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Bakalářská práce

# Predation in Literature, David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas

Predace v díle Davida Mitchella Atlas mraků

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## **Poděkování**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to describe the theme of reincarnation and predation in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*. The novel consists of six parts which are interconnected by the aforementioned ideas. *Cloud Atlas* bears features of a historical novel and science fiction. The task of the thesis will be to describe the form and the connection among the novels. The secondary task of the thesis will be to describe how Mitchell deals with the theme of the universality of human experience and to prove the possible influence of eastern philosophies over the work.

## **Anotace**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je popsat a zpracovat téma reinkarnace a predace v komplexním díle *Atlas mraků* autora D. Mitchella. Dílo britského spisovatele se skládá ze šesti novel, které jsou vzájemně ideově propojeny výše zmíněnými tématy. Román vykazuje rysy historického románu a zároveň žánru science fiction. Sekundárním cílem této bakalářské práce bude zamýšlení se nad otázkou, zda Mitchellův román spadá či nespadá do zmíněných kategorií. Jedním z dílčích cílů této bakalářské práce je popis odrazu východních filozofií v tomto díle.

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## 2 Introduction

The bachelor thesis *Predation in Literature, David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas* concerns a literary work whose main theme represents predation.

The first part introduces the English writer David Mitchell who wrote the novel *Cloud Atlas*. It consists of six interconnected stories - **The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing, Letters from Zedelghem, Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery, The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish, An Orison of Sonmi-451** and **Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After**. Every story takes place in a relatively short period of time in a different part of the world in a different century.

Since the stories deal with so many themes I decided to present the theoretical background before the analysis.

The chapter Theory explains the nature of genres. *Cloud Atlas* is a postmodern novel which works with the form of a diary, an epistolary novel, a thriller, a memoir novel. Next it includes science fiction and a dystopia. There can also be found features of a historical novel.

The main part of the chapter Theory concentrates on predation. This relationship between a predator and its prey is emphasised as one of the fundamental stones of evolution. The subchapter Reincarnation introduces the concept of rebirth, *karma* and the cycle of lives. It adds the influence of eastern philosophies, such as Buddhism and Shintoism.

After the chapter Theory follows the chapter The analysis of displays of predation, eastern philosophies with emphasis on reincarnation and genres in Cloud Atlas. This analysis proves theoretical knowledge. It describes each story from the perspective of genre, predation and reincarnation. Last chapter Conclusion summarizes all valuable findings.

### 3 The author and his masterpiece

David Mitchell was born in 1969 in England. He moved to Japan with his Japanese wife at the age of twenty-four where he spent eight years. Nowadays he lives in Ireland with his wife and two children.<sup>1</sup>

D. Mitchell started as a worker in a bookshop, then he taught English. However, his desire was to write. Nowadays he is able to support his family from his earnings as a writer. His first novel, *Ghostwritten* (1999), was created in Japan. *Cloud Atlas*, his third novel, was published in 2004. From his other works we can mention *Number9Dream* (2001), *Black Swan Green* (2006) etc.<sup>2</sup>

The work of D. Mitchell may be described as a combination of fantasy, science fiction and history. He skips from genre to genre, moves all around the world and crosses centuries. His characters tend to reappear in his next book. He is interested in the theme of predacity, human's hunger and human's manipulation of the environment as well as stammer. He tries to make people think about the concept of the good and the evil or the cruelty.<sup>3</sup>

#### 3.1 The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing

The story takes place on the Chatham Islands (nearby New Zealand) and on the ship *Prophetess* sailing to America. It concentrates on three winter months in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the 50s. Adam Ewing, a naive man in his 30s convinced about his high intelligence, is an American lawyer who is working on the Chatham Islands at the moment. He saves Autua, a savage of the Moriori tribe, when he speaks for him on the *Prophetess* which allows Autua to show his qualities of a sailor so he can stay on the ship and escape the slavery on the Chatham Islands. They meet for the first time when Autua is whipped for his disobedience as a slave of the Maori what is witnessed by Adam who does not agree with it but cannot do anything about it. There is a moment when Autua looks to Adam's eyes and a glimpse of

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<sup>1</sup> BEGLEY, A. *David Mitchell, The Art of Fiction No.204*. In: *The Paris Review*, © 2016. [online] <<http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/6034/the-art-of-fiction-no-204-david-mitchell>>; MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London:Sceptre, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Begley 2016

<sup>3</sup> Begley 2016



understanding can be seen between them. Later Autua says with a smile: "*Pain is strong, aye – but friends' eyes, more strong.*"<sup>4</sup>

Adam meets a London doctor Henry Goose on the Chatham Islands who lately tries to treat his illness, at least it seems that way at first. He is acquainted with the history and relationships between two tribes, the Maori and the Moriori.<sup>5</sup> The Moriori used to be the first inhabitants of these islands, later the Maori – the invaders – came and the supremacy over the Moriori began. During the sail back to America the Prophetess stops by missionaries. All the time Adam is unaware of being slowly poisoned by Henry Goose who pretends concern about his health, however, he is much more interested in Adam's supposed wealth. Adam is saved by Autua from a certain death.

The friendship between Adam Ewing and Autua reminds me of Daniel Defoe's novel *The Life and Strange and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719). This novel of adventure shows the friendship of a white "civilized" man and a savage (Friday). They save each other and help each other to survive on a deserted island. Robinson and Friday developed the kind of relationship of a superordinate beloved master and a subordinate beloved servant. Adam Ewing also feels superior to Autua who, however, is definitely more able to survive in hardship than Adam.

### **3.2 Letters from Zedelghem**

The Chateau of Zedelghem lies in Neerbeke near the city of Bruges in West Flanders in Belgium. The acquaintance of two men starts there in June 1931 and ends six months later. Robert Frobisher considers himself to be a British musician. He is a slightly manipulative young man who can be quite light-headed in all his doings. His financial situation can be usually described as of a critical state. His financial crisis and musical desire force him to seek out a legendary composer Vyvyan Ayr's who lives in the Chateau of Zedelghem.

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<sup>4</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 29.

<sup>5</sup> The Maori has a difficult relationship with the Moriori as well as the Europeans. The Boyd incident has not been forgotten yet. In December 1809 the ship Boyd was attacked by the Maori because of an uncertain mistreatment of a chief's son. The crew was slaughtered and eaten. That massacre belongs to the most violent and cannibalistic acts. (WATTERS, S. *A frontier of chaos? Page 4 – The Boyd incident*. In: *New Zealand History*, 2014. [online] <<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/culture/maori-european-contact-before-1840/the-boyd-incident>>)

Robert persuades Vyvyan to accept him as the amanuensis. While they are composing music together Robert starts a love affair with Jocasta, Vyvyan's wife, and he also shows interest in Eva, the daughter of Jocasta and Vyvyan. He is working all the time on his masterpiece – *Cloud Atlas* sextet. When he finishes his composition, he shoots himself.

There is a great demonstration of the combination of music and literature in **Letters from Zedelghem**. Music is literally inserted into the text. Quote: "(he) *listened to the distant brass of the engine room ...*"<sup>6</sup> or "*Anyway, got a gorgeous passage from the fire – percussion for crackling, alto bassoon for the wood, and a restless flute for the flames.*"<sup>7</sup>

While I was reading **Letters from Zedelghem** I noticed quite an open approach to the topic of sex which is still considered to be a little tabooed by the society. Robert Frobisher is a proud homosexual. The love of his life, putting aside the music, is his only true friend Rufus Sixsmith who unfortunately remains in Britain so they are parted. Robert obviously does not consider having other sexual partners as an infidelity. Actually, he openly discusses his love affairs with Rufus in their letters. He does not hide it, he does not think it is inappropriate. He does not even mind being paid for his service. He also does not avoid the company of women since he is getting involved with Jocasta, his employer's wife, and is attracted to her daughter.

When Robert finds something which can be converted into money he does not hesitate. He sells books he has found in Vyvyan's chateau to a fishy businessman. Robert describes his awfulness in a following way: "*I swear, Sixsmith, that warty old Shylock looks more repulsive every time I clap eyes on him. Has he got a magical portrait of himself stashed in his attic, getting more beautiful by the year?*"<sup>8</sup> A beautiful allusion to Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Although, the idea is reversed. Dorian's picture shows his true evil character while the businessman's picture may show the impossible beauty.

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<sup>6</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London:Sceptre, 2012. s. 46.

<sup>7</sup> Mitchell 2012 86; There is a possibility Robert Frobisher is a synaesthete with his ability to combine visual and auditory perception. By synaesthetes signals of one concrete sense produce percept of another sense at the same time. Their perception is thus different and more complex. (BURIANOVÁ, T. *Slyšíte barvy nebo vidíte zvuky? Tak to jste možná synestetik. A nebo narkoman*. In: Český rozhlas, 2012. [online] <[http://www.rozhlas.cz/radio\\_cesko/takesestalo/\\_zprava/slysite-barvy-nebo-vidite-zvuky-tak-to-jste-mozna-synestetik-a-nebo-narkoman--1037877](http://www.rozhlas.cz/radio_cesko/takesestalo/_zprava/slysite-barvy-nebo-vidite-zvuky-tak-to-jste-mozna-synestetik-a-nebo-narkoman--1037877)>)

<sup>8</sup> Mitchell 2012 74

### 3.3 Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery

The story of Luisa Rey takes place in the city of Buenas Yervas in California in America. Luisa Rey associates with the journalistic background and unfair business practices. Her investigation happens in the year 1975, shortly after Watergate Scandal. Luisa is an attractive journalist who can be pretty stubborn. What she starts she wants to bring to an end.

Luisa Rey comes across a piece of hidden information. There exists a project called *Hydra* in the field of nuclear power engineering which apparently makes a great fortune for the company Seaboard, especially because of the involvement in weapon production, as well as it may change into a destructive nuclear catastrophe for the world. Luisa is working hard to find and publish the secret report of a former scientist of Seaboard Rufus Sixsmith which reveals the whole danger of the project *Hydra*. In the end she succeeds, however, the success is paid by many lives.

There is no coincidence that the deadly project is called *Hydra*. According to Greek mythology, *Hydra* is a serpent with many heads which are doubled when they are cut off. The assistants and supporters of the project seem to outnumber anyone who would try to change their course. The enemies have many plans and back-ups to gain what they want.

**Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery** presents an example of investigative journalism. Luisa does not want to be the kind of the journalist who fabricates information. She is looking for something true, overwhelming, possibly dangerous. She believes Rufus Sixsmith's doubts about the safety of the nuclear project *Hydra*: *"And when the hydrogen build-up blows the roof off the containment chamber? When prevailing winds shower radiation over California?"*<sup>9</sup> This is precisely what Luisa wants to investigate, moreover, it means doing something right. To get what she wants she lies a lot. She wonders how much it is allowed to deceive in journalism and accepts her father's convictions: *"Did I ever lie to get my story? Ten-mile-high whoppers every day before breakfast, if it got me one inch closer to the truth."*<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London:Sceptre, 2012. s. 108.

<sup>10</sup> Mitchell 2012 140

### 3.4 The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish

This part of *Cloud Atlas* focuses on London and the city of Hull in the north of England. It introduces the setting of small publishing companies and nursing homes. This part is set in a few winter months in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Timothy Cavendish is an old man who owns a small publishing house. He experiences feelings of a rich man as well as a prisoner who is owned by others.

To escape from underworld's creditors Timothy Cavendish accepts an offer of his brother who let him believe he is going to hide in a hotel. However, he ends up in a nursing home for the elderly Aurora House – a very rough unpleasant strict place. He is forced to stay there against his will with a possible assistance of his own brother. He feels very desperate until he makes friends among the residents of Aurora House who he calls *the Undead*. He manages to escape from that tyrannical place with his new companions and be free again.

In **The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish** I found many references to literary works which are obviously connected to the fact that Timothy is a publisher. Although he publishes trashy literature, such as fictive memoirs *Knuckle Sandwich* of a murderer Dermot Hoggins, Timothy's remarks refers to the literature of a high quality. There is a mini-reference to *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë. A man is said to have "*Heathcliff eyebrows*"<sup>11</sup> which certainly does not belong to compliments. Timothy is affected by a strange cigar which he describes: "*My head enlarged itself by a magnitude of many hundreds, Alice-style...*"<sup>12</sup> Here he refers to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) when Lewis Carroll enlarged Alice by a cake. When Timothy is caught on a private property by a little boy on Halloween he pretends to be "*The Ghost of Christmas Past*"<sup>13</sup> which reminds the reader of *A Christmas Carol* (1843) by Charles Dickens.

### 3.5 An Orison of Sonmi-451

The world of the main character Sonmi-451 is set in far future Korea. There are many kinds of places. There are zones for the purebloods (humans with Soul in the left index finger) equipped with the most advanced technology and all possible devices for their comfort. The so called deadlands do not belong to the favourite ones because no human can survive there

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<sup>11</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London:Sceptre, 2012. s. 166.

<sup>12</sup> Mitchell 2012 172

<sup>13</sup> Mitchell 2012 167

due to local toxicity and radioactivity which is why only special sorts of clones are sent to work in the deadlands. Sonmi-451 visits with Hae-Joo Im also a slum for Untermenschen which can be described as *a noxious maze of crooked, ramshacks, flop-houses, pawnshops, drug-bars and comfort hives belonging to a more benighted world.*<sup>14</sup> For the purebloods these slums represent a waste bin for discreet disposal of the undesirable. In addition to these places, there are refuges, such as a sanctuary in an abbey, for the purebloods who would rather scrape a living in the mountains than end up in the slum.

While Sonmi-451 describes the events of her life she passes years. However, the actual time are only hours in which she shares her memories and opinions with an archivist who records an interview with her.

Sonmi-451 is a clone. She changes from a working machine to an intelligent being, even more intelligent than humans.

Sonmi-451 serves in a far future *dinery* (a kind of a fast food restaurant). She is ascended, i.e. drugged to start thinking. She is taken away from the *dinery* and used as a guinea pig at Taemosan University being the first ascended clone. Fortunately, Boardman Mephi ends this experiment soon and she begins to educate herself systematically. She meets a student Hae-Joo Im who reveals himself as a member of Union, a group standing against the ruling regime of Nea So Copros. While these two unusual companions are running from the omnipresent enemy Sonmi-451 is introduced to the common terrible abuse of clones. Due to her horrific experience with the outside world she decides to write *Declarations* in which she presents the evil within the society and outlines a sort of a manual for the new life of ascended clones. Afterwards, she is captured, imprisoned and executed.

According to Sonmi-451, *The Little Mermaid* (1837) is a tale about “*a dark treatise on unbelonging*”<sup>15</sup> which is quite a different point of view from the bedtime fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen. This remark represents Sonmi-451’s feeling about herself when she studies at Taemosan University. She asks herself: “*What was all this knowledge for... if I could not use it to better my existence?*”<sup>16</sup> Although Sonmi-451 finds her purpose in the end, this question remains for everyone who cares about the future.

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<sup>14</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London:Sceptre, 2012. s. 331.

<sup>15</sup> Mitchell 2012 233

<sup>16</sup> Mitchell 2012 233

### 3.6 Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After

Hundred years after Sonmi-451 people live in a kind of post-apocalyptic world. The inhabitants of Hawaii, where the story takes place, have to survive in primitive conditions because the civilization as we know has been destroyed. Tribes of Hawaii call it *the Fall*. There can still be found remains of the old world, such as abandoned observatories or overgrown airports. The so-called Prescients travelled throughout the Earth only to discover *dead-rubble cities, jungle-choked cities, plague-rotted cities*.<sup>17</sup> Apparently, the only ones still alive are the Prescients, who possess the most modern technology, and a few other tribes, like Zachry's tribe in *Nine Folded Valleys* on Hawaii, whose way of living has returned to the times when the most advanced device is a hoe or dagger.

An islander Zachry tells his story as an older man while he is sitting with his friends, companions, family by the fire. He concentrates on the stay of Meronym, a Prescient woman, in his homeland which lasted about half a year.

Zachry is suspicious and little coward. He loves his family and believes in goddess Sonmi who advises him on the right path of the life.

When Zachry was 9 years old he happened to be at Sloosha's crossing with his father and brother. Unfortunately, he caused his father's death and his brother's capture by the Kona, another tribe characterized by terrible cruelty. At the present time he has grown up and grazes goats since his people are mainly farmers. He is suspicious of the intentions of Prescients who visit Zachry's tribe from time to time. His suspicion grows when one of them, Meronym, comes to live with Zachry for a while. However, they befriend. Together they climb Mauna Kea where they discover old observatories. After Zachry's home is destroyed by the Kona, Meronym helps him leave the island.

As I mentioned above, Zachry's tribe worships goddess Sonmi who advises them on the right path of the life. Obviously the character of Sonmi-451 has survived hundreds of years and has transformed into a supernatural being which can guide human's life. In my opinion, goddess Sonmi represents Zachry's conscience, however, there exists no logical explanation for remarkable prophecies which gradually come true. On the other hand, Zachry is often confronted by Old Georgie who symbolizes the devil here as he constantly tempts darker, more insecure and more coward side of Zachry.

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<sup>17</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London:Sceptre, 2012. s. 285.

## Theory

David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* may be classified as a postmodern work. Its topics are concerned with the influence of technology and science, the plurality of the history and the variability of the language. His fictional realm includes a diary, a memoir-novel, a thriller, an epistolary novel, science fiction, a dystopia, even features of a historical novel.

The first main theme of *Cloud Atlas* by David Mitchell symbolizes predation – a relationship of living on each other. It is connected with the concept of the natural selection by Charles Darwin as well as social Darwinism by Herbert Spencer.

The second main theme represents reincarnation. Souls travel and death means a new beginning. Everything is interconnected and determined – lives, events, ideas of main characters.

Therefore *Cloud Atlas* expresses a great connection with eastern religions, especially Buddhism. Buddhist conviction about the eternal cycle of lives and the evanescence of all things represents an important motif of the book. Six stories outline the concept of the chain of causes and consequences when every tiny act is significant. Contrary to violence of predators in the novel, Buddhism suggests the behaviour of peace and kindness which may turn the negative *karma*. From other religions I chose Shintoism as an example of faith in the selfless life in harmony with nature which represents a total contrast to predatory ways of living of D. Mitchell's characters.

### 3.7 Genre

#### 3.7.1 The novel

The novel belongs to the category of a prose genre. The name *novel* originates from Italian word *novella* which signifies a tale or a piece of news. The novel can be applied to extended pieces of prose fiction which consist of between 60-70 000 and 200 000 words.<sup>18</sup>

This form of a story or a prose narrative contains characters, an action, an incident and a plot. As for the plot, it is not a necessary item. Actually, it might be included but also it

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<sup>18</sup> CUDDON, J. A. *The Penguin dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*. London: Penguin Books, c1999.

might not be present. However, the plot usually exists in the novel no matter how vague, tenuous or slight it may be.<sup>19</sup>

It seems that the novel provides an endless variety of topics and themes. As there can be found a great number of topics and themes so there is a wide range of categories, like the epistolary novel, the domestic novel, the sentimental novel, the novel of sensation, the Gothic novel, the historical novel, the psychological novel, the novel of adventure.<sup>20</sup> I only picked a few categories to signify the great number of them. Of course, we cannot forget that the types shade off into each other<sup>21</sup> which makes it difficult to unequivocally classify them.

### **3.7.2 Diary, Epistolary novel, Thriller, Memoir-novel**

A diary describes not only events of every day but it is also extended by ideas, opinions and remarks of its author. According to J. A. Cuddon<sup>22</sup>, the diary can be divided into two categories – the intimate and the anecdotal diary. It may also be written by real characters as well as the fictional ones.

A novel in the form of letters is called the epistolary novel. Such letters can be created by not only one person but also by two and more persons in which case the majority of letters belongs to the main character. I also agree with J. A. Cuddon<sup>23</sup> that it is not unusual for letters to make up some part of a novel. In my opinion, such a usage of letters is more common than the occurrence of the epistolary novel.

A thriller novel represents a kind of a tense and an exciting novel which is tautly plotted. The significant feature is the swift action. The novel may also be of a sensational type. The author keeps the reader in a continual suspense while he/she can add a certain degree of mystery and adventure. A considerable part may be played by themes of sex and violence. The thriller may include a crime novel, a police procedural, a ghost story, a horror story, a novel of adventure or a spy story.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> CUDDON, J. A. *The Penguin dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*. London: Penguin Books, c1999.

<sup>20</sup> Cuddon 1999

<sup>21</sup> Cuddon 1999

<sup>22</sup> Cuddon 1999

<sup>23</sup> Cuddon 1999

<sup>24</sup> Cuddon 1999



The form of a novel which claims to be a true autobiographical account but which is wholly or mostly fictitious is called a memoir-novel. According to J. A. Cuddon<sup>25</sup>, our memory can be unreliable. We do not remember everything and we often remember only what we want to. Knowing this, however, does not decrease the value of memoirs and autobiographies, it only emphasises the role of subjectivity.

### **3.7.3 Science fiction and dystopia**

Science fiction occurs usually in prose of the length of a short story, a novella or a novel. It provides a variety of topics, like trips to other worlds or strange quests. The characters of science fiction may explore space, visit other planets or experience interplanetary warfare as well as may be influenced by the arrival or invasion of aliens. Other motifs can introduce a technological change and development or scientific experiments, such as time travel or inventions which profoundly alter normality. They might also be concerned with a social, climatic, geological and ecological change. The important role might also be played by supernatural forces. Science fiction is often fantastic, though it may be rooted in reality, and it is usually set in the future, although the setting in the past is not excluded. Wherever it may be set and whatever may happen, science fiction certainly stretches the imagination.<sup>26</sup>

A dystopia is the opposite of a utopia. It developed from the fear of an uncontrolled expansion of technology and from scepticism for the possibilities of the human brain to influence the course of the world. It is a negative and warning variation of an idealistic image of utopia. It may provide either a technically advanced but dehumanized civilization or a grotesquely looking, primitive community controlled by elementary instincts. The frequent occurrence of an artificial language emphasises the difference from the present times. However, no matter how strong the difference may seem, in reality the dystopia uncovers, exaggerates, allegorizes, caricatures or foresees the true face of the society which already exists or may exist.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> CUDDON, J. A. *The Penguin dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*. London: Penguin Books, c1999.

<sup>26</sup> Cuddon 1999

<sup>27</sup> MOCNÁ, D., PETERKA, J. *Encyklopedie literárních žánrů*. Praha: Paseka, 2004.

### 3.7.4 Historical novel

A historical novel is a form of a fictional narrative which reconstructs history which was not lived by its author. He/She recreates the history imaginatively using mediated information which are based on thorough research of the chosen period. The author strives for verisimilitude.<sup>28</sup>

There is a diversion from the author's reality to the past ways of living and situations in them which may or may not possess timeless validity. Even though the narrative takes place in periods of the past, especially the turning points, it is written in the language and the style of the author's present. The signals of historicity may appear in a form of proper names, dates, language archaisms or characters and institutions of the introduced period.<sup>29</sup> In my opinion, the allusions of historicity may be found in most of the genres because the past plays an important role in human's life although a man's past and history are different terms. However, only such allusions do not create the historical novel.

The historical novel can be divided into three types. The first one, the mimetic type, is concentrated on verisimilitude and likelihood. The second projection type creates the opposite to the mimetic type. The history serves as a projection for a display of moral and ideological issues of the author's present. The third costume type uses the history to increase the interest of readers. The historical costume highlights the glamour of adventurous stories of love and honour.<sup>30</sup>

The quality of historical novels varies because there are many variants of belles-lettres as well as popular literature. The historical novel also provides potential for an analogy, an example or encouragement. It may become a parable about the political power and the destiny of a man in history or it may work as comfort as well as a weapon against the unhappy present.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.7.5 The unreliable narrator

A narrator is a literary subject which mediates the story. Narrators cannot be identified with the person of the author. They do not share the author's opinions and attitudes.<sup>32</sup> The

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<sup>28</sup> CUDDON, J. A. *The Penguin dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*. London: Penguin Books, c1999.; MOCNÁ, D., PETERKA, J. *Encyklopedie literárních žánrů*. Praha: Paseka, 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Mocná, Peterka 2004

<sup>30</sup> Mocná, Peterka 2004

<sup>31</sup> Mocná, Peterka 2004

<sup>32</sup> PAVERA, L., VŠETIČKA F. *Lexikon literárních pojmů*. Olomouc: Nakladatelství Olomouc, 2002. s. 373.

concept of an unreliable narrator was introduced by Wayne C. Booth, an American literary critic. W. C. Booth defined the narrator as reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (in reality in accordance with the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not.<sup>33</sup>

In the first place we usually accept the narrator as a reliable one. We cannot usually verify if the narrator lies or not. However, there are signals of deception: the contradiction of given information, attitudes of the narrator and his/her behaviour; great subjectivity or expressivity; prejudice and emotionality; striving for the sympathy of the reader etc.<sup>34</sup>

The unreliable narrator is often written from the first-person perspective. Such narrators convict indirectly and unintentionally themselves from unreliability. Their unreliability lies in incorrect or insufficient giving information, perception and evaluation.<sup>35</sup>

### 3.8 Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a term which refers to changes, developments and tendencies which have occurred in literature, art, music, architecture and philosophy since the 1940s or 1950s.<sup>36</sup> Postmodernism symbolizes a combination of the future (*post*) and the past (*modo*).<sup>37</sup> It is said postmodernism has succeeded modernism and at the same time these two approaches are shading into each other and coexisting next to each other.<sup>38</sup>

As for postmodern literature, the strongest desire is to be non-traditional. The approach of writers is eclectic. Their works may include aleatory writing, parody and pastiche as well as features of magic realism, fiction, science fiction, neo-Gothic and the horror story.<sup>39</sup>

Postmodern writers are concerned with the autonomy of language. They concentrate on the question of the word and the general nature of literary representation. In other words, authors put emphasis on the form and style.<sup>40</sup> Readers play a more creating role than they used to, for example they are supposed to take part creatively in the birth of a book.

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<sup>33</sup> KUBÍČEK, T., HRABAL, J., BÍLEK, P. A. *Naratologie: Strukturální analýza vyprávění*. Praha: Dauphin, 2013. s. 136.

<sup>34</sup> Kubíček, Hrabal, Bílek 2013

<sup>35</sup> Kubíček, Hrabal, Bílek 2013

<sup>36</sup> CUDDON, J. A. *The Penguin dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*. London: Penguin Books, c1999.

<sup>37</sup> LYOTARD, J-F. *O postmodernismu*. Praha: Filosofia, 1993.

<sup>38</sup> Cuddon 1999

<sup>39</sup> Cuddon 1999

<sup>40</sup> STEVENSON, R. *The Oxford English literary history*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Moreover, readers are presumed to possess a certain amount of knowledge and experience to fully understand the intention of the author.

Postmodernists often ask themselves questions about the difficulty in living in the present world in which the development of techno-sciences has overwhelmed the mankind. We, as human beings, demand the highest security, the assertion of own identity and living in happiness. However, these demands seem to become irrelevant when we face the obligation to assemble, mediate, memorize and synthesize every object of this world. The mankind has been therefore divided into two parts. While the first part of the mankind appears to accept this challenge, for the other part it has become an ancient task of survival.<sup>41</sup>

The way of postmodern thinking does not include only one solution, one historical approach or one cause. Postmodernists profess plurality of the history.<sup>42</sup> There are always more explanations than just one, more ways of seeing the situation than just one, more opinions than just one. In addition to this fact, the development does not equal the permanent progress, the universal history is a myth and the only valid true is the never-ending process of natural, gradually consequent and interconnected changes of all phenomena.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.9 Predation

Evolution represents all transformations which change the life on the Earth from the beginning to the present diversity.<sup>44</sup> The animals, as all living beings, are undergoing the transformations which enable them to use new opportunities and adapt to new conditions. The evolution works on a system of series of small mutations which are able to change the appearance and behaviour of an individual to a completely different one in thousands or millions years.<sup>45</sup>

A complicated system of partnership has developed during millions years, e.g. symbiosis. However, every partner acts mainly in his own interest. The extreme form of such

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<sup>41</sup> LEITCH, V. B. (ed.). *The Norton anthology of theory and criticism*. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, c2010.

<sup>42</sup> PAVERA, L., VŠETIČKA F. *Lexikon literárních pojmů*. Olomouc: Nakladatelství Olomouc, 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Pavera, Všetička 2002

<sup>44</sup> CAMPBELL, N., REECE J. B. *Biologie*. Brno: Computer Press, 2006. s. 1262.

<sup>45</sup> BURNIE, D. *Zvíře: obrazová encyklopedie živočichů všech kontinentů*. Praha: Knižní klub, 2002. s. 16.

a partnership is parasitism.<sup>46</sup> The smaller parasite benefits from the host to whom the parasite is detrimental.<sup>47</sup>

Predation represents the relationship when one species lives on another. Bigger predator usually feeds on its smaller prey.<sup>48</sup> Predation belongs among the important factors of evolution. It represents the basic condition for the success of reproduction. The adaptation of predators and preys is improved by natural selection. There may be named many features of the adaptation of predators, such as sharp senses, speed, camouflage, agility or improvements like teeth, claws or venom. On the other hand, the prey may protect itself by chemicals, camouflage or thorns. The prey may also use a passive or an active defence, i.e. to run or to fight.<sup>49</sup>

Charles Darwin (1809-1882) was an English naturalist who published *The Origin of Species* (1859). In that book he presented two main concepts. Firstly, present species were developed by evolution. Secondly, the life was developed by natural selection. He came to those conclusions through the method of observation. According to Ch. Darwin, every individual is distinguished by many hereditary features. Every species is able to produce more progenies than the environment manages to supply with food, place and other sources. This overproduction creates an unavoidable struggle for existence. In conclusion, there are great differences in the reproduction success. The individuals having the best qualities to suit the local environment usually reproduce more progenies which are able to survive and procreate. The useful qualities are carried by next generation. Ch. Darwin called this phenomenon the natural selection.<sup>50</sup>

Natural selection results in a great adaptability of organisms. However, it is important to emphasise that natural selection does not create the adaptation but examines the hereditary variants in generations whose chosen frequencies are then increased or decreased. Natural selection is a long-term process when hereditary variants are exposed to the natural factors which may improve the reproduction success of certain species to the detriment of other species.<sup>51</sup> According to Ch. Darwin, every species has to adapt to survive, however, Jaroslav Flegr, a Czech biologist, has a different opinion. He claims that older

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<sup>46</sup> BURNIE, D. *Zvíře: obrazová encyklopedie živočichů všech kontinentů*. Praha: Knižní klub, 2002. s. 17.

<sup>47</sup> AMBROŽOVÁ, J. *Mikrobiologie v technologii vod*. Praha: Vysoká škola technická, 2004. s. 73.

<sup>48</sup> Ambrožová 2004 73

<sup>49</sup> CAMPBELL, N., REECE J. B. *Biologie*. Brno: Computer Press, 2006. s. 1178-80.

<sup>50</sup> Campbell, Reece 2006 13-14

<sup>51</sup> Campbell, Reece 2006 13-14

species have more difficulties with the adaption than the new ones because the older species become less and less plastic.<sup>52</sup>

Ch. Darwin claimed that natural selection may result in the development of new species. It may happen, for example, in case of an isolation of groups of population. If these groups were totally isolated in different kinds of environment they would mutate into new species.<sup>53</sup>

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was an English philosopher and sociologist who, besides other things, compared the society to a biological organism whose system consists of interconnected elements. These elements, such as a family, religion or a state, function as organs whose specific tasks are focused on survival of the whole organism.

Social Darwinism is a sociologist movement introduced by H. Spencer who applied Darwin's theory of origin of species on human society and social phenomena.<sup>54</sup> The key words of social Darwinism are the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest.<sup>55</sup> Only the strongest and the most flexible ones who make use of the environment in the most effective way are able to survive. Unfortunately, this idea has often been abused by some ideologies who transformed the survival of the fittest into the omnipotent right of the strongest in the field of colonisation, inferiority of some races or disposal of chosen individuals.<sup>56</sup>

### 3.10 Reincarnation

Reincarnation means a fluent travelling of a spiritual soul from one physical body to another according to its individual *karma*.<sup>57</sup>

The word originated from Latin – *re* as again, *caro* as flesh / physical body, *in* as the preposition in. Literally it means “again in the physical body”. The soul travels into another body after death therefore we as living beings have experienced the life before this one.

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<sup>52</sup> JEŽEK, M. *Co Darwin nevěděl aneb O původu rodů s evolučním biologem Jaroslavem Flegrem*. In: *Rdvojka Meteor*, 2015. [online] <[http://www.rozhlas.cz/meteor/prispevky/\\_zprava/1458237](http://www.rozhlas.cz/meteor/prispevky/_zprava/1458237)>

<sup>53</sup> CAMPBELL, N., REECE J. B. *Biologie*. Brno: Computer Press, 2006. s. 13-14.

<sup>54</sup> URBAN, L. *Sociologie trochu jinak*. Praha: Grada, 2011. s. 51.

<sup>55</sup> VOGT, M. *Sociální darwinismus – produkt polovzdělanosti*. In: *Katolický týdeník*, 2009. [online] <<http://www.katyd.cz/clanky/socialni-darwinismus---produkt-polovzdelanosti.html>>

<sup>56</sup> Urban 2001 51-52

<sup>57</sup> ZÜRRER, R. *Reinkarnace: Úvod do vědy o putování duší*. Praha: EarthSave CZ, 2007. s. 31.

While the physical body is lost the soul does not die but travels to another place. One life is only a link in the chain of many consecutive lives.<sup>58</sup>

The most open approach to reincarnation can be found in Hinduism, Buddhism and Shintoism. The knowledge about rebirth is also a part of the faith of the Egyptians, Romans, some African tribes, American Indians etc. On the other hand, the institutionalized forms of Judaism or Islam and the traditional conception of Christianity refuse the idea of reincarnation.<sup>59</sup>

Hinduism and Buddhism are very similar in their understanding of reincarnation as described below. However, Hindus combine the rebirth with castes. A Hindu can be raised in a higher caste or fall literally among pigs due to the way of living. Japanese Buddhists put more emphasis on immediate gaining of enlightenment than prolonged self-improvement during many reincarnations. Buddhists in general also believe in collective *karma* and the existence of *Bodhisattva*. What have Buddhism and Christianity in common is the need of salvation. Even though we can find a sort of *karma* and resurrection in Christianity, the teachings of *karma* and reincarnation represents the opposite of the omnipotent Christian God and Christian explanation of the miracle of creation.<sup>60</sup>

The basic questions of existence – Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? Is there a meaning of my existence? – are all answered in the concept of reincarnation. This concept also explains the inequality among people or the non-existence of undeserved happiness, the occurrence of coincidences or injustice. Reincarnation helps us understand the phenomenon of life and death and at the same time it liberates from the fear of death. It represents the myth about the eternal return which developed on the basis of observations of the cycle of creation and extinction in nature.<sup>61</sup>

A human has always been fascinated with death. Is there a life after death? Does death mean the end of all things? What happens to us after inevitable death? There exist three different kinds of answers.<sup>62</sup>

Firstly, death is considered to be the end of everything. The life is only temporary and it returns to the Nothingness from which it comes. After death nothing is left from the physical

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<sup>58</sup> ZÜRRER, R. *Reinkarnace: Úvod do vědy o putování duší*. Praha: EarthSave CZ, 2007.

<sup>59</sup> Zürrer 2007

<sup>60</sup> HUMMEL, R. *Reinkarnace: Víra v převtělování a víra křesťanů*. Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1997.

<sup>61</sup> Zürrer 2007; Hummel 1997

<sup>62</sup> Zürrer 2007

body, let alone from the soul. In conclusion, the soul is not immortal. Secondly, there is the conception of Heaven and Hell after the life. All lives, when everyone has only one life, come from Nothingness but they do not return there. After death human's deeds are judged at The Last Judgement where it is decided who will go to Heaven or Hell as proclaimed by the Church. Thirdly, there is a belief in travelling of souls – reincarnation.<sup>63</sup>

What influences the choice of our next physical body? According to R. Zürrer<sup>64</sup> our thoughts, feelings and wishes. Reincarnation could not exist without *karma* – the principle of action and reaction. The English proverb says: “As you sow, so shall you reap.” There are no accidents, only consequences of our past wishes, decisions and actions. However, *karma* may not be recognized because the reaction may have been caused in our past life which we do not remember. Obviously, there is a system of rules for the big game of life in the universe. According to theistic philosophy, it is the order of God. The parents also play their role in this choice of the new incarnation. The child is influenced by their feelings during conception whether it is love, hate or just a moment of passion.

*Karma* affects individually. Everyone can use their own free will to bring more happiness than suffering into their lives. The decision is ours whether to live in harmony with *karma* or not. However, there is also collective *karma* (*karma* of a bigger community) which manifests itself by wars, natural disasters or epidemics.<sup>65</sup>

In every incarnation there is a life mission or task for every human being which should be recognized and fulfilled. This symbol of deeper meaning of life is called *dharma*. Its origin can be found in Sanskrit – *dhar* means keep/carry/hold thus *dharma* is something that holds firmly. *Dharma* should assist with deliverance from the cycle of rebirth. If I fulfil the life task it will bring good fortune to me as well as the others and eventually it will move me one step closer to the end of reincarnation which means the return to the spiritual homeland. However, if I refuse the task many harmful effects will occur there. To avoid such misfortune the guidance of the universe is offered in the form of the inner voice, angels or God.<sup>66</sup>

There is often a projection of guilt. We project our misfortune, feeling of insufficiency, no realization or unhappiness to someone else, like our family, politicians, the Church or even God. However, those people who cannot accept responsibility for their actions will only

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<sup>63</sup> ZÜRRER, R. *Reinkarnace: Úvod do vědy o putování duší*. Praha: EarthSave CZ, 2007.

<sup>64</sup> Zürrer 2007

<sup>65</sup> Zürrer 2007

<sup>66</sup> Zürrer 2007



suffer more in the future. Even if they commit suicide it will not bring them peace or redemption because in the next incarnation they will have to face the same challenge and their *karma* will be even more inauspicious. Therefore people have to fight their destructive qualities, such as the projection of guilt, irresponsibility, hate, jealousy and greed or devouring each other.<sup>67</sup>

When people accept reincarnation, *karma* and dharma they can travel on a nice and happy path of incarnation. At the end of the journey the moment of enlightenment comes (Buddhists call it *nirvana*, the Hindus *moksha*).<sup>68</sup> At the end of the life the physical body should be burnt to make the path easier for the soul. Although we forget our past incarnations, spontaneous memories or dreams occur and they can let us remember what can be of use to us at the present. The most important thing is to accept responsibility for all our actions. There is also a demand for compassion for others, in other words, we have no right to be violent.<sup>69</sup>

The role of love is not insignificant because we may meet our loved ones again, for example as our child, partner or sibling. Unfortunately, the same option applies to our enemies. In that case we may hope that we possess a great talent as a display of very positive *karma* which can help us fight with these enemies better.<sup>70</sup>

The concept of reincarnation has, of course, many opponents. They criticize this idea for injustice, fatalism and determinism. Rebirth, according to critics, means passive submission to fate and blind faith in unchangeable predestination of all things. *Karma* represents a social apathy because no one is trying to help the others since they cannot work against *karma*.<sup>71</sup>

Reincarnation leads us to the point of breaking out of the cycle of lives, to enlightenment, to higher consciousness and leaving for our spiritual homeland. If a human is able to realize the evanescence of all things he/she will be able to liberate from the life itself and end the rebirth.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> ZÜRRER, R. *Reinkarnace: Úvod do vědy o putování duší*. Praha: EarthSave CZ, 2007.

<sup>68</sup> OTTAMA, A. *Karma, přerozování, samsára*. Praha: DharmaGaia, 1999.

<sup>69</sup> Zürrer 2007

<sup>70</sup> Zürrer 2007

<sup>71</sup> Zürrer 2007

<sup>72</sup> Zürrer 2007

## 3.11 Eastern religions

### 3.11.1 Buddhism

Buddhism as a religion is practised mainly in Japan, China, Tibet and Mongolia.<sup>73</sup> Its teachings may be summarized in *The Twelve Principles of Buddhism* by British Buddhist Christmas Humphreys who proceeded from the idea of the law of eternal birth. According to Ch. Humphreys, everything undergoes the existential cycle of birth, growth and death. The soul and the character of a human are determined by previous thoughts and deeds. *Karma* governs every existence. The human is the only creator of his life and purpose. Anyone may reach the liberation of rebirth and enlightenment by the right behaviour.<sup>74</sup>

As suggests above, Buddhism accepts a conception of the cycle of lives (*samsara*)<sup>75</sup> from which a human can be salvaged when the moment of discovery of true things comes (*bodhi* – the final enlightenment). Buddhism teaches about the evanescence of the existence itself. The only truth and reality is *nirvana* which can be described as a state of perfect harmony, a state of blessedness without any hardship or suffering.<sup>76</sup>

*Bodhisattva* refers to a human being who is standing on the threshold of enlightenment, the most desired state, however, she/he chooses to remain in the cycle of life to help the others to achieve enlightenment too.<sup>77</sup>

According to Buddhist religion, the ignorance represents the evil which leads to hardship and suffering. Only when you are awoken from your ignorance you can avoid the evil. Everyone, men, women or children, who decide to practise Buddhism, can be enlightened if they work and make efforts for it.<sup>78</sup>

Contrary to other religions, Buddha does not take the place of God but he is considered to be a real human whose existence is historically proved. On the other hand, Buddhism has its own written documents about its belief as well as every religion. The oldest Buddhist scriptures are called *Tripitaka* which teach us about the chain of causes and consequences

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<sup>73</sup> KNOTKOVÁ-ČAPKOVÁ, B. et al. *Základy asijských náboženství: Judaismus, islám, hinduismus, džinismus, buddhismus, sikhismus, pársismus*. Praha: Karolinum, 2004.

<sup>74</sup> HUMMEL, R. *Reinkarnace, Víra v převtělování a víra křesťanů*. Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1997. s. 60-61.

<sup>75</sup> OTTAMA, A. *Karma, přerozování, samsára*. Praha: DharmaGaia, 1999. s. 8.

<sup>76</sup> Knotková-Čapková 2004

<sup>77</sup> Knotková-Čapková 2004

<sup>78</sup> Knotková-Čapková 2004

(inevitable *karma*), the value of peace and non-violence, the power of kindness, which represents the only way to overcome hate, or the power of every little meritorious act.<sup>79</sup>

*Karma* has its own justice. Buddhists believe that good deeds will be rewarded in contradistinction to bad deeds which will bring you suffering. The Buddhist basic moral command is not to hurt any living being.<sup>80</sup>

Human's existence is nothing permanent according to Buddhism. Actually, everything, the universe, nature, society and mankind, is passing, it changes all the time. Considering that it can make people feel sad. However, Buddhism teaches that a man must get rid of the thirst for living. Only then people can be free from suffering and hardship.<sup>81</sup>

On the way to the enlightenment the most important Buddhist attitudes are alertness and empathy. Only if you concentrate on the goal of your journey all the time you will be able to achieve it. You should not lose your concentration because of a little complication such as an everyday triviality. To show empathy means to cooperate with the others. You cannot do the enlightenment for them but you can help them on their way to it.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, I would like to point out three aspects of Buddhism which I personally find to be quite praiseworthy. Firstly, Buddhism really does not force its belief to others perhaps as the only religion. Secondly, enlightenment can be reached by every gender, men and women, although women are considered to be shrewish, unreliable, vain and seductive. Thirdly, Buddhism should remain apolitical.<sup>83</sup>

### 3.11.2 Shintoism

Shintoism is a religion which was born in Japan. The word Shintoism comes from the connection of *shin* and *tō*. The first word means a supernatural being/God (*kami*, which may include deities of nature, heavenly deities, spirits of the deceased etc.)<sup>84</sup> while the second one stands for a journey.

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<sup>79</sup> KNOTKOVÁ-ČAPKOVÁ, B. et al. *Základy asijských náboženství: Judaismus, islám, hinduismus, džinismus, buddhismus, sikhismus, pársismus*. Praha: Karolinum, 2004.; OTTAMA, A. *Karma, přerodování, samsára*. Praha: DharmaGaia, 1999. s. 9.

<sup>80</sup> Knotková-Čapková 2004

<sup>81</sup> Knotková-Čapková 2004

<sup>82</sup> Knotková-Čapková 2004

<sup>83</sup> Knotková-Čapková 2004

<sup>84</sup> BĚLKA, L., FUJDA, M., KUBOVČÁKOVÁ, Z. *Náboženství světa II: Východní tradice*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2014.

In other words, Shintoism can be explained as a journey to God or salvation which can already be found in everyday life in contradistinction to Christianity. On the other hand, Shintoism claims that it puts an emphasis on living in the right and moral way as every religion does. Shintoists prefer society's needs and public good to their own desires and wishes. They honour their ancestors and live in harmony with nature as well as praise honesty, politeness, helpfulness. Shintoists reject evil thoughts and selfishness. The believers also profess yin yang, a system based on two complementary opposites which cannot exist without each other.<sup>85</sup>

*Kami* has to be worshipped and respected otherwise it could cause misfortune, such as an illness, a fire or infertility. Therefore many rituals are held, especially those connected to purity of body and soul. These rituals are often led by shamans who are frequently women.<sup>86</sup>

This philosophy has always had a great impact on political power. A great connection exists between Shintoism and the emperor who used to be believed to be of God's origin and superior to everyone. Even though the ruler gave up that title in 1946 his declaration has not been accepted by the whole nation yet. The patriotic aspect of Shintoism still holds a strong position in Japan.<sup>87</sup>

#### **4 The analysis of displays of predation, eastern philosophies with emphasis on reincarnation and genres in *Cloud Atlas***

The first part of the analysis introduces the genre and the postmodern approach. The main part of the analysis concentrates on displays of predation and reincarnation in *Cloud Atlas*. Last part adds the connection to eastern philosophies, i. e. Buddhism and Shintoism.

##### **4.1 Genre's variability**

*Cloud Atlas* can be generally classified as a novel. Its main theme may be described as predation and the cycle of lives. However, D. Mitchell also discusses questions of violence, equality of people, love, sex, technology etc.

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<sup>85</sup> KNOTKOVÁ-ČAPKOVÁ, B. et al. *Základy asijských náboženství II*. Praha: Karolinum, 2005.

<sup>86</sup> BĚLKA, L., FUJDA, M., KUBOVČÁKOVÁ, Z. *Náboženství světa II: Východní tradice*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2014.

<sup>87</sup> Knotková-Čapková 2005

As the title suggests, **The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing** is a diary. Adam Ewing, a fictional character, brings us an intimate type of the diary in which we discover the details of his stay on the Chatham Islands and the voyage on the *Prophetess*. Even though there is a number of humorous parts the diary cannot be categorized as an anecdotal one because these parts were not written on such purpose.

Next title also signifies the genre of the story. **Letters from Zedelghem** is an epistolary novel. Robert Frobisher, the main character, sends letters to his boyfriend Rufus Sixsmith from Bruges to London. Robert represents the only person whose letters can be read. The answers of Rufus are not revealed.

**Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery** is a fascinating thriller. It contains all its important features, like excitement, suspense and the swift action. Actually, from the first page the reader is just dashing through the story which proves the wonderful readability. From my point of view, Luisa Rey's adventure is an example of the work of an investigative journalist who deals with crime. Even though the nuclear project *Hydra* has not harmed anyone yet it could have terrible consequences if it was allowed to exist. When you face the idea of nuclear danger in combination with a lonely beautiful fighter you are already in a state of enormous tension.

Then a memoir-novel is introduced. **The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish** is the name of an autobiography of a publisher Timothy Cavendish who introduces himself as an old man who reminisces his crazy adventure. He often contacts his reader: *"Very well, dear Reader, you deserve an epilogue if you've stayed with me this far."*<sup>88</sup> In my opinion, Timothy Cavendish shows great courage when he exposes even shameful or embarrassing events which amuse the reader greatly. Although his courage can also be interpreted as a display of a cunning businessman who knows what he can sell for a good price.

Last two narratives of *Cloud Atlas*, **An Orison of Sonmi-451** and **Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After**, may be classified as science fiction. **An Orison of Sonmi-451** deals with an advanced technology from which I can name the existence of clones, unusual means of transport or a specific modification of human's appearance. The story is set in the future and it shows a portrait of a society whose members manipulate each other for power. Actually, the people of the future are not so different from the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They might

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<sup>88</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 402.

be nice, kind and gentle as well as cruel, greedy and evil. What is emphasised is the abuse of those who cannot defend themselves to make the life of someone else more comfortable. It is a kind of a dystopia.

The society of Sonmi-451 is precisely the one which is technically advanced but dehumanized. As for Zachry's world, especially the Kona tribe seems to demonstrate a kind of dehumanization in the form of primitive people who are controlled by elementary instincts. In conclusion, the reader is left with an image of a catastrophe. What would happen if we let the technological miracle destroy us? What would be left of our humanity?

According to above mentioned characteristic, a historical novel should represent the times which were not lived by the author therefore to this category **The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing** and **Letters from Zedelghem** belong. They concentrate on the turning points of heroes who are purely fictional. Even though I did not discover any historically documented characters in these two stories, other information are real. The places, such as the Chatham Islands nearby New Zealand or Bruges in Belgium, are not fabricated. The Moriori people on the Chatham Islands really exist and they were invaded by the Maori in the past. These are the references of historicity which seem to prove the likelihood of stories. I would classify these two stories as a projection type. The main purpose of them is not to serve as a picture of history but to serve as a scope for the author's ideas about predation, reincarnation, *karma* etc.

From my perspective, **Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery** also belongs to the genre of a historical novel. The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century represents history for me. I think it proves that novels are getting old and can become the historical ones very easily.

The story of Luisa Rey is filled with references of historicity. Luisa associates with many kinds of people as a journalist. She talks to both celebrities and workmen. Contrary to experience of Adam Ewing and Robert Frobisher, Luisa meets real historical characters, such as a film director Alfred Hitchcock. Her adventure takes place in the year 1975 which is unwittingly confirmed by the following remark of a journalist: *"I, uh, wanna follow up my Terror in Sewerland series, to tie in with Jaws-fewer."*<sup>89</sup> The movie *Jaws* was released in 1975, the same year as Luisa's investigation. When Luisa argues with her boss about the permission to look into the nuclear plans of the company Seaboard she reasons as follows:

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<sup>89</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 99.

*If Bob Woodward had told you he suspected President Nixon had ordered a burglary of his political rival's offices and recorded himself issuing the order, would you have said, 'Forget it, Bob, honey, I need eight hundred words on salad dressings?'*<sup>90</sup>

Watergate Scandal happened at the beginning of the 1970s.

*Cloud Atlas* is written from the first-person perspective, except the third-person perspective in **Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery**. Every character gives us their version of the truth in their own way. Sonmi-451 calmly, Adam Ewing reservedly, Luisa Rey strong-mindedly, Robert Frobisher sarcastically, Timothy Cavendish exaggeratedly, Zachry persuasively.

From my point of view, the ideal option for an unreliable narrator is Zachry (**Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After**). Zachry is really prejudiced and suspicious. He often addresses his listeners while he is telling his story. He seems honest. He even admits that he lied sometimes. However, at the same time he claims he actually did the right thing or he had no other choice. He tries to persuade his listeners to agree and sympathize with him. Zachry feels guilty all his life because he made his father and brother suffered a tragedy. He constantly reasons his wrongdoing with himself and his listeners: *"Oy, list'n! Times are you're weak 'gainst the world! Times are you can't do nothin'! That ain't your fault, it's this busted world's fault is all!"*<sup>91</sup>

## 4.2 David Mitchell as a postmodernist

*Cloud Atlas* can be classified as a postmodern work together with the works of Martin Amis, Ian McEwan or Julian Barnes. *These authors cannot be classified as conservative realists, they give the same attention to the nature and potentialities of fiction as well as to the subject of their writing.*<sup>92</sup> David Mitchell already concentrated on levels of reality in a postmodern novel in his master's thesis at Kent.<sup>93</sup>

In *Cloud Atlas* the author worked out the system of the language in detail. Here we can see a postmodern fascination for the word. In **An Orison of Sonmi-451** there can be found a lot of language's deviations, such as *xperience* or *xcursion* instead of experience and excursion.

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<sup>90</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 119.

<sup>91</sup> Mitchell 2012 252

<sup>92</sup> BRADFORD, R. *The Novel Now: Contemporary British Fiction*. Malden: Blackwell, 2007. s. 63.

<sup>93</sup> Bradford 2007

The whole **Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After**, as the title suggests, is written in a sort of a dialect: *"Ten-twelve of them painted savages was 'ready risin'n' reachin' for their whips'n' blades, yellin' war-cries at me!"*<sup>94</sup> Zachry's way of introducing his story reminds of folk tales, which belong to the precedents of postmodernism. He is talking as if he sits next to his reader sharing the story with him. Zachry often addresses his reader: *"...so gimme some mutton an' I'll tell you 'bout our first meetin'."*<sup>95</sup> or *"So you want to hear about the Great Ship o'the Prescients?"*<sup>96</sup>

David Mitchell is really fascinated with the extensive scale of possibilities in writing. He uses features of science fiction, a historical novel, a thriller or a memoir-novel. He creates a fictional diary, letters or a record of an interview (vide the chapter *Genre's variability*). Such an interest in the genre and the style is very typical for postmodernism.

As mentioned above, the question of the influence of technology and science is often analysed in postmodernism. David Mitchell puts forth a scenario when these inventions gradually influence the way of living more and more which, however, does not mean a progress or a happier life. Adam Ewing, for example, describes the wonderful way of travelling by a ship. Robert Frobisher uses telegrams. Luisa Rey and Timothy Cavendish are used to communicating through mobiles. Sonmi-451 is used to getting information from a *sony* which is a device that can be described as a more advanced notebook. Contrary to these scientific helpers, Zachry's tribe has returned to fire, daggers and hoes.

The significant feature of postmodernism in *Cloud Atlas* is the plurality of the history. Every character understands the past, the present and the future of themselves and the others differently. There is always more to be seen than it seems. David Mitchell expresses the idea that everything is interconnected and nothing is a coincidence (vide the chapter *Reincarnation in Cloud Atlas*).

### 4.3 Predation in Cloud Atlas

The topic of predation is introduced on the first page of *Cloud Atlas*. Dr Henry Goose talks about cannibals on the beach: *"...the strong engorged themselves on the weak."*<sup>97</sup> Dr Goose who is poisoning Adam Ewing to get to his possession is actually the most excellent example

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<sup>94</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 250.

<sup>95</sup> Mitchell 2012 249

<sup>96</sup> Mitchell 2012 258

<sup>97</sup> Mitchell 2012 3



of a predator. He lives in accordance with his law of survival: *“The Weak are Meat the Strong do Eat.”*<sup>98</sup> This statement emphasises everything *Cloud Atlas* presents.

**The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing** introduces the nature of colonisation and missionary work. The Moriori tribe used to live on the Chatham Islands in peace but they were invaded by the Maori tribe and violently colonised. The Moriori did not stand a chance, especially because of their belief: *Thou Shalt Not Kill.*<sup>99</sup> They believed whoever killed, he would lose his soul.

Adam Ewing visits an island Raiatea administered by missionaries. These men of God openly admit that their work could not start without guns at the beginning. Their preacher is convinced about the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons over the others, especially savages who have to be controlled, even reduced. While the preacher covers his conviction into the veil of God’s will Dr Goose is more open:

*Why tinker with the plain truth that we hurry the darker races to their graves in order to take their land & its riches? Wolves don’t sit in their caves, concocting crapulous theories of race to justify devouring a flock of sheep! (...) True ‘intellectual courage’ is to dispense with these fig-leaves & admit all peoples are predatory, but white predators, with our deadly duet of disease-dust & fire-arms, are exemplars of predacity par excellence, & what of it?*<sup>100</sup>

Dr Goose adds that the hunger of white men for wealth and dominion is *the keenest, the hungriest, the most unscrupulous.*<sup>101</sup> He is a perfect example of his words with his belief: *eat or be eaten.*<sup>102</sup> He considers people to be joints of meat which he can barbecue.

Another missionary comes with an example from zoology. He describes a certain kind of ants which steal eggs of other ants to raise them as their own workers. These workers never imagine being kidnapped and enslaved. In addition to that, a controversial image of a businessman is provided on Raiatea. Such a businessman sells tobacco by making the savages addicted to it.

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<sup>98</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 508.

<sup>99</sup> Mitchell 2012 12

<sup>100</sup> Mitchell 2012 509

<sup>101</sup> Mitchell 2012 508-509

<sup>102</sup> Mitchell 2012 509

Adam Ewing behaves as a prey from the beginning. Although he thinks of himself as more superior and cleverer than the others. Yet he is easily deceived by Dr Goose and in the end he is saved by a 'simple' savage. Adam Ewing is passive and naive in all his doings.

When Robert Frobisher (**Letters from Zedelghem**) is visiting his brother's grave he speaks with his acquaintance Morty Dhondt. Morty claims that another war is coming (the story takes place in 1931). The war will happen because the nature of human character is hunger for power whose instruments are violence, threat and fear. Morty ironizes diplomacy:

*Oh, diplomacy,... it mops up war's spillages; legitimizes its outcomes; gives the strong state the means to impose its will on a weaker one, while saving its fleets and battalions for weightier opponents.*<sup>103</sup>

Robert Frobisher adds that in that case *science devises ever bloodier means of war until humanity's powers of destruction overcome our power of creation and our civilisation drives itself to extinction.*<sup>104</sup> Here he actually foresees the future of Zachry's world.

The relationship between Robert Frobisher and Vyvyan Ayrs belongs to the complicated ones. We cannot clearly distinguish who is the predator and who is the prey. Robert comes to Vyvyan convinced of being the predator. He wants to get everything from him – money, accommodation, music lessons, his wife Jocasta, even daughter Eva. However, Vyvyan is not as simple-minded as he appears. He steals Robert's musical ideas unscrupulously. Vyvyan also reveals that he knows about the love affair between Robert and Jocasta. From my perspective, Vyvyan wants to use his wife to make Robert stay with him and work for him. This is a portrait of society which does not devour itself literally but prefers to devour the thoughts and ideas.

**Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery** introduces the game of politics and money. Albert Grimaldi, the head of the company Seaboard, suggests his concept of power: *"The ability to determine another man's luck."*<sup>105</sup> Next he thinks about the fact why someone is able to control the others and someone is just a dying minion. The answer is a combination of three

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<sup>103</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 462.

<sup>104</sup> Mitchell 2012 462

<sup>105</sup> Mitchell 2012 131

features – a charisma, a discipline to nurture this gift to maturity and a will to power. These are the characteristics of a powerful man. In addition to that, such a strong man is able to use the conscience of the weak because *every conscience has an off-switch hidden somewhere*.<sup>106</sup>

However, Energy Secretary Lloyd Hooks is a bigger predator than Alberto Grimaldi. There is a moment of a great example of a pretence for the audience. At the press conference Lloyd Hooks and Alberto Grimaldi are smiling for the cameras showing the picture of friendship and honesty. Under the smiles, however, there are such comments like: *“...you’re still Greed on Two Legs.”* or *“You’ll only wrangle your way on to this company’s board over my dead body, you venal sonofabitch!”*<sup>107</sup> This game is eventually won by Lloyd Hooks who gets rid of Alberto Grimaldi. He relies on a professional assassin in these kinds of matters who does not accept any guilt for his actions: *“I’m just the instrument of my clients’ will.”*<sup>108</sup> Actually, Luisa Rey seems to be the only one who is able to escape these two men.

While Lloyd Hooks represents the number one among the unscrupulous, there are many other smaller sharks. Fay Li, Seaboard PR, seems to be the one who does not notice anything suspicious in her firm because she does not want to. However, she is as greedy as her superiors. She tries to get to Luisa Rey’s discoveries to convert them into money. Another little shark is a guy named Milton who helps Luisa after her car crash only to sell information about her whereabouts later.

Apart from strength, manipulation is another method to get what is wanted. Luisa Rey is kicked off her job. Her boss is bribed by giving aid to his ill wife so he would stay away from her. Luisa Rey comes to conclusion that power is the only thing that can change the future. From my perspective, it is greed.

Another type of predation is introduced in **The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish**. Timothy Cavendish is 65 years old therefore he belongs to the category of the old. People are generally afraid of death. Everything that resembles dying has to be eliminated, such as the old. The old are put to isolated nursing homes for the elderly, e.g. Aurora House, where

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<sup>106</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 103.

<sup>107</sup> Mitchell 2012 105

<sup>108</sup> Mitchell 2012 113

no one cares about them as if they were not important (even alive) anymore because they crossed the border of the youth. Timothy's friend Veronica Costello put it simply:

*Oh, once you've been initiated into the Elderly, the world doesn't want you back. (...) We – by whom I mean anyone over sixty – commit two offences just by existing. One is Lack of Velocity. (...) Our second offence is being Everyman's memento mori.*<sup>109</sup>

Timothy Cavendish quotes Aleksander Solzhenitsyn in order to describe the behaviour of the cruel and indifferent staff of Aurora House: *"Unlimited power in the hands of limited people always leads to cruelty."*<sup>110</sup> In other words, no one should be given power unless they understood its consequences and responsibilities since it could change them into monsters without humanity. Veronica adds: *"Once any tyranny becomes accepted as ordinary... its victory is indomitable."*<sup>111</sup>

While Timothy Cavendish is stuck in Aurora House he makes sad comments about freedom: *"'Freedom!' is the fatuous jingle of our civilisation, but only those deprived of it have the barest inkling re: what the stuff actually is."*<sup>112</sup> He even comes to a state when he succumbs to the regime in the nursing home. He feels desperate with no way out. This succumbing is precisely what is wanted from him. If you admit your defeat you are no longer a threat, actually, you become nothing or *the Undead* as Timothy calls the residents of Aurora House.

Sonmi-451 (**An Orison of Sonmi-451**) lives as a clone which means she is made to serve. Her days are filled with Catechisms about her duties and Soup for food. The side effects of eating Soup are to deaden curiosity therefore clones do not wonder. According to Catechisms, they are also forbidden to own anything thus Sonmi-451 says: *"Dreams are all I have ever truly owned."*<sup>113</sup>

Even though minds of clones differ from each other greatly their appearance is the same. Because of their similar faces the purebloods are convinced that clones have no humanity, no interesting thoughts. They are just devices which purpose is to be used. Sonmi-451

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<sup>109</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 376-377.

<sup>110</sup> Mitchell 2012 182

<sup>111</sup> Mitchell 2012 379

<sup>112</sup> Mitchell 2012 372

<sup>113</sup> Mitchell 2012 189

remarks: *"To enslave an individual distresses the conscience, but to enslave a clone is merely like owning the latest mass-produced six-wheeled ford."*<sup>114</sup>

When Yoona-939, Sonmi-451's co-worker, is ascended she begins to behave differently and she is punished for that: *"Being a Soulless, hatched clone doesn't excuse attitude defects."*<sup>115</sup> Yoona-939 is killed when she is trying to escape. Sonmi-451 learns from that experience and hides her ascension during her work at *dinery*. However, when she is transformed to Taemosan University she grabs the opportunity to learn more and starts with reading books from libraries at an enormous speed. When Boardman Mephi wonders *why any dominator fears their dominated gaining knowledge*<sup>116</sup>, Sonmi-451 answers rather only in her mind: *"Insurrection."*<sup>117</sup> She is well aware of her position at University: *"In Papa Song's I had been a slave; at Taemosan I was a slightly more privileged slave."*<sup>118</sup>

While Sonmi-451 is an example of a clever hard worker, the students around her are the opposite. Boom-Sook Kim, to whom she belongs as his guinea pig at first, and his two friends are only interested in drinking, gambling and his crossbow which Boom-Sook Kim almost kills Sonmi-451 with. As sons of high officials they represent a demonstration of future leaders of the state Nea So Copros.

The state Nea So Copros presents an omnipotent ruler that is able to control everyone, not just clones. It reminds me of a novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) by George Orwell about a fictive state where everyone is controlled by omnipresent Big Brother. The lives in D. Mitchell's story are dictated by Nea So Copros which seemingly sees everything and rules the whole civilization. As every regime, it has to provide a symbol of great leadership. Their chairman has statues everywhere: *"Beloved Chairman's monumental statue surveyed his teeming peoples with an expression wise and benign."*<sup>119</sup> I suppose the Soul issue plays the main role in the government. Every human being has Soul in his left index finger while clones do not possess it although they may gain Soul Ring. A great invention to track everyone down. Of course, the society lives under the patronage of laws, e. g. the Enrichment Laws. Hae-Joo Im explains to Sonmi-451: *"...under the Enrichment Laws, consumers have to spend a fixed quota of dollars each month, depending on their strata. Hoarding is an anti-*

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<sup>114</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 191.

<sup>115</sup> Mitchell 2012 199

<sup>116</sup> Mitchell 2012 231

<sup>117</sup> Mitchell 2012 231

<sup>118</sup> Mitchell 2012 241

<sup>119</sup> Mitchell 2012 239

*corpocratic crime.*"<sup>120</sup> It leaves a question. Where is the money which everyone has to spend?

Another invention of Nea So Copros is a slum. The slum serves as a waste bin for the undesirable. Everyone who is not approved ends there and has to survive in horrible conditions. Apart from slums, there are little colonies for those who want to distance themselves peacefully from Nea So Copros. Even though no one is sure how long this quiet coexistence will last. Such colonists live in hard conditions, for example, in an old abbey. They provide a safe place for Union's members in exchange for technique equipment. Sonmi-451 is enchanted by the life of colonists: "...*the only purebloods whose eyes lack the hunger in consumer's eyes were colonists.*"<sup>121</sup>

Nea So Copros represents seemingly a very comfortable place for those who obey its rules. However, this situation already walks a tightrope since more and more unpleasant things occur, such as radioactivity or toxicity. The state cannot exist like that for long. The defence of the government and the purebloods is the denial of this critical state and greater abuse of the clones as cheap and versatile workers. Union, an anti-corporation movement, wants to ascend clones to make a revolution. If clones stopped being obedient machines, everything would change. This kind of society would stop exist.

*Who would work factory lines? Process sewage? Feed fishfarms? Xtract oil and coal? Stroke reactors? Construct buildings? Serve in dineries? Xtinguish fires? Man the cordon? Fill Exxon tanks? Lift, dig, pull, push? Sow, harvest?*<sup>122</sup>

The role of Sonmi-451 in Union's plot against Nea So Copros is following. She is a proof of permanent ascension and she should become an emissary between Union and clones. At first she refuses but she changes her mind due to circumstances. One impulse, apart from others, is when she witnesses how a pureblood gets rid of a little clone who serves as a doll. He throws the little one from the bridge: "*Cheap riddance... to very xpensive trash.*"<sup>123</sup> However, what really makes her revolt is the discovery of fake *Xultation*. The clones at *dineries* believe that after 12 years of serving they will move to *Xultation* which symbolizes a paradise for clones. The reality is different. Clones are massacred on special butchery ships:

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<sup>120</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 237.

<sup>121</sup> Mitchell 2012 348

<sup>122</sup> Mitchell 2012 342

<sup>123</sup> Mitchell 2012 351

“...sadistic visions of hell.”<sup>124</sup> The clones are recycled for Soup and food products for the purebloods. The people have returned to the point of devouring each other. Sonmi-451 explains the system:

*In the beginning there is ignorance. Ignorance engenders fear. Fear engenders hatred, and hatred engenders violence. Violence breeds further violence until the only law is whatever is willed by the most powerful.*<sup>125</sup>

Nea So Copros, as the most powerful one, wills *the creation, subjugation and tidy xtermination of a vast tribe of duped slaves.*<sup>126</sup> Sonmi-451 writes *Declaration* to spread her knowledge to change the system.

The most shocking part of Sonmi-451’s story is the fact that her whole journey is actually planned by Nea So Copros – from her ascension to joining Union. Why? Nea So Copros wants to make its subjects fear the clones and agree with its laws. Nothing is as effective as a process with a weird clone. Sonmi-451 realizes it but goes along with it in order to be allowed to write *Declaration* and influence people.

**Sloosha’s Crossin’ an’ Ev’rythin’ After** comes with the idea of a primitive society which survived the apocalypse of once a great civilisation. There are presented two tribes – the peaceful farmers of *Nine Folded Valleys* and the Kona’s brute. The strength and brutality of the Kona destroy *Nine Folded Valleys* in the end. Zachry of *Nine Folded Valleys* prefers running from troubles to facing them. He believes he is too weak to do anything.

When Zachry is captured by the Kona he is told that his life and body has become the property of the Kona. He will now live in accordance with simple rules as described by the chief of the Kona’s group:

*First rule is, slaves do your Kona masters’ say-so, quicksharp an’ not but-whyin’. (...) Second rule is, slaves don’t speak ‘cept when your master asks ‘em. (...) Third rule is, you don’t waste no time plottin’ scapes.*<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 359.

<sup>125</sup> Mitchell 2012 360-361

<sup>126</sup> Mitchell 2012 361

<sup>127</sup> Mitchell 2012 305-306

Zachry is freed by Meronym later and they sadly watch the destruction of *Nine Folded Valleys*: “Watch the fate o’ the last civ’lized tribe ... the result of your schoolry’n’lcon’ry, jus’ slaved for Kona fields an’ dwellin’s an’ stables an’ beds an’ holes in Leeward ground.”<sup>128</sup> In other words, their ‘civilised’ ideas and lives are enslaved and torn. Zachry kills a Kona what appears to be a mistake since he draws others’ attention to his existence. He later notices that *in our busted world the right thing ain’t always possible*.<sup>129</sup>

Zachry is talking with Meronym about *the Fall*, the end of the previous civilisation. Meronym says: “(the ancestors) mastered sicks, miles, seeds an’ made miracles ord’nary, but it didn’t master one thing, nay, a hunger in the hearts o’ humans, yay, a hunger for more.”<sup>130</sup> It is human’s hunger for having more that awakens violence and destruction. Moreover, such hunger is stronger than humanity: “Old’uns’d got the Smart o’ gods but the savagery o’ jackals an’ that’s what tripped the Fall.”<sup>131</sup> It is the same with the Kona and *Valleymen*. Meronym adds: “It ain’t savages what are stronger’n civ’lizeds ... it’s big numbers what’re stronger’n small numbers.”<sup>132</sup>

Meronym also discusses with Zachry the difference between primitive instincts and thoughtful intelligence:

*The savage sat’fies his needs now. ... His master is his will an’ if his will say-soes ‘Kill’ he’ll kill. Like fangy animals. ... Now the Civ’lized got the same needs too, but he sees further. He’ll eat half his food now, yay, but plant half so he won’t go hungry ‘morrow...*<sup>133</sup>

Apart from *Valleymen* and the Kona, also the Prescients live on Earth whose appearance, knowledge and behaviour differs from tribes on Hawaii. For example, the skin of Prescients is darker or they use scientific findings and advanced devices, such as flying ships or medicine. Obviously the role of separation and different conditions has caused the creation of slightly different species (as Ch. Darwin claimed).

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<sup>128</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 313.

<sup>129</sup> Mitchell 2012 316

<sup>130</sup> Mitchell 2012 286

<sup>131</sup> Mitchell 2012 319

<sup>132</sup> Mitchell 2012 318

<sup>133</sup> Mitchell 2012 318



#### 4.4 Reincarnation in *Cloud Atlas*

The title of the whole novel is *Cloud Atlas* which is also the name of the sextet composed by Robert Frobisher who describes his masterpiece as follows:

*... a sextet for overlapping soloists ... each in its own language of key, scale and colour. In the 1<sup>st</sup> set, each solo is interrupted by its successor: in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, each interruption is recontinued, in order.*<sup>134</sup>

This represents a perfect portrait of *Cloud Atlas*, its interconnections and the concept of reincarnation.

*Cloud Atlas* sextet is considered to be the best work of all lives. At least Robert Frobisher sees it that way. It signifies two questions. Does the author praise his book? Does it symbolize the overwhelming cycle of life? The second possibility is more likely to be true. Moreover, the similar composition of the sextet and the novels of *Cloud Atlas* cannot be overlooked. The first five stories are all interrupted at a dramatic moment by the story following in chronological order. The sixth story, **Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After**, is the only one which is not interrupted. After it is finished, the other five stories are closed in reverse chronological order.

*Cloud Atlas* consists of six narratives which are interconnected in many ways. In retrospective every main character is acquainted with the previous one. Robert Frobisher finds the diary of Adam Ewing. Luisa Rey reads the letters which Robert Frobisher sent to his friend Rufus Sixsmith who she "accidentally" meets. Timothy Cavendish is sent the novel about Luisa's adventure. Sonmi-451 sees the movie about Timothy's experiences. Zachry believes in Goddess Sonmi and listens to an orison, a silver egg-shaped device, on which an archivist recorded her confession. Incidentally, the diary, letters, even the book and the movie are also divided into two parts. The character is acquainted with the first part during the first part of his/her story and the second part of the previous life is introduced in the second part of his/her story.

The next connecting link is a birthmark in a shape of a comet. When Robert Frobisher lies with Jocasta he shows his displeasure at her touching his birthmark: "*She plays with that*

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<sup>134</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 463.

*birthmark in the hollow of my shoulder, the one you said resembles a comet ...*<sup>135</sup> Luisa Rey looks into a mirror to get a clearer view of a birthmark between her shoulder-blade and collar-bone ... it is undeniably shaped like a comet.<sup>136</sup> Contrary to Luisa, Timothy Cavendish does not take the possibility of reincarnation seriously and he laughs at the image of the proof of rebirth in a form of the birthmark: *“I, too, have a birthmark, bellow my left armpit, but no lover ever compared it to a comet.”*<sup>137</sup> Sonmi-451 explains that her birthmark amazes everyone because she is not supposed to have any as a clone. Her birthmark is between her collar-bone and shoulder-blade and it resembles a comet according to the archivist. Zachry notices Meronym’s birthmark when she is sleeping: *“Lady Moon lit a whoahsome wyrd birthmark jus’ b’low my friend’s shoulder blade as she slepted fin’ly. A sort o’ tiny hand-mark it were, yay, a head o’ six streaks strandin’ off ...”*<sup>138</sup> However, there is one character who does not mention this birthmark therefore we are not sure if Adam Ewing has it or not. There is a possibility he might be the first step on this staircase of lives.

Why does the birthmark resemble a comet? The comet is a celestial body which follows an eccentric orbit and appears periodically in the solar system. This reappearance is similar to reincarnation of characters in *Cloud Atlas*. Therefore the comet is a wonderful symbol of rebirth and the cycle of life.

There occur a few predictions of the future in the text. In **Letters from Zedelghem** there is a passage when Vyvyan Ayrs wakes up Robert Frobisher at night because he wants to compose a sonata which he heard in his dream:

*I dreamt of a ... nightmarish café, brilliantly lit, but underground, with no way out. I’d been dead a long, long time. The waitresses all had the same face. The food was soap, the only drink was cups of lather. The music in the café was this.*<sup>139</sup>

Vyvyan actually foresees the future here because he gives a detailed picture of *the dinery* where Sonmi-451 works (**An Orison of Sonmi-451**). It is an underground place where the clones serve and their food is Soup. In **Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery** there is a strange moment of foreseeing the future when during socializing a man remarks in Luisa’s

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<sup>135</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 85.

<sup>136</sup> Mitchell 2012 124

<sup>137</sup> Mitchell 2012 373

<sup>138</sup> Mitchell 2012 319

<sup>139</sup> Mitchell 2012 80

presence: *“The corporation is the future.”*<sup>140</sup> Sonmi-451’s world is a world of corporation Nea So Copros. While Timothy Cavendish (**The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish**) is running from London to escape his creditors he passes Cambridge. He mentions that Cambridge outskirts are used for a scientific purpose, such as cloning humans for Koreans. Sonmi-451’s story is taking place in Nea So Copros, former Korea.

**The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing** represents a perfect example of *karma* when Adam Ewing and Autua save each other. As it is confirmed:

*Autua insists that had I not prevented him from being tossed overboard as a stowaway he could not have saved me & so, in a sense, it is not Autua who has preserved my life but myself.*<sup>141</sup>

When Vyvyan Ayrs is treated for syphilis in **Letters from Zedelghem** Robert Frobisher meets Dr Egret who reminds me of Dr Goose: *“Dr Egret gives me the creeps. Never met a quack whom I didn’t half suspect of plotting to do me in as expensively as he could contrive.”*<sup>142</sup> It could be a coincidence but reincarnation teaches us there are no coincidences. The similarity between these two greedy doctors is very striking. It also proves that the heroes cannot avoid their enemies in their next lives.

At the end of days of Robert Frobisher in Bruges he witnesses the same old windmill on whose steps he slept for a while when he arrived to Bruges for the first time. Robert remarks at this moment: *“Around we go.”*<sup>143</sup> In my opinion, he remarks the fact that humans live in the cycle of lives until they reach the enlightenment. This cycle means that things happen all over again. Robert believes: *“Once my Luger lets me go, my birth, next time around, will be upon me in a heartbeat.”*<sup>144</sup>

Reincarnation may be only fashionable as well as the type of clothes or hairstyle. This opinion is held by a certain type of society as **Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery** suggests. Luisa Rey talks to a rock musician whose mouth is full of empty words about

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<sup>140</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 420.

<sup>141</sup> Mitchell 2012 526

<sup>142</sup> Mitchell 2012 457

<sup>143</sup> Mitchell 2012 488

<sup>144</sup> Mitchell 2012 490

reincarnation. He is talking about his spiritual teacher: “*‘My guru, Luisaaa, my guru! He’s on his last reincarnation before –’ Richard’s fingers go puff! Nirvanawards.*”<sup>145</sup>

However, Luisa seems to start believing she is the reincarnation of Robert Frobischer. She is the only character who comes to such a conclusion. When she reads the letters written by him the images which she is introduced to seem so real: “*Images so vivid she can only call them memories.*”<sup>146</sup> When she listens to the bought recording of *Cloud Atlas* sextet she is sure she knows it very well. In addition to that, the music seems to represent her feelings and situation precisely. Moreover, she realizes her birthmark is identical to Robert’s one. She even experiences the feeling of having already experienced the present situation: “*A swarm of déjà vu haunts Luisa as she stuffs her belongings into her overnight bag. Robert Frobischer doing a dine and dash from another hotel.*”<sup>147</sup> Her initial nervousness and uncertainty transforms into admitting the possibility of reincarnation.

Luisa Rey forms an unusual alliance with the head of Seaboard’s security Joe Napier. Her father once saved Joe Napier’s life in a police action. Joe Napier feels he has to repay him therefore he decides to protect Luisa: “*And you could say it was your father who just saved your life, when kicked away that grenade rolling at me, thirty years ago.*”<sup>148</sup> During the finale on a ship Joe Napier shoots the assassin and prevents Luisa’s death, however, he is mortally wounded. *Karma* works by its own rules.

Luisa Rey also confirms the possibility to meet the loved one in the next life. She is acquainted with engineer Isaach Sachs who dies soon afterwards due to sharing his open doubts about nuclear power engineering with Luisa. Although they barely know each other he falls in love with her almost immediately. When he is lost Luisa feels a great pain.

To get the hidden report about the nuclear danger Luisa has to find Starfish, the beloved ship of Rufus Sixsmith, which is anchored behind the reconstructed Prophetess, on which Adam Ewing travelled back to America. Luisa is attracted to this ship, moreover, her birthmark throbs. She does not understand. Unfortunately, there is also no time to think about it. However, it confirms she is not only reincarnation of Robert Frobischer, but of Adam Ewing as well.

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<sup>145</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 90.

<sup>146</sup> Mitchell 2012 121

<sup>147</sup> Mitchell 2012 142

<sup>148</sup> Mitchell 2012 445

In **The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish** the main character refuses to submit to the rule in Aurora House therefore he is punished by inducing his stroke. When he comes back to his senses he remembers a woman Margo Roker. However, Margo Roker is a character of his previous life (of Luisa Rey's life). It might be only a spontaneous memory induced by extraordinary conditions.

Timothy calls the old residents of Aurora House *the Undead*, however, he eventually changes his mind. It is not the number of years which can send you among *the Undead*, but the attitude: *"In the domain of the young there dwells many an Undead soul. They rush about so, their inner putrefaction is concealed for a few decades, that is all."*<sup>149</sup> According to your attitude and life you can be sent among *the Undead* or gain salvation, in other words, the enlightenment.

In **An Orison of Sonmi-451** the main heroine explains that *ascension only frees what was suppressed*.<sup>150</sup> In other words, the ascension is not impossible. The goal of reincarnation is the ascension. Sonmi-451 signifies what the ascension looks like. It changes a person in many ways: a presence of an inner voice, an advanced speech, a greater memory ability. It also means the person is more curious and alone because there is no one like him/her. Being different also means to be often misunderstood or humiliated.

Sonmi-451 is said to gain the ascension thanks to an experiment on clones. She is given a special kind of soap to eat with ingredients to awake the ascension. However, no ascension can be reached unless you have preconditions for that. Sonmi-451 may have just reached the point in the cycle of lives when she deserves to be ascended.

When Sonmi-451 is running from the city with Hae-Joo Im their car is attacked and has an accident. This occasion awakes Sonmi-451's past:

*I remember the drop: it shook free an earlier memory of blackness, inertia, gravity, of being trapped in another ford; I could not find its source in my own memories.*<sup>151</sup>

She describes the moment when Luisa Rey was thrown down from the bridge in her car by an assassin (one of many attempts to take her down). Luisa Rey almost drowned there but she managed to survive. The feelings of Sonmi-451 and Luisa Rey are identical. Another link

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<sup>149</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 403-404.

<sup>150</sup> Mitchell 2012 191

<sup>151</sup> Mitchell 2012 330

to Luisa Rey is the name of a factory where the clones are grown – *Hydra*. *Hydra* was also name of a dangerous project, which made a fortune for the company Seaboard, in nuclear power engineering whose by-product was uranium which was used to make weapons. Luisa Rey investigated the whole plot.

**An Orison of Sonmi-451** provides an excellent example of the influence of Buddhism. Hae-Joo Im and Sonmi-451 are staying in the sanctuary in the abbey for a while. There is a huge statue nearby: “... *from the rock emerged the carved features of a giant sitting in the lotus position.*”<sup>152</sup> Hae-Joo Im explains to Sonmi-451 that this giant used to be worshipped as a God *who offered salvation from a perpetuity of birth and rebirth.*<sup>153</sup> The Abbess of the abbey introduces even better description of Buddha:

*(Buddha) doesn't bolster our luck, inflict punishment, change the weather or protect us from the pain of life. He did teach about overcoming pain, however, and how to earn a higher reincarnation in future lifetimes.*<sup>154</sup>

Sonmi-451 wishes she was reincarnated in the Abyss's community. Her wish might come true because Zachry lives under the patronage of the Abyss as well.

**Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After** represents a society which worships Goddess Sonmi. They believe she protects their *Nine Folded Valleys* and takes care of their souls. They also believe in past lives and rebirth: “*Time was we mem'ried our gone lives, time was we cudn't...*” or “*...we knew we'd always be reborned as Valleysmen, an' so death weren't so scarysome for us, nay.*”<sup>155</sup> The faith in reincarnation drives off the fear of death.

When Zachry sees the record of Sonmi-451 for the first time he immediately feels attracted to her: “*Bud I cudn't forget that ghost-girl neither, nay, she haunted my dreams wakin'n'sleepin'. So many feelin's I'd got I didn't have room 'nuff for 'em.*”<sup>156</sup> Obviously meeting our past incarnation may mean a lot of confusion.

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<sup>152</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 345.

<sup>153</sup> Mitchell 2012 345

<sup>154</sup> Mitchell 2012 348

<sup>155</sup> Mitchell 2012 255

<sup>156</sup> Mitchell 2012 278

While Zachry is drunk and drugged he imagines: *"I glimpsed all the lifes my soul ever was till far-far back b'fore the Fall..."*<sup>157</sup> It might be only a hallucination, however, there are special states of trance when a man might see the past.

Zachry often mentions that his soul is burdened. Because it is soul which travels after death he is not sure what will happen to him. Even though he does not let it trouble him much, occasionally he worries whether Old Georgie, the devil, will gain his soul.

Zachry believes: *"Souls cross the skies o'time ... like clouds crossin' skies o'the world."*<sup>158</sup> This symbol of the sky, clouds and travelling of souls is signified in the title *Cloud Atlas*. This is emphasised in Zachry's following words:

*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. Who can say where the clouds blown 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.*<sup>159</sup>

In other words, our souls move like the clouds, everything is changing and no one knows the future, only the cloud atlas, i.e. something beyond this world.

#### 4.5 Buddhistic references

*Cloud Atlas* is one big chain of causes and consequences, the foundation stone of Buddhism. Characters of the book are suffering, crying, smiling, winning and losing only to influence the future in a way they cannot imagine. Even though their actions seem little and meaningless they go on and in the end they learn their lesson, even a little bit of a lesson. Even if they lose, they win something or at least they are not forgotten. *Cloud Atlas* also emphasises that our actions do not influence only our lives, but lives of the others in the present and the future as well. Knowing this can be very binding, even frightening. Sonmi-451's death (**An Orison of Sonmi-451**) does not mean she lost because she was able to show the society its not very pleasant picture. Despite being one tiny clone she fights to the bitter end and turns into a symbol of hope or a kind of a goddess in Zachry's story.

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<sup>157</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 302.

<sup>158</sup> Mitchell 2012 318

<sup>159</sup> Mitchell 2012 324

Buddhism teaches us that we have to make efforts for our goal. In other words, nothing is for free. Sonmi-451 has to study hard to gain the knowledge she seeks. In **The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish** the hero has to fight his own weaknesses, fear and unfriendly environment to escape and be liberated in the form of keeping his own life, finding freedom and joy. **The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing** brings the evidence of wickedness of men which Adam Ewing has always been aware of but at the end of his journey he has finally become careful of it. Luisa Rey (**Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery**) has always been hard-working as an ambitious journalist. She is actually quite inventive but her abilities differ from Robert Frobisher (**Letters from Zedelghem**) whose inventiveness is sneakier or more cunning. If I divided main characters according to their efforts I would create three groups. The first place is given to Sonmi-451, who would even give her life to prove her right, followed by Luisa Rey and her clever inventive mind combined with a lot of actions. The second group is formed by Robert Frobisher, who solves his trouble using everyone and would do anything for music, and Timothy Cavendish, who takes an active part in the adventurous escape from Aurora House but I suspect him he will remain the same boring businessman as he was before. Last group belongs to Adam Ewing and Zachry (**Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After**) who are luckier than one would accept as possible. Zachry even makes a remark about being lucky in case of misfortune: "...I was jus' Zachry the Unlucky'n' Lucky."<sup>160</sup> However, to be honest I have to admit that luck plays an important role in every story as well as something we may call fate.

Buddhists strive for a life without hurting each other. *Cloud Atlas* shows us how we hurt each other because of actions and behaviour of other people as well as because of our own mistakes. Zachry has lived with the sense of guilt since he caused his father's death and his brother's abduction. Later he loses his tribe. It is said that pain makes you stronger. However, I cannot say Zachry is stronger at the end of the story.

*Bodhisattva* reminds me of Sonmi-451. When she decides to change her own destiny she discovers she is an excellent student. She becomes familiar with not only many branches of general knowledge but with knowledge of mankind as well. At the beginning of her journey she is literally enlightened, at that moment she starts thinking and being aware of the world around her as an intelligent being, not just a working machine. In the end she is able to use

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<sup>160</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 252.



her abilities and knowledge to awaken the others from their ignorance. *Bodhisattva* stays with people, however, sometimes to stay means to go. Sonmi-451 has to leave the world, she has to die to stay in people's minds and hearts. Sonmi-451 is killed but she seems not to feel any pain. She might reach the point when she gets rid of the thirst for living therefore she feels free from any suffering.

*Karma* as the law of action and reaction seems to reward the good deeds and makes you suffer for the bad deeds. However, the world of *Cloud Atlas* does not seem to follow this teaching exactly. Adam Ewing is not a villain but he suffers greatly in the hands of a greedy doctor. We may ask ourselves what Adam did to deserve such a bad treatment. He might have behaved cruelly in his previous life or he might just pay for his naivety. As I mentioned before the ignorance leads to hardship, so people must seek the truth to be enlightened but a man does not have to do it alone.<sup>161</sup> In the end Adam is saved by Autua whom Adam helped before what proves an interesting use of *karma*. I would like to add that you do not have a pleasant life just because you are a nice person. In other words, a man does not know the consequences of every deed he has ever done.

Even though violence and death are faithful companions of our characters it does not mean it is right. However, it also does not mean it will stop. There is an interesting remark in **The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing**. The Moriori, the native inhabitants of the Chatham Islands, are considered to be savages but they observe "*Thou Shalt Not Kill*"<sup>162</sup> like no one else. They believe that whoever spills a man's blood will be punished in the most horrible way because such people will lose not just their honour, possession, status, but even their soul.

#### 4.6 The relation to Shintoism

One of the greatest interconnection between Shintoism and *Cloud Atlas* may be expressed by the idea of the life in harmony with nature as well as society. The story of **An Orison of Sonmi-451** is a portrait of a collapsed harmony when the society literally feeds on itself and lives surrounded by damaged environment due to toxicity and radioactivity. A clone remarks

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<sup>161</sup> KNOTKOVÁ-ČAPKOVÁ, B. et al. *Základy asijských náboženství: Judaismus, islám, hinduismus, džinismus, buddhismus, sikhismus, pársismus*. Praha: Karolinum, 2004.

<sup>162</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 12.

on his work: “We operate in deadlands so infected or radioactive that purebloods perish there like bacteria in bleach.”<sup>163</sup>

When the evil deeds cause disharmony of nature then the feeling of guilt reaches cosmic dimensions.<sup>164</sup> Last story, in time order, outlines the possibility of the future when man’s wrongdoing reaches the civilization and affects it greatly. The world as we know no longer exists in **Sloosha’s Crossin’ an’ Ev’rythin’ After**. Hundreds years from now the only inhabitants of the Earth seem to be the ones who survived *the Fall* – the fall of the civilization. It appears that technology and wars destroyed almost everything. The present inhabitants live in a primitive way which reminds me of prehistoric times. However, it does not mean the end of the human race, rather a new beginning.

As I mentioned in the chapter *Shintoism*, Shintoists believe that no one can live alone. They are dependent on their families, society, homeland, nature and *kami*.<sup>165</sup> In **The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish** the main character tries hard to escape Aurora House, his brother and underworld’s creditors. However, until he makes friends he is not able to succeed. If Louisa Rey in **Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery** was not supported by the others she would neither reveal the dark side of the project *Hydra* nor would she avoid death. Finally, Sonmi-451 in **An Orison of Sonmi-451** is left alone because there is no one who would stand by her.

What I personally find unusual is the gender aspect of Shintoism. A position of women is not ignored in this religion. Actually, it used to be highlighted but such a privilege has changed. Even though women are still believed to possess great supernatural skills they are submitted to men who, in turn, are submitted to the emperor.<sup>166</sup> As for Sonmi-451, she is submitted to every human being since she is a clone. At least this inferior position of Sonmi-451 is what the regime wants.

Sonmi-451’s world is ruled by Catechisms, i.e. religion. These Catechisms symbolize the highest order according to which people and clones should live their lives. The government is turned into religion which cannot be disobeyed. Even Shintoism plays a role in political power and signifies unfortunate consequences for those who make *kami* angry.

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<sup>163</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 215.

<sup>164</sup> KNOTKOVÁ-ČAPKOVÁ, B. et al. *Základy asijských náboženství II*. Praha: Karolinum, 2005.

<sup>165</sup> Knotková-Čapková 2005

<sup>166</sup> Knotková-Čapková 2005

The conviction of helpfulness and selfishness in Shintoism puts an interesting contrast to the predatory ways of living in *Cloud Atlas*. Shintoists believe in the world of order, harmony and unity which is determined by mutual help and cooperation. D. Mitchell outlines an idea of people who live by the law: *eat or be eaten*<sup>167</sup> because they have always *hunger for more*.<sup>168</sup> According to Shintoism, this conviction will only destroy you.

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<sup>167</sup> MITCHELL, D. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2012. s. 509.

<sup>168</sup> Mitchell 2012 286

## 5 Conclusion

My bachelor thesis introduced the English novelist David Mitchell. His interest in themes of predacity, human's hunger and the manipulation of the environment was expressed in his third novel *Cloud Atlas* which he published in 2004. He played with genres, time and space to emphasise the difficulty of the good and the evil.

*Cloud Atlas* consists of six parts. **The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing** is a diary which describes the voyage of a naive American lawyer from the Chatham Islands to America in the 1850s. **Letters from Zedelghem** as an epistolary novel is told through letters of reckless Robert Frobisher about his acquaintance with a famous composer in Belgium in 1931. **Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery** as an exciting thriller introduces a journalist striving for publishing a dangerous nuclear project in America of 1970s. A self-conceited publisher is hiding from his creditors in an unexpectedly harsh nursing home of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the memoir-novel **The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish**. An ascended clone talks about her experience in far future Korea while she is waiting for death in **An Orison of Sonmi-451**. An islander experiences the twilight of the science and civilisation on future Hawaii in **Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After**.

Last two stories deal with features of science fiction and dystopia while the first three ones show features of a historical novel. The whole work may be considered as a postmodern one due to author's fascination with themes like the technological progress and scientific influence as well as the language and genre's possibilities or the plurality of the history.

The primary aim of my bachelor thesis *Predation in Literature, David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas* was to describe the theme of predation and reincarnation in the novel *Cloud Atlas*.

Predation as the relationship based on living on the weak is introduced as the main instrument of changing lives of main characters. The concept of natural selection by Charles Darwin is connected with a sociologist movement social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer. To sum up, only the strongest and the most flexible ones are able to survive in the environment.

**The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing** connects a greedy doctor with the cruel ways of colonisation. The game – Who is the bigger predator? – is played by two composers in **Letters from Zedelghem**. The two-faced politics is introduced in **Half-Lives – The First Luisa**

**Rey Mystery.** The old are mistreated in **The Ghastly ordeal of Timothy Cavendish**. The abuse of clones as inferior beings without souls, feelings and thoughts is presented by Sonmi-451. Zachry lives in a world where elemental instincts celebrate victory over civilised manners. In other words, David Mitchell presents a society which destroys itself due to hunger for more.

Apart from predation, a question of humanity as well as faith is considered there. The mankind seems to be losing from the beginning when it fights to change the course of destiny. Robert Frobisher, Timothy Cavendish and Luisa Rey represent those who really strive for changing their destiny. They do not believe in God or anything supernatural, only in themselves. On the other hand, Zachry and Adam Ewing are believers who rely on their faith. Sonmi-451 also grows up in the environment of Catechisms. These three characters accept their fate as it is. However, it does not seem to matter if all characters fight or not because they cannot change their destiny in the end. Moreover, their environment gradually loses the humanity in the process.

The next theme of *Cloud Atlas* represents the idea of rebirth. Reincarnation works with the concept of travelling of souls according to individual *karma*. It symbolizes the eternal cycle of life. Death does not mean the end, but the beginning. The symbol of a comet travels as a birthmark from one character to another. Their lives are only pieces in the cycle of the world. However, their actions, no matter how small they are, influence their future incarnations as well as the whole civilization. Everything is interconnected.

According to Buddhist faith, the goal of every human being should be to reach nirvana. Contrary to Buddhism, Shintoists prefer unselfishly public good and life in harmony with nature. What do characters of *Cloud Atlas* actually want? From my perspective, Adam Ewing would possibly like to offer a safer place for his son. Robert Frobisher is always lost in his composition. Luisa Rey would like to excel in her work. Money combined with freedom seems to be the right thing for Timothy Cavendish. Sonmi-451 achieves her goal by publishing her *Declaration*, however, she might just want to be left alone. Finally, Zachry might want to turn back time and have his family and homeland again. Reincarnation offers the unsatisfied the second chance in the form of next incarnation. However, the main emphasis is put on breaking out of the cycle of lives and reaching the enlightenment. Even if

every tiny wish was fulfilled it would not bring the true happiness and liberation which only the enlightenment provides.

To summarize, *Cloud Atlas* suggests the consequences of human's deeds which may happen soon or in the next life. From my perspective, David Mitchell wonders what would happen if predation overcame humanity and thus he proposes an important question for consideration.

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