same truth that boosted her—at any rate, it is the orison what has been passed on until it appears in Zachry's story. On the whole, It is no wonder she does not mind having been framed by Unanimity to tighten the bonds that keep fabricants enslaved; for she tells the archivist that 'the martyr sees a further endgame' (64), that of successful self-overcoming through textualisation; indeed, Unanimity can't 'kill [their] successor' (65) for in becoming—through self-sacrifice—a text with enough potency to create a new worldview, a new morality, she has become immortal, and she effectively succeeds Unanimity.

Nevertheless, Somni's religion in Zachry's story could be argued to be in a decadent state. Originally, Somni tells Hae-Joo that fabricants must stand up and fight for their freedom; however, Somni commands Zachry not to kill the exposed Kona in her *augurin'* and Zachry is well aware of the law forbidding murder lest it stone your sole and Somni-given transmigration of the soul be impossible. In Nietzschean terms, expansion movement of the will to potency has given way to the counter-movement of conservation and integration; defence is forbidden, and so Valleysmen and women are left prey to the Kona. On the other hand, it is precisely after being told by Meronym that Somni is not a goddes that Zachry becomes unconcerned about the consequences of breaking the *nomoi*—to the point that he disobeys both Old Georgie and Somni's *augurin'*. He ends up fulfilling not god-Somni's commandments, but fabricant-Somni's: 'Nea So Copros must understand that fabricants are purebloods, be they grown in a wombtank or a womb…If persuasion does not work, ascended fabricants must fight with Union to achieve this end, using whatever force is necessary' (362)—and so Zachry kills to achieve freedom, becoming Somni's hypertext[73].

In short, only when the phthonic reaction to their hubristic attempt at freedom is put into words and then read in the following story, the *Übermensch* is born—doubly. For the failed self-overcoming of a character has success *only* when read, that is, when become a hypotext; in other words, only when dislodged from their time does the *Übermensch* succeed—in what? In inspiring a new generation, triggering the rise of another

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[73] It is interesting to construe Zachry's narrative as a hypotext for Adam's. Indeed, the limitations described above that confine Zachry and his countrymen and women and ultimately lead to their demise are the very same as those suffered by the Morior, who cannot but fall prey to the Maori. Since the novel gives us to understand that Meronym and Adam are the incarnations of the same soul, perhaps it would not be far-fetched to consider Zachry and Autua on the same light. Both come from restraining cultures, ravaged by predatory tribes, brought to near-extinction, but rebel against their confinement and earn their freedom with the help of someone who is in fact socially and culturally above them: Meronym and Adam. Another hint at the possibility of Zachry's story preceding Adam's would be the scene were the latter falls into a cave inhabited by dendroglyphs (20), which brings to mind Zachry's Icon'ry, full of carved faces. In this sense, hypertextuality may enforce the idea of a circularity in time—Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence. For more on that, see De Cristofaro 2018.

Übermensch—as a hypertext—who must, however, fail, in order to perpetuate the pursuing cycle of freedom. In this sense, the *Übermensch* is ever a hybrid: both hypotext and hypotext, he always reaches out for otherness, producing otherness that in turn cater also as both hypotext and hypertext.

2.2. Dissemination or the Übermensch *as an intertext: the friendly untimeliness*

However, the concept of hypertextuality does not exhaust the possibilities of Kristeva's in its applications to Nietzsche[74]. Indeed, Kristeva considers the construction of the subject as resulting in a 'kaleidoscopic individual…simultaneously itself and infinitely open to otherness: *ego affectus est*' (Kristeva in Yeung 111); a definition that could well serve to Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. The subject is then a text, and so '*un* croisement de surfaces *textuelles, un dialogue de plusieurs écritures*' (Kristeva 70)[75]. For history and society are texts

> *envisagées elles-mêmes comme textes que l'écrivain lit et dans lesquels il s'insère en les récrivant- La diachronie se transforme en synchronie, et dans la lumière de cette transformation l'histoire* linéaire *apparaît comme une* abstraction *; la seule manière qu'a l'écrivain de participer à l'histoire devient alors la transgression de cette abstraction par une écriture-lecture, c'est-a-dire par une pratique d'une structure signifiante en fonction de ou en opposition avec une autre structure.* (71)[76]

On the light of this, all text is an intertext insofar as its meaning exceeds itself drive by a *puissance du continu* [potency of continuum] that cancels out the hypertextual boundaries between texts in a horizontal chain of signifiers, for the signifieds overlap vertically; it is in this sense that diachrony (the chronological accumulation of texts) meets synchrony (the coincidental clash of meanings). However, each meaning is retained; for each writing is the

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[74] Hypertextuality understood as 'presence of one text in another text' (Martínez 281), that is a binary relationship, is rendered insufficient to explain the 'ongoing whirl of intertextual transformation' (Stam 210) that the network of relations in which the text is trapped comprises. On the contrary, Kristeva's concept 'refers to the infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of a culture…which reach the text not only through recognisable influences [as Genette poses] but also through a subtle process of dissemination' (202); in a nutshell, there are a multiplicity of texts present in a text; not only a direct hypotext—just as an individual is influenced by a multiplicity of sources.

[75] 'an intersection of textual surface, a dialogue among several writings'.

[76] 'read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them. Diachrony is transformed into synchrony, and in light of this transformation, linear history appears as *abstraction*. The only way a writer can participate in history is by transgressing this abstraction through a process of reading-writing; that is, through the practice of a signifying structure in relation or opposition to another structure.'

reading of the anterior texts (75), and, *mutatis mutandis*, each reading a re-writing in an open-ended cycle of what I humbly would call *wreading*.

Thus, the *Übermensch* is always an intersection of *Übermenschen*: one becomes such by wreading the previous one and oneself at the same time, when all the previous wreadings meet and so makes it possible for. There is no cause-text and effect-text; rather, a (w)reading rewrites a past (w)reading and writes a future (w)reading. *Cloud Atlas* highlights this inter- and hyperconnectivity through several discourses of and references to wholeness and untimeliness.

To begin with, the character of Isaac Sachs displays a theory of intertextuality and perspectivism in Luisa's story. In a brief passage he elaborates first on the distinction between actual past and virtual past: 'The actual past is brittle, ever-dimming + ever more problematic to access + reconstruct: in contrast, the virtual past is malleable, ever-brightening + ever more difficult to circumvent/expose as fraudulent' (*Cloud Atlas* 408), while 'The present presses the virtual past into its own service, to lend credence to its mythologies + legitimacy to the imposition of will' (408-9). This refers to the fact that the past is only available as a text—which does not coincide with it, for it is prey to the will to potency that creates perspectives. Then, also, '[s]ymmetry demands an actual + virtual future , too…This virtual future may influence the actual future, as in a self-fulfilling prophecy, but the actual future will eclipse our virtual one as surely as tomorrow eclipses today' (409). On the whole, the present is always the place where textual past and textual future intersect—and therefore are created—although we perceive them as natural past and natural future.

As for the rest, echoing references are sparingly distributed in several narratives. On the one hand, both Zachry and Adam's narratives—the chronologically last and and the last narratively last respectively—contain the allusions to the ocean. In the former's, it is mentioned as Zachry confuses the humming of the icon's in the Icon'ry with the murmur of the ocean. Indeed, the Icon'ry accommodates a multiplicity of singularities made immortal after their decease—it may be explained by Somni saying that 'maybe the inanimate may be so alive' (345), which altogether relates to the need for self-sacrifice of the *Übermensch* ('it was like if they lived in words they cudn't die in body' (317), says Zachry of their lost family) to achieve a hegemonic discourse. In short, Zachry's confusion conveys the idea of a oceanic cosmical vastness combined with significant singularisation (ocean that rumbles and icons that speak beyond death). On the other hand, the narrative also finishes with a reference to both dissemination and differentiation; when faking the conversation he will have with his

father-in-law after Adam tells him he will join the abolitionist movement, he asks himself what impact he will make but that of 'one drop in a limitless ocean!' (529), which points to the long discussed and inevitable failure of the hero. To that, he answers: 'Yet what is any ocean but a multitude of drops?'. Again, we find that the novel perfectly conveys this necessity to ceaselessly reach out to otherness so as to become different, or rather, to just become—in any case, to exceed what one is through exceeding time itself.

This is also expressed through the metaphor that gives the novel its title. At a certain point in Timothy's narrative, when he is at his lowest, he yearns for a lost youth and pains at the impossibility of retracing his tracks and making the good calls. He then grieves: 'What wouldn't I give now for a never-changing map of the ever-constant ineffable? To possess, as it were, an atlas of clouds' (389). This impossible balance of the fixed and the mutable brings to mind the lost balance between the Apollonian drive and the Dionysian drive in Nietzsche's early writings. The image is repeated and complemented by Zachry: 'Souls cross ages like clouds cross skies, an' tho' a cloud's shape nor hue nor size don't stay the same, it's still a cloud an' so is a soul.' (324). Needless to say, the souls crossing ages could be interpreted as the individuals wreading and rewreading their and other's lives, changing, transforming into camels, lions, children; disseminating into the multiplicity of singularities to wread them and so, wread themselves. But then he continues: 'Who can say where the cloud's blowed from or who the soul'll be 'morrow? Only Sonmi the east an' the west an' the compass an' the atlas, yay, only the atlas o' clouds (Idem)'. Sonmi—the *Übermensch* par excellence—*is* that multiplicity: she has overcome herself, exceeded her time, and in dying, become undying: a mapping of that which does not allow to be mapped: the *Übermensch:* an atlas of clouds.

However the most illustrative example of this drive to intertextual untimeliness may be found in Robert's narrative. After embracing his *Hybris* and transgressing the musical boundaries of silence and notes, he begins to compose a work worthy of an *Übermensch*—which, as it could not be otherwise, Robert names *Cloud Atlas Sextet*:

> Spent the fortnight gone in the music room, reworking my year's fragments into a 'sextet for overlapping soloists': piano, clarinet, 'cello, flute, oboe, and violin, each in its own language of key, scale, and color. In the first set, each solo is interrupted by its successor: in the second, each interruption is recontinued, in order. Revolutionary or gimmicky? (*Cloud Atlas* 463)

This passage—which might cater to describe the novel's structure—depicts also the process of the shaping of the *Übermensch* as a palimpsest, namely a superimposition of texts, meanings and subjects. Each story—each *Übermensch*—is an adaptation—as Hutcheon

thinks of it, i.e. repetition without replication—of not one but all the other ones *at the same time*; diachrony made synchrony—*Unzeitgemäßheit.*[77]

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[77] This overlapping, or repetition of *Übermenschen* can be related to, on the one hand, Péguy's quotation that the first water-lily of Monet repeats all the subsequents, rather than these repeating the first; for in the first water-lily—the first text—inhabit all the water-lilies—texts—to come and so have enough potency—*Macht*—to create a new sequence of significations (See Deleuze 1993). On the other hand, this inhabitation of differentiated meanings in a text could be related to Tavares, whose writings are rather a cohabitation of previous readings that rewrites those readings, in what he calls *traduçâo desastrada* [false translation] (See Grau 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

As a whole, we could say that the reading of *Cloud Atlas* does shed light on the Nietzschean concept of the *Übermensch*. However, it is alongside Kristeva's notion of intertextuality hat the *Übermensch*'s potential explodes as depicted in Mitchell's novel.

First, the mission of the *Übermensch* is destined to fail. Moreover, it *has* to fail in order to achieve intertextuality. All excessive drive towards self-overcoming, towards capsizing one's historical set of given norms and rules—that confine and limit us—is welcomed with a crashing reaction from the system we intend to upheave; a reaction that flattens us and puts us back into place. It is the defeat, and not the victory, which inspires future generations—for only death can bring immortality.

Secondly, to become an *Übermensch* one must construct oneself as a hypertext, which means, first, to recognise one's own intertextuality—the perspective of the subject, which is a mere fiction—and, secondly, to nourish from such intertextuality: to imbue ourselves with texts, meanings and wreadings makes us different, singular, stronger—in a Nietzschean way. In other words: to succeed one must acknowledge the conventionality of all boundaries and so become textulalised, a potent convention.

Thirdly, success comes never in one's time, but only when one outlives one's chronotope, to use Bakhtin's terminology. No say it in Nietzsche's words, only untimely resistance is resistance at all.

Fourthly, inasmuch as the function of intertextuality in the shaping of the *Übermensch* is that of bringing about a merging of diachrony and synchrony, a *spherification* of linear time—untimeliness [*Unzeitgemäßheit*] that allows the *Übermensch* to come to be and succeed in its hegemonisation of their discourse.

Fifthly, intertextuality in the *Übermensch* as depicted in *Cloud Atlas* explodes the differentiation between fabula and syuzhet; between chronological time and narrative time. Both the fabula and its narrativisation finish; but since there are six stories being told at the same time, six times (in six narratives of six shapings of the *Übermensch* wreading ceaselessly one to each other) the novel does not effectively finishes—and neither does the story nor the narrative.

To that regard, it would have been interesting to explore the circularity of time suggested in the novel in relation to Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence. I will leave this for further investigations, but in any case I would attempt to defend the position that time in *Cloud Atlas*—and perhaps we might understand Nietzsche's conception of time thus—

portrays not so much as circular time, but *concentrated time*. Insofar as the *Übermensch* is, cannot but be, intertextual, and so they come to epitomise the intersection of times past and future as the concentration of past and future meanings, it could be argued that time does not exist but rather *perception*, *perspective* of time—we make sense of time in a given way; and that textualisation of time—which escapes diachrony inasmuch as there is no before and after, but a continuum of sense and meaning crisscrossing the present backwards and forwards—is all that is available to us[78].

In conclusion, if this essay has proven something is that *Cloud Atlas* is not a collection of interrupted narratives which are resumed in the inverse order after the sixth one. Instead, each preceding narrative still goes on while the ensuing one begins—in short, it is a series of overlapping narratives that shape the *Übermensch* as a time-dislodged, overlapped soloist that overlaps with other soloists; in a nutshell, a collection of untimely, overlapping soloists. All in all, we could conclude that the *Übermensch* is what Bryant calls a fluid text, as it embraces all the versions-repetitions that flow from one another—merging with the whole but, at the same time, maintaining its differentiation by means of the failure that triggers *ultimate* success. A tricky and almost impossible combination of dissemination and singularisation; as tricky and almost impossible as an atlas of clouds.

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[78] At any rate, see Bayer 2015 for more on that.

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