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## Abstract (English)

Even though popular movies are often perceived as superficial and shallow, many of them have deeper religious and philosophical meanings. The "Cloud Atlas" is a complex film adaption of a complex novel by David Mitchell, which can be interpreted from numerous religious and philosophical perspectives. The film employs many direct references to philosophy and indirect allusions to Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism. The objective of this paper was to identify Jewish theosophic elements within the film. Many narrative and visual aspects of the film fit well within the Jewish theosophic cosmological picture. Finally, I conclude that the symbols, motifs, dialogues and character development present in the film point towards a Jewish theological interpretation.

## Abstrakt (Deutsch)

Obwohl populäre Filme oft als oberflächlich und flach wahrgenommen werden, haben viele von ihnen tiefere religiöse und philosophische Bedeutungen. Der "Wolkenatlas" ist eine komplexe Verfilmung eines ebenso komplexen Romans von David Mitchell, der aus mehreren religiösen und philosophischen Perspektiven interpretiert werden kann. Der Film besitzt viele direkte Bezüge zur Philosophie und indirekte Anspielungen auf Christentum, Judentum und Buddhismus. Das Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, jüdische theosophische Elemente innerhalb des Films zu identifizieren. Viele narrative und visuelle Aspekte des Films passen gut in das jüdische theosophische kosmologische Bild. Daraus lässt sich folgern, dass der Film selbst, seine Symbole, Motive, Dialoge und Charakterentwicklung Interpretationen stützen, die im Bereich der jüdischen Theologie und Mystik angesiedelt sind.

## 1. Introduction

Scheidt (2007) noticed that many popular movies have religious elements. Motifs like longing for freedom and salvation are present in movies of all genres, while science fiction and fantasy films are especially loaded with biblical subtext (Kozlovic, 2001). Religion reflects the present world critically and promises a possibility of creating better reality. Fritsch (2007) writes that religion got a new "face" in the postmodern era of pluralization and individualization. Since traditional religious and philosophical narrative styles are less interesting to the modern audience, old and well-known narratives take the form of films. As will be discussed later, one of the biggest motives in the "Cloud Atlas" is redemption of the mankind, a typical religious symbol. (Scheidt, 2007) Religious and philosophical motives and symbols have become an object of interest for many media studies scholars. Davidowicz (2017) in "Film als Midrasch" noticed that particularly Jewish theosophic motives are common in popular films. In their movie trilogy "The Matrix", the Wachowski siblings have used a number of religious and philosophical references, as already noticed by philosophers and media studies scholars. Another science fiction masterpiece by the Wachowskis and Tom Tykwer (2012) with numerous philosophic and religious references is "Cloud Atlas". Even though the movie is based upon a book, there are significant differences between the two. I will mention and describe some of them, but will not go into much detail, as this is not the objective of the thesis.

The film's synopsis describes it as:

"an exploration of how the actions of individual lives impact one another in the past, present and future, as one soul is shaped from a killer into a hero, and an act of kindness ripples across centuries to inspire a revolution". (The Wachowskis, 15.9.2011.)

The film takes place in six different dimensions of time and space – 1849 Pacific Islands (here often referred to as "the first narrative"), 1936 Edinburgh ("the second narrative"), 1973 San Francisco (the third narrative), 2012 UK ("the fourth narrative"), 2144 Neo Seoul ("the fifth narrative"), 2321 Big Islands ("the sixth narrative"). Each story has a title in the novel. However, the film does not employ these titles, so I will refer to the narratives according to film descriptions, rather than titles from the novel.



In this paper, I will analyze some of the most important aspects of the Cloud Atlas movie with a special focus on elements pointing to Jewish theosophy. I will analyze each story separately, as well as connections present in all six narratives. My interpretation will be based specifically on the Zohar (2016) and kabbalistic symbolism present within the film. The premise of this thesis is that the film "Cloud Atlas", based upon the novel by David Mitchell (2004), directed by the Wachowskis and Tom Tykwer, is a film with extraordinary philosophical depth, containing elements of Jewish theosophy, which can be interpreted using Kabbalistic method of content interpretation. I will focus on significance of the protagonists and their roles, symbols present within visual imagery and thematic elements of the plot. I will analyse the plot themes from Zoharitic viewpoint to determine the extent to which they can fit into a Kabbalistic world scheme, and whether "Cloud Atlas" can be viewed as a film based on major Jewish themes.

In my analysis, I will focus primarily on following theosophic theories:

- 1) theory of interchange between Upper and Lower worlds,
- 2) system of cosmological spheres (Sefirot),
- 3) reincarnation (Gilgul),
- 4) theory of Tikkun and human role in "correction" of the world,
- 5) progression of history towards Messianic era,
- 6) role and characteristics of the Messiah,
- 7) implication of language for creation of the world.

I will also try to encompass significant visual symbols, such as motif of stars / comets and color scheme used within the film.

In Chapter 2, I will review some of the relevant literature regarding the film "Cloud Atlas" as well as the novel. In subchapters of chapter 2, some of the most notable elements of the film and novel, such as plot shifts, will be defined. In Chapter 3, structure of the film will be analyzed according to methods of Bohrmann (2007) and Seeßlen (1992). I will define parts of the film which belong to Exposition, Confrontation and Resolution, as well as point out the contrast between boomerang structure of the novel versus the time-arrow structure of the film. In Chapter 4, I will review literature related to semiotic analysis of "Cloud Atlas" and relevant semiotic signs pointing towards Marxist theories of hegemony, commodification and reification. In chapter 5, significant visual and auditive elements of the film will be examined.

In chapter 6, I will briefly explain basic Kabbalistic theories relevant for my analysis. I will start to prove my premise, that is, that the film contains numerous elements pertaining to Jewish theosophy, using the Zohar as the primary source. Chapter 7 will define the film's genre. Spatial typology and importance of spaces for the plot will be analyzed. In chapters 8 and 9, thematic elements common to all six narratives of the film, will be examined. Particular emphasis will be put on motifs from Judaism and Jewish theosophy, such as motif of redemption (Tikkun), knowledge (Da'at), importance of interhuman relationships, Messianism, reincarnation (Gilgul) and six days of creation of the world. In chapter 10, each story will be interpreted individually, using Zoharitic interpretation method, Sod. In chapter 11, evolution of each character will be analyzed and placed within Kabbalistic framework. In Chapter 12, I will start to sum up the thesis, once again mentioning differences between the film and the novel, as well similarities between the film "Cloud Atlas" and trilogy "The Matrix". In Chapter 13, a brief conclusion will be made.

## 2. Literature Review

Even though there is a variety of literature on "The Matrix" trilogy, there is not much literature on the film "Cloud Atlas". Therefore, in my thesis, I used some of the literature focusing on the novel by David Mitchell to help explain the plot elements relevant to my paper, which are present both within the novel and the film. In this context, I will underline some differences, but I will not go into details, because this is not the purpose of the thesis.

### 2.1. Novel vs. Film

According to Bayer (2015), the novel "Cloud Atlas" is a postapocalypse. Its non-linear plot structure refers to postcolonialism, environmentalism and technological disasters. Bayer (2015) also claims that the novel wants to show that each historical era is marked by catastrophic developments – and every "present time" is therefore destined to end in a disaster. Brown (2016) writes that Mitchell uses metafiction and intertextual devices to make the reader make connections between the otherwise separated narratives, as well as modern-world implications. According to Mitchell himself, the main theme of the novel is interconnectedness of cause and effect (Roadshow Films, 2013). In individualistic postmodern world, as communities and families become smaller, people think of themselves

as isolated individuals, even though they are all part of a bigger collective. "Cloud Atlas" shows that the totality of space, time and consciousness functions as one organism.

## 2.2. Language of the book

According to Gessert (2005), the book uses extraordinary language, employing different writing styles – historical, romantic, journalistic, etc. Mitchell used accurate styles to immitate 19th century diary, love letters from 1930s, journalistic reports from 1970s and near-future 2012. Furthermore, Mitchell invented two languages – one for Sonmi-451, a clone worker in the fast food restaurant in dystopian Neo Seoul, and another one for Zachry, a postapocalyptic goatherd after the collapse of civilization based on technocracy. Obviously, these writing styles were hard to transfer to the film. Another motif present in the book, but invisible in the film, is that of war between two native Polynesian tribes in 19th century narrative. The physically superior Maori oppress the Moriori and attempt to wipe their race out through genocide. Interestingly, this criticism is not directed towards the colonial powers, but towards inner conflicts of the native tribes. According to Gessert (2005), two native tribes, speaking the same language, but one violent and one non-violent, represent two aspects of humanity: its positive and negative side (or "inclination" in the Zohar). In his view, the "Cloud Atlas" is a "metaphor for humanity as a cloud, interconnected and fragmenting, each part containing particles and possibilities of others, constantly flowing" (Gessert, 2005: 425). Subtle connections between the stories send forth a deeply humanistic message with Buddhist motifs. Each protagonist leaves behind the known reality and faces forms of "murderous selfishness"(ebd.) in the unknown. Gessert argues that in the book "discontinuities outweigh continuities"as in many pieces of (post-)modern literature. However, I would argue that the the film demonstrated how much the stories actually overlap.

## 2.3. Major themes of the novel

Besides interconnectedness, love is the second major topic. In the novel, most characters are not romantically involved and their relationships are pragmatical rather than mystical. Guo (2013) mentions the example of the clone Sonmi from the fifth story, who is asked if she loved her rescuer, the rebel Chang, in both book and the film – but in the book the answer is ambiguous, whereas in the film love is the key element which extends beyond life and death.

As Sixsmith's niece put it in the second story, love is considered to be "a kind of natural phenomenon (...) love could outlive death". Guo (2013) concludes that some of the elements appear to be Buddhist, but the main underlying ideology is humanism. Some of the main principles of Buddhism are annihilation of self, quitting all connections with the material world and realization of own emptiness – while the movie advocates for human rights, mutual societal respect, legal equality and self-recognition of each individual. Even though Guo (2013) claims that the film supports atheism, it is not so; we are shown that religion can be used as means of control to preserve the status quo in the society in the first narrative, but the atheistic society of the fifth dystopian narrative is as evil, as humans have "become god" by applying genetic engineering. In this thesis I will try to show that the film itself favors a spiritual interpretation over the atheist one. The directors have made it clear that the film works in both spiritual and secular perspective. (CineFix, 2012) According to Shanahan (2016: 112), the novel itself is "postsecular", focusing on "transcendence and spirituality beyond seemingly mutually exclusive choices of conventional religiosity or its wholesale rejection". Shanahan writes that the protagonists can be viewed as "entry of individuals into Emerson's transpersonal Over-Soul (1841)", and the novel is Neotranscendentalist, mixing Nietzsche and Hegel with far-Eastern religious philosophies.

#### 2.4. "Cloud Atlas" as a "macronovel"

Harris-Birtill (2019: 9) describes the novel as "macronovel", which can be interpreted through different analytical tools and comparisons – "caleidoscope, planetary novel, house of fiction, rabbit warren, Ferris wheel, concentric circles, Venn diagram, carousel, Chinese box, labyrinth, rhizome or networked web structure, and even an old lady who swallowed a fly". She employs another analytical tool – a Hindu / Buddhist meditation aid mandala, a type of "ancient symbolic map (...) of a self-contained world-system" (10-11).

#### 2.5. Reception of the Film

The film received mixed reviews. One of German-speaking filmologists who negatively commented on the movie is Georg Seeßlen. He considered it just another popcorn-cinema movie, like "The Matrix", but even worse because six movie plots are combined into one movie. According to Seeßlen (2015), the movie is a megalomanyan project which could not

have turned out good due to overambition of its directors. I strongly disagree with this point, and I hope this paper will prove that the film is abundant with complex philosophy, which Seeßlen might have not understood at all. According to Peberdy (2014), the mixed reviews of the film are a result of audiences' wish to perceive a film that is more "easily digestible" rather than a legitimate criticism (169). Wilkes (2012) writes that the film failed commercially due to its complexity, rather than lack of quality, as the viewers found it difficult to understand interconnectedness of the plots. There is a numeric similarity with "The Matrix", as there are six storylines and six reboots of "The Matrix". Wilkes (2012) speculates that every narrative could possibly be taking place inside one of the versions of the "matrix", as everything is connected in this multiverse. He especially noticed how the visuals and plot devices of the story number five are very similar to those in "The Matrix", with the humans produced in tanks and used as an energy source to feed other clones. Wilkes (2012) further supports his hypothesis by the fact that Hugo Weaving who plays agent Smith in "The Matrix" plays a negative character in each of the six Cloud Atlas storylines. Many critics such as Parker (2016) and Guo (2013) agree that the film "Cloud Atlas" is a successful adaption of the novel by Mitchell, which accurately portrayed issues and themes presented in the novel. Guo (2013) holds that both the novel and the film are inspired by Buddhist philosophy, but I will go further into this claim in the following chapters.

In spite of the film's moderate earnings and mixed criticism, the Wachowskis and Tom Tykwer are directors who work for the sake of art, not for the sake of income. The interviewer David Faraci pointed out, while talking to the Wachowskis, that the message of their previous film "Speed Racer" had been exactly that winning is not important, only the process itself (CineFix, 2012).

## 2.6. Freedom of Choice vs. Predestination

Shoop / Ryan (2015) argue that characters in the novel are trapped between possibility of free choice and having (biologically) predetermined realities. The novel and the film both question whether history is driven by imperatives "that render the desires, intentions and actions of traditional ethical subjects of historiography – whether world historical individuals, classes, or nations" (Shoop / Ryan, 2015: 93). The theory of Big History, wherein all past and future times are interconnected, plays a role in "Cloud Atlas", wherein historical forces and human agencies are in clash against each other. In order to fight against their biological

predeterminations ("evil inclination" in the Zohar), humans in the novel affirm their "respiritualized subjectivity". Obviously, in spite of outer (and inner) forces, humans have the capability to rise above the given reality. (Shoop / Ryan, 2015)

Guo (2013) and many others see the novel and the film as "rooted in a seemingly-Buddhist humanistic schema" (Guo, 2013: 1). The Buddhist idea of reincarnation comes from the idea of "dependent arising" (*pratityasamutpada*) based upon the principle of universal interconnectedness of all things. Sonmi's sentence "our lives are not our own. We are bound to others, past and present, and by each crime and every kindness, we birth our future" appears often throughout the movie. Guo (2013) also interprets the symbolism behind the star-shaped birthmark, which "seems to indicate something scientific yet mysterious, such as destiny or love".

The author himself (Mitchell, 2012a) wrote that his novel allows freedom of interpretation to the readers, and "a novel contains as many versions of itself as it has readers, whereas a film's final cut vaporizes any other way it might have been made". Even though Mitchell "loved" the film by the Wachowskis, whom he considers amazing directors (Roadshow Films, 2013), he thought that the idea of a "story boomerang" has not been sufficiently preserved in the movie, due to its structure of a "pointilistic mosaic". According to Mitchell (2012a: 147), the purpose of the novel was to show that future is open and it is still possible to change the world and avoid the fate of the sixth narrative; in his opinion, the film shows all these events as predestined and fixed in time and space. Mitchell feels that his characters' "virtual future" became "actual future" in the film. The novel sets forth the following model of time:

"an infinite matryoshka doll of painted moments, each 'shell' (the present) encased inside a nest of 'shells' (previous presents) I call the actual past but which we perceive as the virtual past. The doll of 'now' likewise encases a nest of presents yet to be, which I call actual future but which we perceive as the virtual future" (Cloud Atlas, 393).

However, I would argue that cyclical structure of his book may imply closedness of the narrative. The "Russian doll model" by Mitchell is described as containing "actual past / future" which is only perceived as "virtual past / future". If the future is already actual, then there is no free choice. On the other hand, film's time-arrow structure signifies openness, implying that there is a goal to the mankind. The basic premises of cyclicity versus linearity are, of course, different. Mitchell's book employs a Hindu-Buddhistic philosophy more

heavily than Judeo-Christian. In broader Hindu-Buddhistic view, history is repeating itself in predetermined circles, and there is no way of escaping it. On the contrary, Judeo-Christian philosophy endorses freedom of choice as important contributing factor in how the history will be shaped. In the film, every action of each character has an important effect in both directions – future and past – while the book implies a closed structure. Therefore, my premise is that the film relies more heavily on Judeo-Christian symbolism than Buddhist.

## 2.7. Filmmaking Process

According to the Wachowskis, the complexity of the novel struck them. They liked the "idea that every person you meet has a potential of having major impact on the structure of your life". (Lana Wachowski during Devin Faraci's interview, CineFix, 2012) Music has a great significance in the film, having a "cord-like structure" intertwining through different dimensions. The directors wrote the music for the film months before starting filming. According to them, music should not be an "addition" to the film, but a structural part of the plot, one character with its personality. (CineFix, 2012)

In order to connect fragmented narratives, the directors spread cards consisting important plot points on floors, having many rooms full of cards in the end, searching a "wire", dialogical, musical and plotwise connections between the narratives. In contrast to some critics who thought that "discontinuities overweigh continuities", the directors saw an inherent logic in the novel right away. (CineFix, 2012) It is clear that individuals such as Gessert (2005) failed to understand the novel, just like Seeßlen (2015) failed to understand the film.

While making the film, the directors had a strong belief that their public "do not want to be passive consumers" seeking mere entertainment. The Wachowskis were especially counting on the fans of their previous film, most notably "The Matrix". It was their purpose to intellectually engage the viewers "seeking challenging material" (Lana Wachowski during Devin Faraci's interview, CineFix, 2012). Sadly, a big number of the viewers and critics were not up to the task, and the film was not a major success commercially.

## 2.8. Controversies surrounding the Film – Political Correctness

There were accusations of racism coming from The Media Action Network for Asian Americans, who criticized "yellowfacing". (Peberdy, 2014) However, this clearly implies misunderstanding the purpose of the film, which

"thematically (...) transcends boundaries of race and gender, location and time, and it tells a story that implies the nature of humanity is beyond all those boundaries" (Lana Wachowski, Production Notes, 3).

Even though it was pointed out that Asians' appearance was limited to use of eyelid prosthetics, while not considering the facial structure, the filmmakers explained that the goal was not for the actors to "pass for the respective ethnicity or gender". (Peberdy, 2014) In order for the narrative to make sense, it was necessary to keep the actors recognizable, therefore the crew worked hard not to use excessive make-up where not necessary. (Nazzaro, 2012)

## 2.9. Pushing the Boundaries

According to the Wachowskis, the viewers are expected participate in a construction of meanings behind the film and their lives (DP / 30: The Oral History of Hollywood, 2012). While making "The Matrix", the Wachowskis had a quote by Arthur Schopenhauer on their wall: "The fundament upon which all our knowledge and learning rests is the Inexplicable." (2000, Vol 1.) Viewers need to be open and willing to perceive the Inexplicable, transcending their old material understanding of the world. According to the directors, both secular and spiritual interpretations of the film are possible, however, the Wachowskis endorse a deeper spiritual interpretation. (CineFix, 2012) "We are always interested in the nature of Inexplicability", Lana said (2012).

According to Lana Wachowski, the directors sought the ways to emphasize similarities between the narratives, as well new ways to "push further" cinematic aesthetics, just like they did with "The Matrix" (CineFix Interview, 2012; Depaul VAS Interview, 2014). In order to accomplish this in "Cloud Atlas", they used a "combined tone" while cutting and putting scenes together in the editing process. Another radical cinematic move was to use the same actors for each of the narratives, opening up spaces for secular and spiritual interpretations.



These interpretations will be analyzed later in the thesis. In the next chapter, I will focus on structure analysis.

### 3. Structure of the Film

After introductory remarks about the process of transmission of "Cloud Atlas" from novel to film, I will explain the structure and identify most relevant plot points of the film. At the beginning of this chapter, I will mention the basic premises of structure analysis which I will apply to "Cloud Atlas".

#### 3.1. Theoretical Framework

Bohrmann (2007) defined the basic pattern of dramatical structure in most popular films. An average film has a three-act structure, consisting from exposition, confrontation and resolution. In the first act, the protagonist and his usual lifestyle are introduced. Even though this phase is usually as long as ten minutes, in "Cloud Atlas" it is much longer, because there are multiple narratives happening. A few critics noticed the film structure bears similarities to Griffith's 1916 film "Intolerance", which has four stories taking place in separate dimensions. (Hemon, 2012)

Seeßlen (1992: 541) also writes that most film plots have three-part structure: in the beginning the viewers are shown what an empty, everyday life without redemption looks like. In the main second part, the protagonist has to travel, fight and work towards solving conflicts and problems. In this part, the "hero" also has to overcome temptations. Finally, we are shown the protagonist's "new life" after he achieved redemption. Even if the end is not a straightforward "happy-end", it has to offer a solution to the problem and some kind of redemption to the protagonist. Shortly, the structure is: 1) exposition, 2) confrontation, 3) solution / redemption. (Seeßlen, 1992: 541) Joseph Campbell (2008) in his model called "The Hero's Journey" introduced further clarification to three acts, which he called 1) separation, 2) supreme ordeal, 3) unification, defining each myth through 8 plot stages. These 8 stages were expanded into 12 universal stages by Vogler (2004) which can be applied to any plot.

I will use these theoretical frameworks to define and explain the structure of the film "Cloud Atlas". Even though the plot structure in "Cloud Atlas" is not as simple, because there are six

plots in six different dimensions of time and space, these frameworks can still be applied to every individual story, and to the film as a whole. The film contains ca. 200 narrative shifts, some of which are only milliseconds long (Hemon, 2012).

The "Hero's Journey" model can be applied well, because every protagonist is travelling horizontally and vertically, and each one of them is a "hero", because their actions (and writings) from the present will have a major impact on humanity in future. Secondly, each protagonist employs some means of transportation while undertaking their "Hero's Journey" – ship (1849), train (1936), car (1975), train and car (2012), motorcycle and flying car (2144), spaceship (2321).

### 3.2. Events Essential for the Plot

Parker (2016: 126) identifies the following events as essential: 1) when the greedy dr. Goose (Tom Hanks) begins to poison Adam Ewing (Jim Sturgess); 2) when the old composer Ayrs (Jim Broadbent) employs Frobisher (Ben Whishaw); 3) when the journalist Luisa Rey (Halle Berry) gives her card to the whistle-blowing physicist Sixsmith (James Darcy) her card; 4) when the gang of author's brothers threatens Cavendish (Jim Broadbent) to give them a fair share of the profits, 5) Sonmi-451 (Doona Bae) witnessing the killing of her friend Yoona-939 (Xun Zhou); 6) the Abbess (Susan Sarandon) giving the prophecy to Zachry. Parker (2016) also writes that Tom Hanks' character is actually the main protagonist (out of all six) because he most noticeably progresses from an evil, greedy murderer to the intelligent tribeman wanting to rescue humanity.

### 3.3. The "Hook" – In Medias Res

Within the first ten minutes of the film, the viewers decide whether or not they like the story – therefore, the "hook" is set up in order to make the viewers interested. This is usually accomplished through spectacular, bold imagery with little dialogue. Expressive images define the basic atmosphere of the film, the milieu or central themes. (Bohrmann, 2007)

Apart from already established six plots, one can argue that there is a seventh overarching story as well, rounding up the narrative. Because multiple dimensions of time and space exist in the film, the structure is also more complex than that described by Bohrmann. There is an

additional *foreshadowing* of the film, which cannot be viewed strictly as an exposition, starting "in medias res" from the beginning of the film until the minute 5:11. Even though not an "exposition" in the literal sense, this part still corresponds to the "hook" described by Bohrmann (2007), being non-linear and expressive, with images altering every few seconds in order to engage the viewer. Similarly, the "Backstorywounds"(Borhmann, 2007) are alluded to, since the viewer has to keep watching the film in order to find out how exactly these six protagonists found themselves in difficult situations.

### 3.3.1. Basic Premises

I will briefly describe the set-up and basic premises of each plot in order to explain its structure.

In the first and final scene, Zachry tells the story of his life (the sixth story), but his present-day self is not placed within the sixth story itself, rather, he recalls it in flashbacks, from yet different time and place (sometime after 2321; on a distant planet). In the novel, every story is divided in two parts except this one. Tan (2014) sees this story as an apex of the novel.

Images change in a kaleidoscope-like manner, spilling from one reality to the next every few seconds. The introduction is brought by Zachary, telling a story to his grandchildren, as the wind brings up the stories of their ancestors. "All voices, tied up into one. One voice is different. One voice, whispering out there, spying from the dark". Zachry is alluding to their version of the devil, Old Georgie, who still exists even in the post-post-apocalypse. He announces that he is about to tell his grandchildren the first time he met with the devil, and a moment later, we see Ewing meeting his potential murderer dr. Goose (1849).

Already at this point, the viewers have noticed that different characters are portrayed by same actors. The viewers can also see that there are six parallel narratives and six protagonists, albeit the one who begins to tell the story (Zachry, Tom Hanks) may be the "main" one. Even though time and place of each plot are not yet revealed, it is nevertheless clear that the narratives take place in different time eras, due to clothing, scenography and manner of speech within each story.

We find out that the first protagonist is a postapocalyptic tribesman Zachry (Tom Hanks) who tells a story about the past time, while a mysterious figure he calls Old Georgie was a threat to

him. Superstition in his beliefs, as well as a fact that he is sitting outside by the fire, under the sky full of stars, show the audience that this plot is set in either prehistorical or postapocalyptic era. He is an old man with peculiar scars around his left eyelid, remembering his own past (and other people's pasts). He says that this is the first time he had encountered Old Georgie (the devil figure) "eye to eye", thereby implying that this meeting is connected to his eyelid scar.

"Eye" will remain an important motif in the film, especially in the first narrative, because one look into eyes of a beaten slave Autua (David Gyasi) will cause Ewing's major character change, which ultimately set forth the whole plot. After introduction by Zachry, the audience encounters the second protagonist, Adam Ewing (Jim Sturgess), and it is clear that this plot takes place in 19<sup>th</sup> century. His clothes imply that he is a higher-class citizen, living somewhere near the ocean, probably as one of the colonialists.

### 3.3.2. Set-up and Basic Premises of each Plot

The *foreshadowing* part of the plot actually starts *in medias res*, in the moment where Ewing (Ben Whishaw) sees dr. Goose (Tom Hanks) digging in the sand (1849) and asks him: "Have you lost something?". The audience has already noticed that both Zachry and dr. Goose are played by Tom Hanks. Also, the narrator Ewing (reciting his diary) warns the audience about his health issue, which will become a potential plot point in future.

In the next scene, Luisa Rey (Halle Berry) sits in a car, recording the notes regarding the recent murder of Sixsmith. The audience is told that she is investigative a controversial case, and that some people working on the case had been murdered to protect a secret. She is driving her greenish Volkswagen car over the bridge towards the Lloyd inc, not knowing that her car would be pushed in water on her way back. The audience can conclude that she is an investigative journalist, working on a controversial case.

Close-up on a typing machine. Cavendish (Jim Broadbent), already having escaped from the nursing home, writes about the reason he had been put there. He describes himself as a book editor, writing a reflection on his life. He addresses "the reader" in second person, thereby calling directly to the audience to stay patient and keep watching: "I believe that if you, dear reader, can extend your patience for just a moment, you will find that there is a method to this tale of madness".

We see a black gun on a white paper with musical lines, while young musician Frobisher is narrating contents of his letter to Sixsmith (James D'Arcy, whom we do not see). Frobisher narrates that he had just killed himself in a bath of a dark wooden hotel room with a gun of Vyvyan Ayrs (it is not yet known that he is a reincarnation of Timothy Cavendish), but the reason is unknown to the viewers. He walks through a dark brown hall towards a white bathtub wearing white shirt and dark brown trousers. Sitting in a bathtub, he puts a gun in his mouth. Visuals are minimalistic, signifying his anxiety. Style makes it clear that the plot may be set between two World Wars.

Korean clone Sonmi-451 (Doona Bae) is captured and brought to interrogation by the Archivist in the name of Unanimity. Her dress is white, the table is dark brown and the surroundings are black. As the Archivist (James D'Arcy, a reincarnation of Sixsmith to whom the previous letter was addressed) mentions the government of Unanimity, it becomes clear that this story is taking place in a dystopian futuristic system.

Now that the viewers have been shown each narrative briefly, the images interchange in an even faster pace. Luisa Rey drives through numerous environmentalist activists protesting in front of the Lloyd factory. Cavendish says that "everything" (even though the audience does not know what exactly) started with a book promotion of a writer Dermot Hoggins. Dr. Goose tells Ewing that in the past, this beach was a cannibal settlement, where "the strong" used to eat "the weak" and spit out their teeth – already at this point, we learn about social-Darwinist attitude of Dr. Goose, who is digging out teeth of these victims in order to sell them. Similarly, we see how intertwined past and future are, because the Kona cannibals are going to live here in the future again. The Archivist tells Sonmi that her version of the truth is what matters, but she coldly replies: "The truth is singular. Its 'versions' are mistruths" (pg. 185 in the novel). After this bold statement by Sonmi, we see Frobisher putting a gun in his mouth saying: "Do not let themselves say I killed myself for love. I had my infatuations, but we both know in our hearts who is the sole love of my short, bright life.", followed by a blackout.

At 5:11, the *foreshadowing* intro is finished, and the actual stories start. Main themes such as 1) Darwinism, 2) love, 3) controversies around the nuclear power plant, 4) corporate Unanimity versus singularity of truth, 5) circulation of stories through generations, 6) themes of good and evil inclination to humanity are revealed. The audience learns that Evil itself is the main antagonist, personified in the Old Georgie. The viewer is left in suspense after these "hooks" are thrown, not knowing 1) what this Darwinist premise would unveil into; 2) what

exactly led to Frobisher's suicide and who his "love" is; 3) what kind of controversy there is around the corporation and why; 4) who Dermot Hoggins is, what he would do, and how it would affect the editor Cavendish; 5) what led to Sonmi's arrest, 6) what led to the postapocalypse and who is Old Georgie. In order to find out answers to these questions, the viewer needs to keep watching.

### 3.4. Exposition

Only after the "hook" is thrown, actual exposition starts. The images become slower and more screen time is dedicated to each story starting from now. In this part of the film, we learn about the protagonists and their life situation. In this part of the film, time and place of each story are revealed. (Bohrmann, 2007)

#### 3.4.1. Theoretical Framework of the Expository Part

According to Vogler (2004), the stages of the first act are: 1. introduction of the ordinary world, 2. call to the adventure, 3. refusal, 4. encounter with the mentor, 5. acceptance of the mission through the first trials. In end of the expository part, the central conflict of the plot is established. The first point of change, a surprising element known as Plot Point 1, is introduced. The plot is lead into a new direction in order to engage the viewer further. The protagonist has to reorientate in a new situation, where he receives a new information or has to make an important decision. Thereby, the common life of the character is dramatically changed. (Bohrmann, 2007) I will now describe how this theoretical framework applies to each of the narratives' expositions.

#### 3.4.2. Main Information Obtained in the Expository Part

At 5:33, we find out time and place of the first narrative – the Pacific Islands, 1849. The camera sinks from the sky down to the ship. We find out that Adam Ewing (Jim Sturgess) is a lawyer representing Haskell Moore (Hugo Weaving), a slaveowner, signing a contract with rev. Horrox (Hugh Grant), who mentions that the slavery had also existed in the Bible. After being led to the plantation, surprised at misstreatment of the slaves, he passes out. Halle Berry is shown among the slaves. Doctor Goose (Tom Hanks), seeing a key for the chest of gold

around Ewing's neck, decides to poison him, but the viewers do not know this yet. They are told that the protagonist is ill with a parasite infection. The Plot Point 1 happens here, as the protagonist learns about slavery and about his disease.

At 8:39, it is revealed that the second narrative takes place in 1936. in Cambridge. A young gay musician Robert Frobisher goes to the house of old composer Vyvyan Ayrs (Jim Broadbent) to work for him after being disinherited by his father. Ayrs mentions that music is like a dragon, sometimes killing its creator, alluding to the Crusades. Just before he gets sent away, Frobisher manages to catch the first melody right and play it on piano as Ayrs' young wife Jocasta (Halle Berry) walks in. She is the Plot Point 1, which will make Frobisher question his orientation. He describes everything in his letters to Sixsmith (James D'Arcy).

At 14:49, it is shown that the third narrative takes place in 1973 in San Francisco. After refusing a relationship with a drunk rock musician in the club, the journalist Luisa Rey (Halle Berry) gets stuck in the elevator with an older Sixsmith (James D'Arcy), who notices her comet-shaped birthmark similar to Frobisher's. The audience has already noticed at this point that this Sixsmith is an older version from 1936 Sixsmith. After that, he asks her which price she would pay to protect the source, and she replies: "Any". Right after the elevator gets repaired, before parting, she gives him her visit card. This is where the central conflict of the plot will take place.

At 19:25 we are thrown to London, 2012. where the book editor Cavendish (Jim Broadbent) is having a book presentation. Mafia writer Dermot Hoggins (Tom Hanks), dissatisfied about the negative review of his book "Knuckled Sandwich", makes a scene by calling the critic Finch "a knight" before throwing him off the balcony. Halle Berry is shown among the guests. After the book had become a bestseller, relatives of Hoggins, who is in prison, come to ask Cavendish for his portion of money. This is the Plot Point 1, the surprise element which makes the protagonist reorientate.

The fifth narrative, taking place in Neo Seoul 2144, starts at 24:39. The Archivist (James D'Arcy) records memories of arrested fabricant Sonmi-451 (Doona Bae), surprised at how well she speaks "consumer language", opposed to the workers' "sub-speech". She describes an everyday routine in Papa Song's restaurant and the First Catechism: "Honor thy consumer", as well as the mystical ritual of "exaltation". Her everyday routine was broken after noticing Yoona-939 (Zhou Xun) having relations with Seer Rhee (Hugh Grant). Afterwards, Yoona showed her a secret portion of the film about Cavendish's life starring the actor Tom Hanks.

After being harrassed by a customer, Yoona hits him saying: "I will not be subjected to criminal abuse". Her lover Seer Rhee murders her with a click on the remote control. This is where the first twist takes place: finding out about Yoona's affair, the film, Yoona's resistance to harrassment and her murder are parts of the Plot Point 1, which made Sonmi question her whole life.

At 31:46, the fixth plot starts on the Big Island (Hawaii) in year 106 after the Fall, estimated at year 2321. We learn about the postapocalyptic society of herders and their inner struggle with the Old Georgie (Hugo Weaving), a devil-like creature tempting Zachry (Tom Hanks) to stay hidden while the Kona kannibals (Hugh Grant) are attacking his brother-in-law Adam (). Introduction of the Prescient Meronym (Halle Berry) is the Plot Point 1, after which Zachry has a nightmare. The Abbess (Susan Sarandon) reveals him interpretation of the dream. We learn about the hierarchy of their society, on top of which is the Abbess, as well as about their religious belief in the goddess Sonmi. Even though the villagers distrust Meronym, but Zachry will be made to change his whole world view after her arrival. Similarly, she will be forced to reexamine her own beliefs, as the Prescients believe themselves to be superior over the Valleysmen. When Zachry asks her: "Why the Prescient' life worth more than a Valleysmen'?", she reconsiders her beliefs and heals his niece Katkin with a Prescient medicine, which Valleysmen have no access to.

#### 3.4.3. "You have a choice" – Transition from Exposition into Confrontation

38:49-40:11 is the transitional period between the Exposition and the Confrontation, the first and second act of the film. At 38:49, the narrative shifts back to Sonmi. A new character Hae-Joo Chang (Jim Sturgess) is introduced. He offers Sonmi help, insisting that her connection with Yoona would bring her to danger. "You have a choice", he tells her, as this part of the film finishes. This imperative of freedom is the common element for all six plots. According to the directors, this is the part of the film where the linear structure is interrupted for the first time. The directors said in an interview that this sentence was in fact directed to the audience. Just like Sonmi, the viewer "has a choice" whether to keep following six plots non-linearly arranged, or to leave the film. (Cinefix, 23.10.2012.)

Even though the first act of the film usually lasts between 10 and 30 minutes, in the "Cloud Atlas" this part finishes at 40:11.



### 3.5. Confrontation

The central part of the film starts when the protagonist experiences a new situation and has to function within the new circumstances, a "strange world"(Bohrmann, 2007). In this part, the viewers learn about emotions and motivations of the protagonist. The main figure has to overcome more difficulties, some of which were already mentioned in the exposition. When the protagonists adjust themselves to the new surroundings, they can overcome numerous tasks and conflicts with the antagonists. (Bohrmann, 2007)

#### 3.5.1. Theoretical Framework of the Confrontational Part

According to Vogler (2004), this part of the film includes following stages: 6. encounter with the new situation, facing friends and feinds; 7. entering the world of the enemy; 8. important test, which includes "death of the old self" (Bohrmann, 2007); 9. reward. In this part, Plot Point 2 is introduced, with increasing tempo of the plot, prior to the culmination.

#### 3.5.2. Relevance of the Confrontational Part

This part of the plot starts at 40:12, shifting back to the first narrative. We see Ewing's health deteriorating. His encounter with the runaway slave Autua, who will be his ally in the future, takes place. Even though he is sceptical in the beginning, he decides to help the slave as his worldview changes. The viewers learn that Meronym is a Prescient (technologically advanced tribe) searching for colonies on the radiating earth, physicist Sixsmith is murdered by the professional killer Bill Smoke (Hugo Weaving) at command of the CEO Lloyd (Hugh Grant), etc. I will not go into much detail here, because the main part of the plot takes place here. I will go further into detail while analyzing Kabbalistic elements within the narratives.

In this part of the plot, Ewing overcomes his prejudice and befriends a runaway slave Autua, Frobisher is employed by Vyvyan Ayrs, Luisa Rey enters the Lloyd Inc. after Sixsmith is murdered. Cavendish gets locked into the retirement home. Sonmi escapes with Hae-Joo, but is later arrested. Zachry rescues Meronym from the Kona kannibals, and she heals his little niece Katkin.

The "reward" after passing "the test" starts when Ewing convinces the captain to employ Autua as a crew member, Robert Frobisher starts a romance with Jocasta Ayrs, Luisa Rey is

rescued by Isaac Sachs (Tom Hanks), Sonmi is rescued by Hae-Joo and Katkin is saved by Meronym.

The "Plot Point 2" is gradually introduced after 01:28:00. Frobisher's attempt to seduce Ayrs fails embarrassingly, after which Ayrs decides to steal Frobisher's "Cloud Atlas" sextet. In an argument, Frobisher accidentally shoots Ayrs' leg and police is after him (1936). Adam Ewing's health deteriorates and dr. Goose steals his wedding ring (1849). Sachs's airplane explodes and Luisa Rey's car is pushed into water. Afterwards, her father's colleague gives her a hint about operation of the nuclear power plant (1973). Four residents of the retirement home "Aurora House" decide to run away (2012). Zachry takes Meronym to the mountain Mauna Kea. After arrival to the peak, Meronym tells Zachry that Sonmi is no god, but a martyr, shattering his whole belief system (2321).

### 3.5.3. Length of the Confrontational Part

This part usually starts around minute 30 and ends up around minute 90 in the film, if the film lasts about two hours (Bohrmann, 2007). Since "Cloud Atlas" is 172 minutes long, the plot shifts are different. Therefore, the second act ends at 02:01:20 with a culmination of passion. While Sonmi and Hae-Joo are making love, Zachry is gently covering Meronym with a blanket, and Sixsmith imagines a highly stylized scene of himself and Frobisher smashing the dishes. The black-and-white room they are in looks like a museum with a chess-like floor and perfectly arranged ceramic plates, vessels and vases with old-fashioned decorations. Smashed pieces of black-and-white dishes break apart in a slow-motion, similar to "The Matrix" scene when Neo is stopping the bullets with his mind. In the end, we see numerous dishes in the air, falling down in a slow-motion, while Frobisher and Sixsmith are laughing. This scene takes place in Sixsmith's head while reading his lover's letter:

"All is so perfectly, damnedly well. I understand now. Boundaries between noise and sound are conventions. All boundaries are conventions, waiting to be transcended. One may transcend any convention, if only one can conceal of doing so. In this moment, I can hear your heartbeating as clearly as I feel my own and I know that separation is an illusion. My life extends far beyond the limitations of me". (02:00:17-02:01:22)

Afterwards, we see Sixsmith's nostalgic face while thinking about Frobisher in train.

### 3.6. Resolution

In the third part of the film, the central conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist takes place. The plot culminates in a "life or death" fight. Finally, most unclarities stemming from the main plot or the subplots are explained. The viewer is left with a feeling of completeness as the final images, "kiss-off", allude to the happy ending. (Bohrmann, 2007)

#### 3.6.1. Theoretical Framework of the Resolutionary Part

The third act includes stages: 10. "return": after the short-termed enjoyment in stage 9, the hero has to return to the enemy; 11. climax of the film: final encounter with the enemy; 12. return home with a reward. (Vogler, 2004)

#### 3.6.2. Length of the Resolution

This part of the film usually lasts from minute 90 to minute 120 in a two-hour film. (Bohrmann, 2007) In "Cloud Atlas", the third part starts at 02:01:26 with a scene of boat similar to that at 40:12, only this time the sky is dark as the storm is approaching. The storm is a device often used in literature and films to announce the culmination of the plot. All of the main conflicts take place and get resolved by the end of the film. In all six narratives, conflicts happen and the film reaches its climax. Final scene with Zachry and Meronym and their grandchildren at the distant planet is not quite a "return home", but a "formation of a new home" for mankind, as a reward for their efforts.

### 3.7. Boomerang vs. the Time Arrow

Unlike the film – the six stories are ordered 1-2-3-4-5-6-5-4-3-2-1 in the novel, meaning that each story is told chronologically to the half and then continued in the "boomerang" reverse chronological sequence. Hicks (2010: 2) writes that this boomeranging arc "depicts risks associated with both linear and cyclical approaches to temporality". The novel starts in year 1849, continues in 1936, goes on in 1973, brings us to the present (2012) and then continues in near future (2144) and further future (2321). As the story number 6 is actually present-day reality for the novel, it does not discontinue like the other narratives. However, this is a lot

different in the film, as all narratives are shown parallelly, beginning and ending with the sixth (potentially seventh) one which is considered present-day reality. This structure is more similar to a time arrow (Gessert, 2005). Sometime after the year 2321, Tom Hanks' character Zachry tells the story of his life in flashbacks, which then awaken also flashbacks from other time periods. All six stories are montaged as overlapping and entering into each other: each action is shown as starting in one story, continuing in another one, and then transiting again to another one, etc. Thereby, all events are shown to be connected through time and space. The film relies upon "the butterfly effect" as smallest actions from past and future characters can affect the present. One of the most important sentences, echoing multiple times throughout the movie, is:

"Our lives are not our own; from womb to tomb, we are bound to others, past and present, and by each crime and every kindness we birth our future" (Sonmi-451).

In Kabbala, all events and human actions are connected and purposeful in order to eventually lead to Tikkun (correction of the world) (Idel, 2008). However, it could be argued that the film also contains a kind of "boomerang", because it starts and ends with the overarching "seventh" narrative by Zachry. Instead of starting and ending in 1849 like the novel, the film starts and ends around the year 2321, in the distant future, after the events had already happened.

Another difference is that each story in the book has a title, while in the film, only time and place of each plot are revealed. The titles of the stories are, as follows: "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing", "Letters from Zedelghem", "Half-Lives: The Luisa Rey Mystery", "The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish", "An Orison of Sonmi-451", "Sloosha's Crossin' and Ev'rythin' After".

#### 4. Semiotic Analysis

A common element in all stories is relationship to the authorities – parents, makers, etc. In the first story, Adam Ewing rebels against his wife's father-in-law, the traditional individual supporting slavery as a "natural world order". In the second story, we are told that the father disowned Robert Frobisher. In the third story, Luisa Rey is shadowed by her journalist father's heroic act – she puts herself into a great danger to prove that she is worth of being his daughter. In the fourth story, Timothy has a bad relationship with his older brother Denholme,

who tricks him and puts him into a retirement home. In the fourth story, Sonmi-451 rebels against the system which creates the clones and exploits them. In the fifth story, Zachry is guided by god named Sonmi and the voices of his ancestors.

I will explain further what the relationship to the authorities signifies in subsequent chapters, using theories of hegemony, commodification and repressive ideology.

#### 4.1. Marxism

According to Tan (2014), "Cloud Atlas" contains many semiotic elements pertaining to Marxist and anti-consumerist theory. Oppression in the novel is "analysed through the notion of power relations" (Tan, 2014: 51). Both the novel and the book repeatedly use phrases such as "natural order" in order to criticize capitalist economy and social-Darwinist ideology. While the book is a postmodern novel with qualities of historiographical metafiction, the film also employs many historical references and postmodern structure. Historical truths referring to certain time periods are mixed with fiction. In this chapter, I will focus on the fifth story as a prime example for anti-capitalist message of the film (and novel).

#### 4.2. Hegemony

Both the novel and the film employ Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony encompassing values of dominant group regarding politics, culture, economy, etc. This group, becoming dominant over other groups, controls the society by imposing their own values over the subordinate groups (Gramsci et al., 1971).

In the fifth narrative, hegemony is very apparent. The government and its ideology are both called the Unanimity, setting political and economic standards for all citizens. It is an openly hegemonic power whose rules are not open for discussion. Following its own ideology of extreme corporatism, the Unanimity government imposed the standards of extreme consumerism on all citizens. Free citizens are "branded" with a microchip, which they call "a soul". In the novel, monthly spendings of each citizen are monitored by the government, and each person not reaching the assigned quota is persecuted. This aspect of the Unanimity government is not visible in the film. Althusser's theory of the Repressive State Apparatus can also apply here, because the Unanimity government exercises violence over people opposing

the laws. However, at the same time, there exists an Ideological State Apparatus, or the dominant societal institutions which hold the society's values in place, such as family, church, organizations, schools, unions (Gramsci et al., 1971). However, it is open to discussion whose power is actually the dominant one: that of the Unanimity government, or that of the corporations. Currently, they are one and the same, but it is hard to determine who exactly pulls the strings.

#### 4.2.1. Hegemonic Powers of Corporations

Tan (2014: 57) argues that in the novel, the Unanimity government keeps the corporations only "as long as they conform to and serve the dominant ideology and notions of the Unanimity". However, I disagree – I would argue that the corporations are actually pulling strings. However, there is a major difference between the novel and the film: in the film, there is an actual resistance movement (showing that the government is not all-powerful), while in the novel, the resistance itself turns out to be a hegemonic tool of the government to prove its domination and invincibility. Therefore, the film is much more optimistic in regard to possibility of social change. The state is here but a mechanism to serve the corporations. The whole state and its citizens are subordinated to the interests of the the capital. According to Marx (1979), the governments create ideologies in order to make the people accept Capitalism as natural world order. Therefore, in a Marxist view, the economic interests would be the main goal, while ideology is only a tool. Basically, the corporations are in charge in the fifth narrative, while the government exists only as long as it is useful for them, creating a fictional "Unanimity" ideology in order to make citizens obedient. I would argue that the corporations are pulling the strings, while the state is weak.

The only function of the government in the film is to create the ideology and force the citizens to abide by the rules of the corporations. Therefore, the state is not the one making decisions, but the one making sure they are obeyed and carried through. Consequently, in the novel the state may be more of a Repressive Apparatus, while in the film, the state may be more of an Ideological Apparatus. Shoop / Ryan (2015) write that "the collective action as the agent of progressive change" is critically viewed in the novel, pointing towards social criticism. Namely, Mitchell implies that the workers' "unions" and parties nowadays in the world exist only to create illusion of opposition, while in fact they are parts of the system endorsing capitalism (95). Shoop / Ryan (2015: 95) argue that "Cloud Atlas" points out towards an

alternative route of social change in form of written documents and media such as "journals, letters, novels, films, 'orizons', or 'yarnin' ". Even if individuals seem to be powerless, their micro-actions and testaments may influence other individuals and incite action.

While some classic dystopian novels such as Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451", Zamyatin's "We" and Orwell's "1984" critique egalitarian totalitarianism, Mitchell focuses on criticising extreme neoliberalism. His novel "offers our contemporary moment the corporation as the ultimate telos of the totalizing logic of neoliberalism" (Shoop / Ryan, 2015: 95). Mitchell's Unanimity government is only a figure, serving under the authority of corpocracy.

#### 4.3. Commodification and Reification

Eagleton writes that all "objects are reduced to commodities" in capitalist system, existing only "for the sake of their exchange-value, or being bought and sold"(Eagleton, 1997: 22). This applies to goods, services and all types of labour. This kind of commodification is visible in treatment of the fabricants at Papa Song's, who are reduced to objects. Only the value of their work counts, while other aspects of their identity and human rights are intentionally ignored in this extreme form of capitalism. Lives of the workers are shaped in mechanic cycles within the big corporate machinery – they are reduced to mere labour force, rather than human beings. The naturally born humans such as Hae-Joo believe that the cloned fabricants have no intellect or emotions. The government spreads this ideology in order to reach mass conformism and avoid being charged of denying the workers' human rights. The fabricants are thereby reduced to simple commodities. Nothing ever is wasted in the corporate Neo Seoul, as after death fabricants' bodies are recycled into food for live fabricants and their organs are sold. Therefore, their bodies literally remain commodities even after death. (Tan, 2014)

Apart from the theory of commodification, there is a theory of reification, where the "process or relation is generalized into an abstraction, and thereby turned into a 'thing'." (Bewes, 2002: 3) This type of objectification is more closely related to ideological perception, while commodification is related to economic value of an entity. According to this theory, situations and entities are oversimplified. Nothing is analyzed systematically, rather, one perspective is viewed as the truth. This is visible in oversimplification of political relations within the society: there is "the good" Unanimity state with its rules, and "the evil" resistance movement, the Union (Tan, 2014). In the novel, the resistance movement is fictional, in the film it is real,

but ultimately it does not matter, as the government decides which side is "good" and which is "evil", even if stemming from the same source. In the novel, Sonmi is actually taken by the researchers to conduct the state-financed experiment. Sonmi is taken to the university in order to determine whether the fabricants have any intellectual capacities at all. In the film, she is freed by the resistance fighter Hae-Joo Chang (who are two different people in the novel) with whom she actually falls in love (unlike the novel).

Aspects of Repressive and Ideological State Apparatus, Civil Society, Commodification and Reification are also visible in other stories, especially the third one, where the corporation owning the nuclear power plant decides the dominant ideology by manipulating facts and figures. In this story, the "state" is also an Ideological Apparatus, while the corporations are the ones making decisions behind the scene. The states are now "corporate empires" reduced to preserving the "natural order", capitalist conditions in which the corporations can prosper.

Through means of reification, people in the dystopian Neo Seoul are convinced that their lifestyle is the only right way to live. Unconditionally believing the illusory world of welfare is true, they lose their identities and get lost in the "consumerist fantasy". There is also a false myth – people believe that the more they consume, the happier they will become. (Tan, 2014) This is similar to Žižek's theory that happiness always "slips away" (1976). Humans never enjoy in the moment, believing that a true enjoyment will come sometime in future. Thus, in the "Cloud Atlas", an artificial form of happiness is created to correspond to economic needs of the consumerist society. The humans become dependant on material items with a hope it would make them happy, as a kind of commodity fetishism (Marx).

Another myth Sonmi believes is that her sisters live a happier life after "exaltation". This societal ritual, during which the "Cloud Atlas" sextet is played, is reminiscent of Marx' critique towards religion. Marx (1979) writes that religion is used by the governing classes as "opium for the masses" in order to make them conform the existing order, presenting it as "natural". Promising the oppressed masses welfare in a future life, the government backs up from making better living conditions for everyone in the present. In this way, the masses are comforted by this ideology, which makes them unwilling for societal action.

According to Shoop / Ryan (2015) and Knepper (2016), the novel revolves around pessimism surrounding neoliberalistic hegemony post-9/11 terrorist attack, as well postmodern optimism in a possibility of globalism. However, in my view, this comparison reduces the complexity of the film.



## 5. Visual and Auditive Elements of the Film

In this chapter, I will explain relevance of visual and auditive elements of the film.

### 5.1. Light and Visual Representations of each Narrative

Light is the first most important element which depicts atmosphere in each story. The Zohar writes that light stands for Chesed, while darkness stands for Gevura, so light is always to be interpreted metaphorically "The day declines' refers to the grade of Chesed, while 'the shadows of the evening are lengthened' (Yirmea 6: 4) refers to the grades of the harsh Judgement." (Chayei Sarah 24: 240)

The visuals of the first story are relatively bright as most of the plot takes place outside, in sunny weather. Nature is well-preserved and cities still look very rural. As Ewing (Jim Sturgess) gets more ill while dr. Goose (Tom Hanks) is pretending to treat a parasitosis, more events take place inside the brown boat and there is progressively less light. During the climax when self-freed slave Autua (David Gyasi) fights against Goose, a seastorm takes place. As Autua makes Ewing clear stomach from dr. Goose's poison, Ewing is in the open and the sea is calm again.

The second narrative is visually darker and most of the plot takes place inside Vyvyan Ayrs' traditional, old-fashioned house (which is decorated similarly to Mr. Horrox' (Hugh Grant) house from the first narrative). This is to signify conservatism and closed-mindedness of its owner. In darkness of the place, Frobisher's (Ben Whishaw) anxiety and feeling of not belonging can be felt.

The third narrative mostly takes place on the urban streets of San Francisco with prominent skyscrapers. Luisa Rey is constantly running to or from somewhere – camera movement becomes much quicker especially at the climax scene when Bill Smokes (Hugo Weaving) gets killed. The corporation itself is a glass skyscraper, and Luisa lives in a tall building herself. This is to portray progress of civilization, but also estrangement of the modern era. According to Pezzoli-Olgiatti (2009), skyscrapers in science fiction films are visually designed in order to allude to the Tower of Babel, criticizing modern and hyper-urbanized world as based upon subordination of nature and exploitation of human labor. Sun is shining, but no nature can be seen; however, we are told that it is endangered by malfunctioning nuclear reactor.

The fourth story is mostly located indoors (book presentation, nursing home). Train is the closest to the outside world Timothy Cavendish (Jim Broadbent) can get. His sense of being trapped and confined is accentuated by his surroundings. Colors are usually neutral, signifying his lack of character and purposelessness. He can only see true freedom from the inside out. Similarly, the sphere of Netzah in Kabbala implies longing of the Lower world to the Upper worlds, but does not include a reaction of the Upper world. (Zohar, Trumah 7: 42) Therefore, the desire of the Lower world is only "looked at", remaining constantly unfulfilled. Tim realizes he had wasted his life by focusing on irrelevant things like leading business and gaining small profits, rather than creating family and making friends. Even though he fixes his present by reviving relationship with his highschool sweetheart Ursula (Susan Sarandon), he cannot go back to the past to set things right. He cannot have children, his "friends" do not want to hear of him and his brother hates him. Similarly, the sphere of Netzah implies longing for something which cannot be gained.

The fifth narrative has typical cyberpunk visuals, inspired by the "Blade Runner". The dark streets are overcrowded with people, only light being provided by the commercials. The sky is completely black, the city is extra-urbanized with visible skyscrapers. Sonmi's (Doona Bae) restaurant, located in the tall skyscraper, is colored in bright red and yellow. These are typical colors for a fast food restaurant, but in the Zohar both of these colors represent judgement (Gevura). Ultimately, the female principle (Malchut / Shechina) remains empty and Messianic era cannot take place. Blackness of the sky implies absence of Chesed in the world: even though technology is advanced (representing Hochma, wisdom), it lacks Chassadim (loving-kindness). (Beresheet A 2: 7) This means the rule of the female principle, which impose strict judgement without mercy – the system of heartless corporatist capitalism. When Sonmi-451 starts running from the police, the visuals shift to blueish, like the real world in "The Matrix". The military basis of rebels looks like Zion in "The Matrix", while the factory where clones are produced reminds of the tanks containing human bodies, used as batteries in "The Matrix". Lights of the flying cars and commercials are all blue in this narrative, representing the strict judgement of the Lower Female (Malchut) in the Zohar. (Zohar Beresheet B, 54: 267) Concealment of light is typical for the sphere of Hod: however, the light can be approached by the prophet (Sonmi), who has to distribute it to the world. Biblical quote "and you shall put some of your honor (Hod) upon him" (Bemidbar 27: 20) is interpreted in the Zohar as referring to the concealment of prophetic qualities from clear vision (Netzah) into the dream (Hod) (Zohar, Beresheet A 12: 145-146; Vayetze 8: 51; Vayishalach 7: 116). When

Sonmi tries to run, thin beam on Sun can almost be seen on the horizon. When she is arrested, she is in a black room, dressed up in white clothing. Her Messianic status is accentuated by her white clothes, representing Chesed (loving-kindness) in the Zohar. (Zohar Yitro, 34: 553) Similarly, two female executors of the clones have blood-red dresses, standing for Gevura, which are reminiscent of the robe wore by Spanish inquisition. The black surroundings mean that the world will lose all of its light after her death (Messiah ben Joseph). However, in the Zohar this is only the end of the first phase: the true Messianic era is yet to come.

The world in the sixth narrative is grey, with destroyed remains of nature. However, it is not black anymore: grey signifies a combination of Chesed, loving-kindness represented by light, and darkness of the empty Malchut, waiting to be re-filled by Chesed. The sky is grey and cloudy in the beginning, but Sun shines again after Meronym (Halle Berry) arrives.

## 5.2. Movements of the Camera and Geometrical Setup

Camera is another device used to accompany the plot. There are more than 200 shifts between the narratives in less than three hours of the film. Editing makes the plots seem as if they are overlapping – for example, when Hae-Joo Chang escapes using a narrow bridge in the fifth narrative, his legs are shown. Suddenly, they turn into legs of the slave Autua walking over the ship sail. The frame is often wide when the film shifts to another narrative, to localize the event, while it focuses on the face of protagonist most of the time during plot exposition. Bird perspective is used whenever the audience needs to see a panorama of the location. When portraying the characters and their events, camera is usually steady or accompanying their motion. Camera is rarely moved, usually to accentuate an action scene, but most of the time it is still.

Camera in the film moves mimetically, in order to depict best what is on screen. Softly following the characters and their actions, it aids the plot, helping the viewers to understand what is happening in the easiest way. Movements of the camera are slow, making the camera almost unnoticeable, facilitating focus on the story itself. The way the film is edited depicts atmosphere of each scene, jumping from one scene to another in a playful way during the introduction, in order to incite and thrill the viewer in the first five minutes, after which the scene alteration slows down, becoming steadier in order to "give the viewer a break" and facilitate understanding of each plot (CineFix, 2012). During action scenes, interchanges

between scenes occur much more rapidly than during the expository part in order to accentuate interdynamics between different dimensions (plots).

Visually, mutually corresponding scenes have a similar geometrical setup. As already mentioned, there is a visual correspondence between two scenes from the first and fifth narrative, as the slave Autua runs over the mast of the ship, and Sonmi walks over a tiny bridge. Both of these scenes stretch in a horizontal way within two dimensions. Both portray a character walking over a high longitudinal bridge with a clear sky behind them. These scenes also share the aspect of the third dimension – as the helicopter comes from the distance capturing Sonmi, the ship crew stands relative to Autua in a triangle-shaped setup. In both of these scenes, enemies are approaching the characters, shooting at them in a "Matrix"-like visual setting.

### 5.3. Musical and Auditive Themes of the Film

The musical theme of the whole film is the *Cloud Atlas Sextet* composed by Robert Frobisher (Ben Whishaw) in the film, and in reality composed by Tom Tykwer, one of the directors. Different variations of the sextet play in the background of the movie most of the time. For example, clones sing it during their "exaltation" ritual in the fifth narrative. Frobisher's piano playing first attracts Ayrns' wife. Music stretches through dimensions: for example, as Ayrns dreams of the clones in the fifth narrative, he hears *Cloud Atlas* sextet in his dream. Luisa in the third narrative feels a strange familiarity and connection with the piece she hears playing in a store. In the sixth narrative, *Cloud Atlas* is not a musical piece, rather it stands for a kind of telephone station connecting the Earth and other planets. *Cloud Atlas* piece is the same melody stretching through different temporal and spatial dimensions as an "unconscious" of the humanity. It signifies the common theme of the whole history, implying that there is a common goal for all past and future people.

Another important sound in the film is heartbeat, also stretching through dimensions. Sonmi-451 (Doona Bae) relaxes by listening to Hae Joo Chang's (Jim Sturgess) heartbeat, when a knock on a door takes us into another narrative.

## 6. Philosophy and Kabbala

In this chapter, I will explain briefly what Kabbala is and which elements can be seen in the film. In following chapters, I will go more into detail regarding analysis of each story and each character.

### 6.1. Brief Definition of the Kabbala

Kabbala is a Jewish tradition of mysticism, based primarily upon the books *The Zohar*, "Bahir" and "Gates of Light" (Davidowicz, 2014). The kabbalists consider themselves recipients of a secret learning, or learning of a secret. Namely, in rabbinic tradition it is postulated that the Torah (Pentateuch) can be interpreted from four different levels of interpretation: pshat, ramez, drash, sod. In very simplified terms, pshat is a literal level of interpretation. Ramez alludes to hints in the text, which explain possibly hidden subplots, contexts and motivation of the characters, opening up possibility for allegoric interpretation. Drash is a comparative interpretation, which actualizes the Biblical narrative connecting it to other similar events or to situations within one's own lifetime. Sod is a mystical meaning, alluding to esoteric interpretation based upon Gematria (method of connecting meanings of words with their numerical values) or language analysis based upon a certain philosophical (theosophical) system of signs. (Idel, 1993) Deeper levels of interpretation usually do not contradict the literal opinion (peshat). (Schleicher, 2003) Even though esoteric teaching had existed during the Rabbinic Period (ca. 2<sup>nd</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century CE), maybe even earlier, only in the 1200s the term "kabbala" became widespread. (Davidowicz, 2014)

#### 6.1.1. Historical Context of the Zohar

The reason why my interpretation is based primarily on *The Zohar* is a fact that, while other books provide a more "pragmatical" insight into Jewish esoteric customs, *The Zohar* is a theosophical (theological-philosophical) basis for Kabbala. The book's authorship is a common matter of dispute within academic circles, but it is a fact that it first became publicly known in 13<sup>th</sup> century Spain. "Sefer ha-Zohar", meaning "Book of Splendor", was visibly influenced through neo-Platonic philosophy. (Davidowicz, 2014) Its author(s) used certain premises of ancient Greek philosophy, turning them systematically into methods of textual

interpretation. Since the Kabbalists were very educated rabbis, they successfully combined Platonic elements with Jewish traditions, not losing sight of original Jewish thoughts, but expanding them by new interpretations. (Davidowicz, 2014) In this way, Jewish values such as Creation, Revelation and Salvation were reestablished through a tie connection with ancient Greek philosophy. (Davidowicz, 2014) In this way, Jewish Halakha was "universalized", becoming applicable to a wider variety of traditions, rather than just Jewish one.

The Zohar in particular brings forth Kabbalistic ideas in forms of homiletics. Structurally, it is a Midrash, or more precisely a collection of Midrashim, consisting of all parts typical for Rabbinic literature.

## 6.2. Central Zoharitic Theories

In my analysis, I will focus primarily on following theosophic theories:

1) theory of interchange between Upper and Lower worlds, 2) system of cosmological spheres (Sefirot), 3) reincarnation (Gilgul), 4) theory of Tikkun and human role in "correction" of the world, 5) progression of history towards Messianic era, 6) role and characteristics of the Messiah, 7) implication of language for creation of the world.

In this subchapter, I will briefly explain basics of these theories. In the remainder of the thesis, I will make connections of these theories with "Cloud Atlas".

### 6.2.1. Male and Female Principle – Interchange between Upper and Lower Worlds

First of all, the Zohar brings forth a theory of connections between God, Creation, Mankind and Soul. (Davidowicz, 2014) The hierarchy of Lower realms and Upper realms, is not only theoretically established, but also methodically implemented at the same time. The Torah text is read through this prism. There is a clear division between the Upper worlds (Male principle) and the Lower worlds (Female principle), who strive to achieve contact with each other. (Idel, 1986) There are four main dimensions, from the highest to the lowest: Arich Anpin, Bina, Zeir Anpin constitute the Upper worlds, while Malchut constitutes the Lower worlds.

Arich Anpin (literally "long face") is the highest Male dimension, Bina ("intellect") is the highest Female dimension, Zeir Anpin ("small face", shaped after the "long face") is the Lowest Male dimension, whereas Malchut / Shechina ("kingdom") is the Lowest Female dimension. Flow of Mazal ("luck") starts at Arich Anpin, flowing into Bina, who develops it further, ultimately giving birth to Zeir Anpin (the souls). The souls then cross the border through the sphere of Yesod, exiting the Upper worlds and entering the Lower worlds. Souls incarnate in Malchut (the material world) in order to correct it through "Tikkun". (Idel, 2000)

The Upper male principle is also known as Aba (father) and the Lower Male principle is called the Son, the King or the Husband. The Upper Female principle is known as Ima (mother), while the Lower Female principle is Nukva (woman), the Daughter, the Queen or the Bride (Davidowicz, 2014).

The Zohar writes that the purpose of incarnation of souls in the Lower world (Malchut) is to raise it toward the Upper world by awakening its desire to receive from the Male principle (Zeir Anpin). Basically, a marriage between the Male and Female dimensions is a goal of all history. Since transcendental love is a major theme in the film, there is definitely a connection with this Kabbalistic idea. (Idel, 2008) I will return back to this topic later to elaborate more.

#### 6.2.2. From Nothing to Something

Another important constituting factor of Jewish theosophy is a system of Sefirot, spheres of Divine emanation. In The Zohar and Sefer ha-Bahir it is presumed that God does not reveal himself directly to human beings, therefore, he can only be grasped through an abstract system of ten spheres (Davidowicz, 2014). "Ein Sof", often translated as the "Endless world" is an abstract reality of Potentiality, Nothingness, manifesting through a prism in order to become "Something". It is a play on Hebrew words "ain" (nothing) and "ani" (I), as well as "mi" (who) and "yam" (sea), which are anagrams of each other. The Zohar compares this theological process of transformation from "ain" into "ani" to a conception and birth, with "ain" coming from Arich Anpin (Abba, cosmological father) into Bina (Ima, cosmological mother), who is a world and a prism at the same time. Pregnancy of Bina (Upper female world) with seed of Arich Anpin (Upper male world) resulted in birth of Zeir Anpin (Lower male world), souls of mankind, and Malchut, the Lower Female world. (Zohar, Beresheet A 1:2) It is important to note that terms "male" and "female" are relative in Kabbala. An Upper

world is always considered "male" relative to a Lower world, which is again "male" for the world below it. Arich Anpin is the "absolute male world", from which all stems, while Malchut is the "absolute female world", into which goods flow from all other worlds. Since in "Cloud Atlas" characters often have different gender in different dimensions, depending on what their particular function in a certain story is, it reminds of this Zoharitic principle of relativity of gender identity.

### 6.2.3. System of Spheres

Spheres are not separate entities. Not only that they are interconnected, but each sphere has sub-spheres within it. God is here a carrier of cosmological potency, while the physical world is its receiver. (Davidowicz, 2014) Ein Sof produced Arich Anpin ("long face", a term which denotes the upper three sphere), which produced Zeir Anpin ("small face", a term denoting the lower seven spheres) (Goldish, 1994). Zeir Anpin is an origin of all human souls. Souls are to be incarnated into the manifest reality in order to participate in Tikkun (correction) of the world by fulfilling a particular purpose. In "Cloud Atlas", each character has a particular purpose in the order of the world, which I will explain into more detail later.

Spheres are usually graphically represented in the form of a "Tree of Life" with Keter at the top and Malchut at the bottom (Idel, 2008). Upper spheres are male relatively to lower ones, while right spheres are male relatively to left ones. Keter is in the middle at the top, followed by Hochma (Wisdom), a top right sphere, and Bina (Intellect), a top left sphere. Generally, spheres are divided into four (five) main categories: Keter is the highest one, and Malchut is the lowest one. Ten spheres are, from top to bottom: Keter ("The Crown"), Hochma ("Wisdom"), Bina ("Intellect"), Chesed ("Loving-kindness"), Gevura ("Strength"), Tiferet ("Beauty"), Netzah ("Endurance"), Hod ("Glory"), Yesod ("Firmament"), Malchut ("Kingdom"). These spheres help to explain cosmological structure of the universe relevant for functioning of the world. Jewish theosophy employs an antropomorphic visual representation of the physical universe (Lower worlds) as well as the Upper worlds. (Idel, 1993) Every lower sphere stems from the upper one and they are all interconnected, often graphically represented in a form of tree (known as "Tree of Life"). As already mentioned, this tree has an antropomorphic shape (Keter – above head; Hochma and Bina – brain, eyes; Chesed and Gevura – right and left arm; Tiferet – heart; Netzah and Hod – right and left leg; Yesod – reproductive organs) (Davidowicz, 2014) Therefore, all universes are mirroring each



other, and actions within each dimension affect other dimensions. (Pinson, 1999) In Cloud Atlas, six narratives can be viewed as representations of six lower spheres (from Chesed to Yesod), where actions of each individual within each sphere instantly (albeit seemingly with a few decades time delay). Yesod is the lowest sphere in the Upper worlds, connecting Zeir Anpin and Malchut, as a portal through which the Souls are born in the Lower world.

#### 6.2.4. Cosmological Gender Relativity

According to the Zoharitic principle of cosmological gender relativity, each lower sphere is considered female relative to the upper one, while each right sphere is considered male relative to the left one. Immanently, all spheres are androgynous (Davidowicz, 2014). Keter is the "absolute male" and Malchut is the "absolute female" vertically, just as Chesed is the "absolute male" and Gevura is the "absolute female" horizontally. However, this definition functions only within *one* sphere system. Namely, within the network where multiple sphere systems are present, each sphere system is considered "male" or "female" as a whole. Categorization of one sphere system as either "male" or "female" depends on its position in relation to particular systems surrounding it. Vertically, "upper" is male and "lower" is female. Horizontally, "right" is male and "left" is female. This rule can be implemented to each situation in Upper and Lower worlds. Systems have "gender" only while in comparison to one another, while in itself, each system has a balance of "male" and "female" spheres. Similarly, each sphere has both male and female aspects within itself. (Davidowicz, 2014)

#### 6.2.5. Human Souls

Each human soul stems from one of the six bottom spheres (from Chesed to Yesod), therefore, each person has a particular goal to fulfill in the Lower world as a part of global Tikkun (correction of the world). Because physical universe has limited capacities, it can receive only a certain amount of goods from the Higher worlds at a time. It can not receive unlimited amounts of spiritual goodness. Therefore, souls incarnate in bodies and "raise female waters", that is, a desire of the Lower world to receive from the Upper world. Humans play a central role by fulfilling their purpose through changing the world for better. Since the goal of the whole history is unison between the Male and Female principle, this logic has to be applied in every matter. For example, it is necessary to remove inequalities based on

gender, race or social status, in order to "raise" the female principle (representing all groups of oppressed individuals) to the level of the male principle. In this way, both Male and Female principle are at the same level and inequalities among humans are canceled out. Therefore, by acting justfully and fighting for human rights (just like the protagonists of "Cloud Atlas" do) one is participating in a global Tikkun and preparing the world for arrival of the Messiah. (Idel, 1993)

Secondly, each person is required to fulfill a certain purpose, depending on a particular sphere they come from. In order to fulfill all aspects of this particular sphere, sometimes it is necessary to reincarnate more times (normally, 6 lifetimes suffice to fulfill 6 sub-categories of each sphere). The Zohar writes that: "the soul is required to incarnate (...) only until it finished correcting the six levels, Chesed, Gevura, Tiferet, Netzah, Hod and Yesod, of the same place whence it was taken." (Zohar Mishpatim, 2: 2) Each soul who has reincarnated multiple times in order to reach perfection of the six Godly attributes. In the same way, the six main characters have to reincarnate six times. Reincarnation in Judaism is known as "Gilgul". In Chapter 11, I will elaborate more on each character's soul journey and classify "Cloud Atlas" characters according to a particular sphere their soul may be coming from.

#### 6.2.6. The Worlds

Isaac Luria took terms from Isaiah 43: 7: "Every one that is called by My name and for my glory (Azilut), I have created (Briah), I have formed (Yetzirah), even I have made (Asiah) and implemented them to the Kabbalistic spheres. He called Keter "Ein Sof" (endless world), Bina "Azilut" (world of emanation), Zeir Anpin as consisting of "Briah" (world of creation) and "Yetzirah" (world of formation), Malchut "Asiah" (world of action). Each of these worlds corresponds to a level of soul within the human being: Neshama is the "intellectual soul" coming from Briah, Ruah is the "emotional soul" coming from Yetzirah, and Nefesh is the "biological soul" coming from Asiah. In addition to these three described in the Zohar, Luria mentions Chaya, "a spiritual soul" coming from Azilut and Yehidah, "a Godly soul" coming from Ein Sof (Idel, 1993).

In this division, Hochma and Bina belong to the world of Azilut, Chesed and Gevura to the world of Briah, Netzah and Hod to the world of Yetzirah, and Malchut to Asiah. Spheres Da'at (manifestation of Keter in Azilut), Tiferet and Yesod are portals between the worlds.

Da'at is a portal between Azilut (in Zohar known as Bina) and Briah (in Zohar known as Zeir Anpin). Tiferet is a portal between higher and lower levels of Zeir Anpin, namely between intellectual/emotional realm of Chesed-Gevura and motivational/pragmatical realm of Netzah-Hod. Yesod is a portal between Zeir Anpin and Malchut, and as such, this portal is the most important one. Malchut is a portal between two systems of sefirot, becoming a Keter of the lower one. Spheres are connected in the following manner: Keter (crown) of each world is a Malchut (Kingdom) of the world above it, while Malchut of each world is a Keter of the world below it. (Pinson, 1999)

#### 6.2.7. Personified Representations of the Spheres

In Biblical narrative, portals are personified through Moses (Tiferet) and Joseph (Yesod) towards David (Malchut). In "Cloud Atlas", Tiferet is Meronym, because she stands for the believer, the merciful one. She is searching for the truth, and is always guided by belief in a better tomorrow. Sonmi-451 stands for Hod, the humble one, as well as Yesod, a portal between Zeir Anpin and Malchut. I will elaborate on sphere and Tikkun of each character further in following chapters.

As I already explained, in Judaism history is linear, moving towards a certain goal, Messianic era. In this era, individual known as the Messiah will lead humanity to redemption. In Judaism, there is a concept of two Messiahs: Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David. Whereas Messiah ben Joseph is a more Christian type of Messiah signified through pureness, innocence and martyrdom, Messiah ben David is a human being of flesh and bone, an individual who is also tempted by Evil Inclination. As such, he makes mistakes, but has a potential to ascend above his temptations and lead humanity to redemption. I will argue in my paper that Sonmi-451 (Doona Bae) is Messiah ben Joseph, because her sacrifice is crucial for remainder of the plot. She is a martyr who leaves behind a testament, just like Jesus. In contrast to her, Zachry (Tom Hanks' character) is Messiah ben David, representing Malchut, and actual arrival of salvation.

#### 6.2.8. Language as a Tool of Reality Construction

Finally, in the Kabbala it is implied that (Hebrew) language was a means of construction of the world. Letters existed even before the creation of the world, and they were used as instruments for building it, according to the Zohar. „With the beginning of the manifestation of the King's will, a hard spark made an engraving upon the supernal light“. (Zohar Beresheet A, 1:1) In "Cloud Atlas", written text is a main medium of transmission of ideas from one time period to another. Words are the basic element which motivates characters to behave as they do. Frobisher (1936) was motivated by reading Adam Ewing's Pacific Journal (1849), Luisa Rey was motivated by Frobisher's letters given to her by Sixsmith in 1973, Cavendish was motivated by Luisa Rey's report in 2012, Sonmi was motivated by a film made upon Cavendish's autobiography in 22nd century, and Zachry was motivated by Sonmi's testament, which she had left to the Archivist. Basically, words of previous individuals "created the world" for the following protagonist. Each person's ideology and willingness to fight for justice was directly incited by the previous person's writings. Words, especially written text, are crucial for the plot. It can be argued that each person's text inspired the next person to "co-create" the world. The Zohar states that „every word that receives a new interpretation (...) creates a new Firmament“ (Zohar Prologue, 11: 61). Similarly, characters in the film create new future to the mankind inspired by interpretation of words of their ancestors.

#### 6.3. Hinduism vs. Judaism

Since Kabbala searches for a new way to approach the Divine realms through self-reflection and immersion within the text (rather than as a member of Judaism as a collective entity, or through a medium of traditional rabbinic authorities), it has sometimes been compared to Eastern traditions such as Buddhism or Hinduism, emphasizing possibility of individual connection to God. However, this is a common misconception, because there are significant differences between central Kabbalistic / Jewish theosophic and Hinduistic / Vedantic premises. (Davidowicz, 2014)

One of important differences is that in broader Hindu-Buddhistic view, history is repeating itself in predetermined circles, while on the contrary, Judeo-Christian philosophy endorses freedom of choice as important contributing factor in how the history will be shaped. In the film, every action of each character has an important effect in both directions – future and past

– while the book implies a closed structure. Therefore, my premise is that the film relies more heavily on Judeo-Christian symbolism than Buddhist. Many critics have already attempted to connect the film (and particularly the novel) "Cloud Atlas" with Hinduistic / Buddhist influences, but unlike them, I will focus primarily on Kabbalistic ones.

### 6.3.1. "Cloud Atlas" as a Buddhist / Hinduist or Jewish-Themed Film?

Dimovitz (2015) writes that "Cloud Atlas" is a postmodern movie based on a neostructuralist novel. As the text transits from literary text to the voice, it transcends its dependence on the discourse. This opens up many more possibilities for the film, than it does for the novel. Dimovitz (2015) interprets the novel as a Lacanian allegory about the beginnings of humanity as a "perpetual and cyclical fall into language (...) a necessary and universal Fall that repeats from generation to generation" (72). According to him, the film implies a cyclical nature of the universe, because the postapocalyptic ending is similar to the prehistoric era. This would then imply a hinduist worldview, as the earth evolves in yugas which eternally repeat themselves. On the contrary, in Judaism time is linear and there is a certain purpose to the existence of the world. Once this goal is achieved, there will be no relapses to the previous state. (Steensgaard, 1993) According to the novel, the cycle of rise and fall is inscribed in the 'human nature' – luckily, the film is neither cyclical nor portrays these structures as inherent. The structure of the film is linear – even though Mitchell liked the movie overall, he complained on its structure because it implies linear rather than cyclical development. Therefore, the film is closer to the Jewish cosmological structure than the novel.

Dimovitz (2015) points out that at the end of the "Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing" part of the novel, Ewing visited a Methodist church where the priest, tobacco trader, equated tobacco with the Old and New Testament. In this part of the novel, the priest said that in the past, the colonizers were dependant on the Polynesian natives (Old Testament) but now they must implement the new system (New Testament) to impose social control over them, by making them addicted to tobacco. At one point, the priest said:

"Aye, look like Eden it might, but Raiatea is a fallen place, same as everywhere, aye, no snakes, but the devil plies his trade here as much as anywhere else". (Mitchell, 2004: 483)

This is interpreted by Dimovitz (2015) as a metaphor for colonization: the colonizers are like the serpent who attack "pure", closed identities of the natives by creating desire towards something external. The "fall" of the natives' culture is caused through inscribing the natives with Western consumerism, language and religion. (Dimovitz, 2015: 73) Deliberate creation of desire which causes deadly addiction can be interpreted as a metaphor for serpent at the garden of Eden. Colonizers are behaving like Satan, the serpent, towards the natives.

### 6.3.2. "The Fall"

Dimovitz (2015:73) goes further to connect this alegory with Lacanian concept of subjectivity as a "function of patriarchal inscription of language and ideology" on a child through the process of socialisation. As the youth identifies with this dominant power, they accept the symbolic order of their society. Dimovitz (2015) writes that Mitchell's ontology implies that the "Fall" was necessary for a narrative transformation; without it, nothing would ever happen. Dimovitz (2015) equates the "fall" of man from the Torah with giving up pre-existing identities to accept symbolic orders of the society; thereby, he makes this connection between the Torah narrative and "Cloud Atlas" stories. In this viewpoint, the "fall" of Adam and Eve was necessary for establishment of society. However, Kabbalistic scholars would disagree on this premise: according to them, "the fall" was not necessary, but it happened by error. The error was mended at the Mount Sinai by receiving the Torah, but it was once again committed through incident with the Golden Calf. Therefore, humans lost their immortality for the second time, and now they have to work hard towards it, in order to reach it once again in the Messianic era. (Pinson, 1999) In "Cloud Atlas", humans are also mending each other's "sins", such as: 1) racially based slavery, 2) societal discrimination towards LGBT community, 3) corruption, 4) mistreatment of old people, 5) genetically based slavery and corporatocracy, 6) cannibalism based upon the idea of "survival of the fittest". Therefore, the "fall" in the film is not necessary, but a mistake. However, just like in The Zohar, it can be mended through hard work of: 1) other righteous individuals or 2) the same persons who had sinned in previous lifetimes.

#### 6.4. Philosophical References in the Film

In this chapter I will explain which philosophical references are present in the film, before I go in detail explaining Kabbalistic references in the following chapters.

##### 6.4.1. Plato's Cave and Social-Darwinism

Dimovitz (2015) writes that there is a subtle reference to the Plato's allegory of the cave in the novel, when Henry Goose in the first narrative tells about the slave-maker ants who steal other ants' eggs to turn the new ants into slaves. Slavery is considered a natural order by many antagonists (Ewing's father-in-law Haskell Moore (Weaving), plantowner Horrox (Grant), dr. Goose (Hanks), etc.) Contradictorily, some characters (Moore, Horrox) are religious Protestants even though they endorse a social-Darwinist viewpoint of natural order and a premise of "survival of the fittest".

Hicks (2010) writes that Mitchell (2004) used Mircea Eliade's "Myth of the Eternal Return" as a framework. Cyclical understanding of time defies the scientific notion of history and understanding of time. He writes that cannibalism in the story six is a metaphor present in all six narratives, not only the last one. Complex tropes such as environmentalism, clones, cannibals, transmigrating souls, religious icons are used to examine the phenomenology of historicism and break the predetermined notion of historicism (Hicks, 2010). Each story employs certain archetypes which repeat themselves constantly throughout the history. The emphasis in the novel is more on the "terror of history", while the movie shows how both positive and negative actions can shape future.

##### 6.4.2. Individualization and Faith

However, Hicks (2010) accentuates that these archetypes are just an illusion, as individuality is endorsed in the novel. Sonmi-451 breaks the cycle of terror by "ascending", becoming an educated individual with high intellect. This proves that "even same-stem fabricants cultured in the same wombtank are as singular as snow-flakes" (Mitchell, 2012: 187) Sonmi-451 becomes reframed as a historical subject rather than fabricated, archetypal identity. In Judaism, one of the purposes of descension of the soul into the material world is its individualization accomplished through building of the world. (Spero, 2001: 123) This

corresponds with scientifically proven entropy, that particles tend to divide into smaller, more distinguished particles. The Zohar writes that individualization is the basic feature of righteous individuals, who are "whole" people.

"As is written 'Abraham was one (Echezkel 55: 24) why was he one? Because there was no other in the world, who had elevated himself by faith (...) Thus, he was distinguished and different from all other people of his generation" (Lech Lecha 22: 199-201).

In "Cloud Atlas", all protagonists have some sort of faith, although not necessarily a religious one. All of them believe in humanity, righteousness, equality, and importance to fight for the right cause. Each main character elevated himself by fulfilling a particular purpose, and thus reached "distinction from all other people of their generation".

In one surreal scene of the film, Robert Frobisher (Ben Whishaw) and his lover Rufus Sixsmith (James D'Arcy) are in a room full of white ceramic dishes, breaking them in slow motion, as Frobisher narrates:

"I understand now that boundaries between noise and sound are convention (...) I know separation is an illusion. My life extends far beyond the limitations of me" (Frobisher).

Parallely we are shown Sonmi-451 and Hae-Jo Chang making love. Slow breaking of the dishes represents entropy, while at the same time something is being created, love between Sonmi and Hae-Jo as well as between Frobisher and Sixsmith strengthens. When conventions are broken, new positive energy is created, with power to change the world. As I will explain later, love is the single most important prerequisite of any societal progress in the film.

#### 6.4.3. Baudrillardian Interpretation

Hicks (2010) writes that the whole story can be interpreted in Baudrillardian way, as numerous virtual realities of the past and future. The novel states that the way we remember the past can "undermine our access to the actual past by overlaying it with images of virtual past" (Mitchell, 2004: 389-90). Therefore, all stories can be considered fictionalization of each other. By reading Ewing's diary, Frobisher created mental representations of what Ewing's life might have looked like. Similarly, through Frobisher's love letters, Luisa created



a sense of living in 1936, etc. According to this interpretation, the narratives from the past are created by present-day fictionalization (Hicks, 2010). Also, there is no "present", as every narrative is either past or future for other narratives. History, future and present is just a "story".

## 6.5. Language and Truth

Dimovitz (2015) writes that language has ideological power in the story, proved by the fact that the fabricants in "An Orison of Sonmi-451" are forbidden to learn new words, as language can awaken desire for equality and knowledge, while lack of it creates subordination. In the first story, Ewing writes about his nightmare of losing speech, which he identifies with the oppressed Indians (19). Dimovitz (2015) writes that this is an implication of Chomsky's generative grammar, where the linguistic act transforms through a "surface structure"utterance (Chomsky: 15, as cited by Dimovitz: 74). Also, when Timothy Cavendish awakens from his stroke in the novel, he feels like "Peter Rabbit", which Dimovitz (2015) also associates with the loss of language as loss of identity. For example, we are told in the film that clones like Sonmi are supposed to talk in "subspeech" rather than official language of Unanimity. Dimovitz (2015) writes that in the sixth story "Sloosha's Crossin", Zachry remembers death of his prematurely born baby who had no mouth or nostrils. This image haunts him in the dream, where the baby asks him: "Why'd you kill me, Pa?" (246). Dimovitz (2015) compares this scene to the fact that the world was created through speech, but God "breathed" life into a human.

### 6.5.1. Importance of Language in Judaism

In the Zohar, the first and the last breath are considered a cosmic kiss between God and man (Zohar, Mishpatim 27: 552) Mouth is also a symbol of Da'at (knowledge) in the Zohar, the cosmologic sphere which connects the dimension of intellect (Hochma and Bina, wisdom and understanding) with the dimension of emotions, the other spheres. Mouth is like Yisrael Saba and Tevunah, the higher reality which was created by Aba (cosmological father) and Ima (cosmological mother) when Chesed (loving-kindness) combined with Hochma (wisdom). (Zohar, Mishpatim 2: 527-530) "Da'at is concealed in the mouth of the King, called Tiferet, as an extension of Tiferet. All treasures and colors are hidden within" (Zohar, Mishpatim 23:

529) Hochma (wisdom) is considered "treasure" which is then pronounced through the mouth. However, mouth was also means of committing the first mistake which led to the "Fall", as fruit of the Tree of Knowledge Good and Evil was consumed through mouth.

#### 6.5.2. "Voice" and "Speech"

Mouth can be a means of expressing and consuming, giving and taking. Dimovitz (2015) considers mouth as representing the body and structure of identity. Therefore, this consumption led to giving up old truth and acceptance of the new identity. However, according to the Zohar, desire comes from sense of taste, which is on top of the mouth, whereas speech comes from the palate from within, expressing the views coming from the brain (mochin) (Zohar, Mishpatim 2: 527-530). Dimovitz (2015) noticed that Sonmi-451's "awakening" in the novel started with a voice in her head which she refers to as "sentience". In the Zohar, the Voice originates in the Upper world and is then transferred to the Lower world through Speech. Voice and Speech are considered male and female aspects of the same thing; they have to correspond and combine with each other in order to express the truth. (Zohar, Mishpatim 2: 527-530) Dimovitz (2015) writes of anxiety caused by impossibility of transforming inner voice into speech, for example in case of stammer. This dissonance is connected with both language and consumption as means of control. The speaker is the powerful one while the listener is the oppressed one.

"Cloud Atlas" explores this idea both in the case of the enslaved Polynesian natives in the first narrative and the oppression by the cannibals in the sixth narrative. As Zachry / Henry Goose (Tom Hanks) put it: "The weak are meat and the strong do eat". This shows that cannibals demonstrate their "control" over other tribes by consuming them. Therefore, mouth can be a means of control in two ways. However, it is also means of redemption. It is further written in the Zohar: "When the light of Da'at is stirred and emerges, it is then referred to as 'the mouth of Hashem' and the lips, being the two lights of Aba and Ima, when they meet the light of Da'at, they join by it together, and the matter is pronounced in truth, through Hochma, Tevuna and Da'at. Then all the words of the Holy one, blessed be He, are pronounced." (Zohar, Mishpatim 23: 529) Words have a power of creating the worlds and bringing them together in the Zohar. Lips must be used for telling the truth – in the end, it is what Sonmi-451 does.

### 6.5.3. Singularity of Truth

However, while the film makes it clear that "Truth is singular. Its 'versions' are mistruths" (Sonmi-451) and the sixth narrative ultimately finds the absolute "true true", the novel mentions a Derridean postmodernist claim that there are "as many truths as men" (Mitchell, 2004: 17). The third narrative tries to search for the "truer truth", only to conclude that "the truth is radiation on Buenas Yervas" (Mitchell, 2004: 416). It's as simple as that. The symbolic order is only based upon traditional power structures, there are no true inner meanings.

## 7. Genre and Spacial Typology

The overall genre of the Cloud Atlas is hard to define, as six intertwined stories have different genres – the first one is historical, the second one romantic drama, the third one a thriller, the fourth one farce, the fifth one is dystopian and the sixth one post-apocalyptic. The overall genre is an "adult epic film" according to the directors (DP / 30: The Oral History of Hollywood, 2012).

### 7.1. Theoretical Framework of Spacial Typology

All of "Cloud Atlas" stories have the same plot structures and plot devices common to dystopian / science fiction / fantasy films. According to Pezzoli-Olgiati (2009) structure and aesthetics in science fiction / dystopian movies demonstrate tension between different worlds in highly technologized future.

"Die Grenzen der Welt, der Zeit, der Personen und ihrer Körper werden verändert erweitert, in neuen Kontexten ansiedelt. Im hier unternommenen, vergleichenden Ansatz wird besonders die räumliche Ebene betont: Darstellungen, Eigentümlichkeiten und Verbindungen unterschiedlicher Weltkonzepte auf einer 'kartographischen' Dimension stehen also im Mittelpunkt". (Pezzoli-Olgiati, 2009: 35)

Aesthetics on the level of scene structure illustrates relations between different worlds. Different places are characterized with certain connotations: for example, places (cities, nature, open spaces) and non-places (subway) are scenery for different types of action on narrative level in order to convey different values: positive, negative or other kind of

association with the narrative. Pezzoli-Olgiati (2009) use examples from older movies like the Blade Runner (1980), 12 Monkeys (1995) and even Metropolis (1922) in order to classify different "worlds" in science fiction/dystopian movies.

#### 7.1.1. Science Fiction Aesthetics as Representations of Worlds

First of all, there is a low world of average humans. In Blade Runner it is dominated by "chaotic traffic and decay", in 12 Monkeys it alludes to an underground world of survivors, whereas in Metropolis it is the world of workers. In the Cloud Atlas, it is, in the order of six narratives: 1) life of the slaves, 2) (sexually) oppressed minorities such as the young musician protagonist, 3) non-luxurious apartment of the journalist Luisa Rey, 4) oppressed users of the old people's homes, 5) workers in the Neo Seoul restaurant, 6) life in post-apocalyptic tribes. All six narratives portray oppression and mistreatment in the society, bringing forward a potentially humanitarian, socialist and environmentalist message. Visuals of these six worlds accentuate social stratification of different groups and individuals.

Apart from the "low world of average humans", there is a "technologised world of self-proclaimed Creator", with its centre being a technological palace (Pezzoli / Olgiatti, 2009). In 12 Monkeys it alludes to world before destruction, while in Metropolis it is a machine city with a dominant palace in the middle. In the Cloud Atlas, it is 1) life of slave-owners and well-off people, 2) the home of the old and acclaimed musician, 3) inside and outside of the corporation headquarters, 4) the skyscraper where book presentations are held, 5) the skyscrapers where genetically privileged individuals live, 6) society of the Prescients. According to Pezzoli-Olgiatti, all worlds of the privileged are visually designed in order to allude to the Tower of Babylon. Obviously, many science fiction movies criticize a modern and hyper-urbanized world as portrayed as based upon subordination of nature and exploitation of other humans.

Finally, there is a world of polluted and destroyed nature and remains of the world above ground – this reality comes to be in 5th and 6th story, but it had originated in mistreatment of humans and nature. Ecological irresponsibility in the plot started around the time of Second Industrial Revolution, through the era between two World Wars, to the nuclear irresponsibility.

## 7.2. Claustrophobic Spaces and the Social Change

Tan (2014) writes that "Cloud Atlas" employs Antonio Gramsci's concept of Civil Society as "the whole of ideological-cultural relations and the whole of spiritual and intellectual life". (Mouffe, 1979: 30-31) I will use some of the points made in his Thesis and extend them into my own interpretation, emphasizing importance of the spaces in the film. Namely, each protagonist faces a claustrophobic space. Each story has a location "sealed off" from the world, representing characters' own feelings of separation and isolation – for example, Chatnam Islands, Hawaiian Islands, the ship, the Ayr's villa. There is a motif of opening and closing, both visually and plotwise. I will now explain how this is applied in each narrative.

In the first story, the boat cabin of Adam Ewing is small and closed, wooden, old-fashioned, wet and dirty. The protagonist is physically and psychologically captured, stuck at the ship under the Captain Molyneux' command, forced to "play by other people's rules". This ship is an example of Gramsci's notion of Civil Society, as the captain who is in charge defines the ideology implemented at the ship, and the rules every crewmember has to follow. Ewing's only friend and hope to salvation, dr. Goose, is actually slowly poisoning him. This alludes to multiple layers of meaning, once again: the boat represents the society based upon hierarchy, where individuals are forced to obey the ones above them, even if those in power are wrong, such as the Captain when he attempts to shoot the runaway slave Autua. However, when the Captain is persuaded by Ewing to accept Autua as a crewmember, the dominant ideology of the century is overruled, and a new ideology of equality is implemented instead, as Autua is given a chance. The cotton plantation where Ewing arrives is another example of Gramsci's Civil Society (Tan, 2014: 53).

Ewing is "a small man" captured in his cabin, trusting the doctor (another figure of authority) who wants to kill him and steal his gold. However, once Ewing frees himself from the stereotypes he had about people of other races, during a strong encounter with Autua, he acquires an unlikely ally, finally realizing that dr. Ewing has poisoning him all along. He finally exits the cabin and demands a workplace for the runaway slave. In this way, the story shows that any small individual can indeed make a change, only if they open themselves for new people and experiences, which may change the way they think. The cabin room may be interpreted as Ewing's mind, wherein he lets a new individual, an unlikely friend Autua, who completely changes his way of thought. After acquiring a new perspective, he finally "comes

out" of his old behavioral patterns and demands a social change, which may not be greeted immediately by everyone, but long-term is worth the fight.

In the second narrative (1936), the young musician Frobisher escapes from a big luxurious chateau of Ayr into the closed and dark hotel room in which he contemplates suicide. The chateau is another example of Civil Society by Gramsci et al. (1971), where Ayr controls everyone living inside his house. Even though Frobisher attempts to overturn the power within the castle, he fails. Apparently, unlike Ewing, he is unable to cope with his emotions and societal pressure. Unwilling to "come out of the closet", he commits suicide. However, his emotions were written down within the letters to his lover Sixsmith.

Many years later (1973) Frobisher's lover Sixsmith, motivated by these letters, gives out the reports about irregular operation of the nuclear power plant to Luisa Rey, while being stuck in the small red elevator. The investigative journalist Luisa is captured a few times – in the elevator, in the car (sinking down the river), in her small apartment in a bad-looking part of the city, and in a room in the corporate headquarters. The corporation is an example of the Civil Society, manipulating the truth and assassinating the scientists who wanted to get the story out. (Tan, 2014) Luckily, in the end Luisa managed to publish the story and get it out to the public.

In the fourth story, the retired book publisher Cavendish is literally captured in the nursing home, first within his own room under the threat of Nurse Noakes, later in the retirement home building which does not allow him to go outside. The "Aurora House" is another example of Civil Society, where authoritative figures oppress the elderly with their rules and legislations (Tan, 2014). However, Cavendish breaks free in the end and publishes his life story, which will motivate Sonmi in future. Again, after standing against the mistreatment of nurses in the retirement home, his phrase "I will not be subjected to criminal abuse" will motivate Sonmi in future.

Sonmi-451 faces many claustrophobic spaces – in fact, the first time ever she goes outside is while escaping. Her whole life takes place within one building, the Papa Song restaurant, working 19 hours a day supervised by managers "seers". Life of the fabricants is under complete control of the corporation Papa Song, "who sets the rules in their micro-structured world" (Tan, 2014: 54). Sonmi sleeps in a tiny case on a modern shelf, visually very similar to beds in the concentration camps, goes through the same space and routine every day with other cloned workers, wears always the same clothes, works in one-room restaurant, and

ultimately end up captured in a small dark room with her interrogator, the reincarnation of Sixsmith. However, her story affects him and her words get preserved in the "orison" in order to become a gospel in the sixth story. Again, there is a symbolism of social change associated with "coming out".

Zachry (2321) mostly lives in open spaces, but these open spaces are very minimalistic. Cities are ruined and nature is radioactive. The society of the valleyman is very structured, with the Abbess at top of the hierarchy, sharing common beliefs and leading a communal lifestyle. This is another example of Gramsci's Civil Society (Tan, 2014). His cabin is very claustrophobic and old-fashioned, while his territorial freedom is limited by the Kona cannibals. In the end, he has to leave the Earth and travel towards another planet in order to finally be free from outer evil (the Kona) and inner evil (Old Georgie). Basically, the Earth became inhabitable, so he had to start the society anew at another planet as a new "Adam Rishon".

### 7.3. Vertical and Horizontal Movement - Theosophic Interpretation of a Journey

Travelling is an important element of the "Cloud Atlas". Many characters climb up the social ladder vertically, but they also move horizontally. Just like Hebrew slaves had to cross the Red Sea, Ewing (Jim Sturgess) in the first story had to travel across part of the Pacific Ocean. Through redemption of a slave, Autua (David Gyasi), Ewing earned his own redemption. In the second narrative, Frobisher (Ben Whishaw) travels to Edinburgh to work for Ayrs (Jim Broadbent) where he manages to express his artistic talent for a while. Luisa Rey (Halle Berry) is first seen in the movie driving her car to investigate the nuclear plant. Tim Cavendish (Jim Broadbent) travels at one point to the Aurora House by train and then escapes it by car. Sonmi-451 (Doona Bae) travels to escape; in the book, she also travels to meet small Buddhist farm-owning communities which changes her perspective. Finally, Zachry and Meronym have to travel by spaceship to another habitable planet. All of the characters achieve some kind of freedom by physically travelling to another location, like the Hebrew slaves who travel across the desert in the four books of the Torah to achieve the "promised land".

## 8. Common Thematic Elements

The film is unique in its structure and plot building. The directors have clearly paid attention to each detail in each narrative. Its technological development and montaging style draw possible inspirations from "The Fountain" (2009) by Darren Aronofsky, where two protagonists live in three parallel dimensions of time and space (Davidowicz, 2017). Visuals and cinematic realization are similar to those in "The Matrix", coming from the same directors.

Narratives 2, 3 and 4 are directed by Tom Tykwer, whereas narratives 1, 5 and 6 are directed by the Wachowskis. They were combined and montaged by all three of them in the end product (CineFix, 2012). Even though some films employed the same actor in different roles – "Dr. Strangelove" (1964), "Kind Hearts and Hornets"(1949), "Moon" (2009), as well as "Monty Python" sketches, and naturally "The Fountain" (2009), none of these films did it on such a large scale, with so much subtext. The "Cloud Atlas" had at least 25 actors portray multiple roles (Peberdy, 2014).

Scenes from different narratives, consisting the same actors, were put together in the editing process, creating separate micro-narratives. The Wachowskis explained one separate micro-narrative in the 2012 interview by Devon Faraci (CineFix). In the 4th narrative, the Highlander played by Jim Sturgess (also Adam Ewing, Hae-Joo Chang) hits the Nurse Noakes (Hugo Weaving) on head. In the next scene (third narrative) her previous self Bill Smoke (Hugo Weaving) is up and standing, but the Highlander's soulmate played by Doona Bae (Tilda Ewing, Sonmi-451), now a Mexican woman, smashes Bill Smoke on head. Adam Ewing (Jim Sturgess) and his wife Tilda (Doona Bae) unite. In the end, they are again confronted by her father, Haskell Moore (Hugo Weaving).

Different directing styles and genre preferences are visible, as stories directed by Tykwer are a romantic drama, a political thriller and a satire, whereas the stories directed by the Wachowskis are a historical intrigue, science fiction dystopia and a post-apocalypse. Correspondingly, the visuals also differ. Each story is faithful to its genre, and each one has a different visual setting. For example, the fifth narrative is visually similar to "The Matrix", with classic division of spaces typical for science fiction genre. However, there are many overlaps. For example, the nursery home of the fourth story later becomes a fast food restaurant where the plot is set in the fifth story.



Common thematic elements are portrayed in a similar way. Some of the shared topics among the stories are a question of slavery and freedom, "awakening" from the given condition, forbidden aspects of love, regard to nature, economy / profit versus humanity / morality, conservatism versus Messianic revolution. Freedom of choice is the common element for all six plots, because all protagonists need to make big, life-changing decisions, which affect not only their lives, but also past and future, as if they needed to choose between the Tree of Knowledge Good and Evil and Tree of Life.

### 8.1. Redemption (Tikkun)

As Scheidt (2007) writes, redemption is particularly important for Western religions, as this idea stems from the Exodus narrative and expands into Christian concept of salvation through faith. According to him, all big religions are "Erlösungsreligionen" (41). Jewish redemption aims at a collective of the "chosen people", while Christian redemption is more universalistic, but every individual must reach it personally. The Cloud Atlas talks addresses individual salvation of one slave in the first narrative; the second protagonist "frees" his and his lover's forbidden relationship through suicide; the third protagonist "frees" the truth about malfunctioning nuclear reactor, making it available to the public; the fourth protagonist escapes from the nursing home together with three colleagues; the fifth protagonist, Sonmi, sets up prerequisites for freeing all clones (one particular collective); Zachry in the end preserves certain aspects of the whole mankind. Therefore, the starting narratives are more based upon Christian concept of individual redemption through faith in a better tomorrow, whereas the focus slowly shifts to freeing a collective. Sonmi-451 aims at educating and freeing a particular group of people, the clones, which is very close to the Jewish redemption concept. Even though we could say that through Zachry the whole mankind is preserved in the sixth story, it is not so; Zachry's village is murdered by the cannibals and he is the only one to survive. In fact, only a small group of people hard survived the nuclear apocalypse and "Fall" of the society back to prehistoric era, and even a smaller group of the "chosen ones" manage to escape to another planet and start anew. Therefore, the film starts with Christian concept of redemption and ends with Jewish redemption of the "chosen ones".

Scheidt (2007) writes that redemption in the movies has a different "face": instead of love towards God, the primary motivator for the characters is love towards a human being. However, different religions have different concepts of love and redemption. In Christianity,

subjects are fairly passive; redemption can only be achieved through Jesus, by each person individually (Sheidt, 2007: 42), while in complex Jewish "Tikkun" learning, small actions at the micro-level are also part of the overall redemption. Everyone and everything takes part in "repairing" a small part of world. According to the Zohar, the world is sustained through righteous individuals like Abraham. Their micro-actions of kindness sustain the universe. (Zohar, Lech Lecha 23: 225)

Similarly, love between humans is part of Jewish learning about correction of the world – rather than only love towards God. In "Cloud Atlas", love is the most important trigger of people's actions. Love makes subjects change their perspectives and fight against slavery, oppression, ecologic disasters, physical confinement, societal prejudice etc. Love towards his wife (Doona Bae) and children inspired Ewing (Jim Sturgess) in the first narrative to fight against slavery; love towards Sixsmith (James D'Arcy) inspired Frobisher (Ben Whishaw) to compose the *Cloud Atlas* musical piece; love towards Luisa (Halle Berry) inspired Isaac (Tom Hanks) to reveal the secret details about the broken nuclear reactor; love towards Hae-Joo Chang (Jim Sturgess) inspired Sonmi (Doona Bae) to fight for equality; love for Meronym inspired Zachry (Tom Hanks) to defeat his evil inclination (Old Georgie played by Hugo Weaving), overcome prejudice against strangers and ultimately save the mankind. Love towards another human is a part of typically Jewish concept of redemption, while Christian redemption is based upon love towards God / Jesus.

## 8.2. Kabbalistic Relevance of Sound, Voice and Speech

Even though I already mentioned importance of music, sound, voice and speech in the film, in this chapter I will further explain how they connect to central Kabbalistic theories.

Music in the film pertains to Tikkun. *Cloud Atlas* piece is the same melody stretching through different temporal and spatial dimensions as an "unconscious" of the whole humanity. It signifies the common theme of human history, implying that there is a common goal for all past and future people. All humans are mystically interconnected through a higher force. In Kabbala, each one of the five worlds (from bottom to top – Asiah, world of action; Yetzirah, world of formation; Briah, world of creation; Azilut, world of emanation; Ein Sof, the Endless world) corresponds to one out of five human senses. Smell stands for Asiah, taste for Yetzirah, touch for Briah, sound for Azilut and vision for Ein Sof. Therefore, all forms of

music, noise and sound stem from Azilut. Zohar describes Bina (Azilut) as a world of "Voice" whereas Malchut (Asiah) is a world of "Speech". "Voice" stands for a potential, whereas "Speech" stands for particular articulation. (Pinson, 1999)

Sound, therefore, originates in Bina and descends towards Malchut. *Cloud Atlas Sextet* is a piece of music Frobisher and Ayrs hear in a dream, Luisa Rey hears it in a small record store, Sonmi hears it during the Exaltation ritual, Zachry at the station where Meronym takes him. Music is intertwining all these dimensions and stories as a "cord" (according to Wachowskis, 2012), implying that there is a "bigger picture" to it, a purpose, a macroplan behind actions of individuals.

Transformation from Voice to Speech, from Bina to Malchut, signifies descension of spiritual consciousness from the Upper towards the Lower worlds. In the film, the protagonists want to better the world. In a way, they act as "portals" (Yesod) between Lower and Upper worlds. They manifest the latent goodness present in humanity. By improving the world, they bring forth the Messianic Era. Was it not for journal of Adam Ewing, abolitionist from 1849, there would have been no Frobisher's *Cloud Atlas Sextet*, no letters to Sixsmith, no Luisa Rey's report, no Cavendish's ordeal, no Sonmi's Orison, and ultimately no religion based on belief in Sonmi. Zachry would not have trusted Meronym, nor would he have travelled elsewhere for habitation. Humans would have remained living on Earth (or parts thereof) polluted by radiation, which would have probably caused extinction of mankind.

Protagonists raise their voices through literal speech, as well as through writing. Just like in the Zohar there is an interaction between Voice and Speech, there is an interaction between Voice and Text. According to this dualistic concept, Voice is usually the Male principle and Speech (Text) the Female principle. Male principle is latent and potential, whereas Female principle is manifest and particular. In "Cloud Atlas", protagonists literally make the history happen through their speech (e.g. Adam Ewing's abolitionist speech to Haskell Moore in 1849; Frobisher's angry speech to Ayrs in 1936; Luisa Rey's talk with Isaac Sachs; Cavendish's opposition against mistreatment in nursery home; Sonmi's speech to the Archivist; Meronym's explanation about nature of Zachry's religion). Through speaking, characters bring forth the Voice from Bina into Malchut. Second way they bring the Voice down is through writing, as already mentioned. Due to interaction of all these elements, mankind was given a second chance to start anew in another place. Characters fulfilled their role in Tikkun (correction of the world) and brought forth a better era (namely, the kannibals

have remained on Earth, so they no longer pose a threat, while the innocent Valley-men and advanced Prescients travelled elsewhere).

### 8.3. Knowledge (Da'at)

Fritsch (2007) mentions that triad or truth, knowledge and redemption is an old religious motive, to be found mainly in Gnostic teachings and Buddhism. In Christianity, "knowledge" per se is not very important, rather it is all about recognition of Jesus as only true source of knowledge, through which redemption can be achieved. In Kabbala in particular, knowledge (Da'at) is a very important element. Da'at is one of the ten cosmological spheres, as an actualized form of Keter. Da'at connects the unknowable reality, worlds of cosmologic father (Heb. Aba, representing Hochma, wisdom) and mother (Heb. Ima, representing Bina, understanding) with the worlds of lower seven spheres. In this way, Da'at represents usable knowledge which should guide people's actions in order to transmit Hochma (wisdom) and Bina (understanding) into the physical reality. In "Cloud Atlas", transmission of knowledge is important in all six stories, because knowledge enables characters to free themselves from slavery.

In the novel, importance of acquiring knowledge to get freedom is even more accentuated than in the film, because in the novel Sonmi-451 studies at the university and reads many philosophy books, including works of Solzhenicyn and "The Republic" by Plato.

### 8.4. Relationships

All six main characters have uncleared relationships with their families, "makers" or relatives. Ewing is in clash with his slave-trading father-in-law in 1849. Frobisher was disowned by his father in 1936, likely due to lifestyle choices. Luisa Rey is under pressure to be a brave and non-conforming investigative journalism, due to her father's journalistic career. Timothy Cavendish is in conflict with his older brother Denholme, who tricks him into a retirement home in 2012. Sonmi-451 is in conflict with her "makers" – as a Golem-like clone, she wants to destroy the system which created her. Zachry in the sixth narrative talks to his grandchildren (the young generation) while listening to the ancestors' spirits. In a way, he is the first character finally in peace with his (and humanity's) past.

## 9. Symbolology of Numbers and Messianism

There are six stories and six main characters, corresponding to six spheres of Zeir Anpin (representing the Upper world) in the Zohar. The sefirot are spheres of Godly emanation, described metaphorically as chambers: "First is the chamber of love, second is the chamber of awe, third is the chamber of mercy, fourth is the chamber of prophecy from the shining mirror, fifth is the chamber of prophecy from the opaque mirror, sixth is the chamber of justice and seventh is the chamber of judgement" (Zohar, Beresheet A 17: 193). The seventh chamber is Malchut, the Lower world, which needs to be built and corrected through six spheres of Zeir Anpin. Zohar reads the first word of the Torah "beresheet" (Eng. "in the beginning" as "bara sheet" (Eng. "created six"). (Zohar, Beresheet A 17: 194) Therefore, the whole universe is created in the number of six (plus Malchut, the female principle).

### 9.1. Messianic Mission

All six main characters are associated with some kind of Messianic mission. The Zohar writes: "When the Holy one, blessed be he, first created Adam, while he was still unshaped flesh and had no soul, He said to the angel who was assigned over the images of men: "look, and shape in this form six men!" (Chayei Sarah 8: 42) According to this sentence of the Zohar, each one of "six men" belongs to one millenium. There are six millenia until arrival of the Messiah, and each one of "six men" comes from a different time, and each one of them represents a different aspect of the Messiah (who is not necessarily one particular person, but a concept of progression of mankind). In "Cloud Atlas", chronologically first character is Adam Ewing. He is one of the six protagonists who all carry a star-shaped birthmark. Messiah is to appear together with a star according to the Zohar, so these six characters represent aspects of the Messiah. Adam's name represents the beginning (his name starting with a Latin letter A), while Zachry's represents the ending (his letter starting with a Latin letter Z, the end of alphabet). Therefore, the first mortal human (Adam Ewing) and the last mortal human (Zachry) have the same origin, and after Messianic arrival, there shall be no death according to the Zohar.

According to the Zohar, God "created these six men from the same dust that was used to create Adam". (Chayei Sarah 8: 43) In The Zohar, description of six people refers to six

cosmological spheres – Chesed (loving-kindness), Gevura (strength), Tiferet (Beauty), Netzah (victory), Hod (splendor), Yesod (foundation). In "Cloud Atlas", there are literally six people, six protagonists, which can be interpreted as personifications of these six spheres.

I will explain Messianism of main characters into more detail in the following sub-chapter.

## 9.2. Reincarnation (Gilgul)

The same actors appear in all six stories, signifying reincarnations of the characters. The Zohar writes about six cycles of reincarnation. A law from Torah to free a Hebrew slave after 6 years of serving and the law of the Sabbatical year are compared to seven days of creation.

" 'If you buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve' (Shemot, 21:2) means that the soul is required to incarnate (...) only until it finished correcting the six levels, Chesed, Gevura, Tiferet, Netzah, Hod and Yesod, of the same place whence it was taken." (Zohar Mishpatim, 2: 2)

According to the Zohar, the "Hebrew slave" is a metaphor for a soul who has to reincarnate in order to reach perfection of the six Godly attributes. In the same way, the six main characters have to reincarnate six times. This is a major difference of movie and the novel, in which only the main character reincarnates (which is signified by his star-shaped mole). He transits from being Adam Ewing who frees a slave, a bisexual musician Ben Whishaw, the journalist Luisa Rey investigating ecologic irresponsibility of a corporation, the old Timothy Cavendish, Sonmi-451 and in the end Zachry.

In the book, it can be viewed as an evolution of one single (potentially Messianic) character, who starts by saving one person and ends up saving the whole mankind in the final story. Book in particular alludes to Buddhism, as Sonmi-451 is taken to the buddhist community where reincarnation is discussed. According to Wilkes (2012), karma is the essential element of narrative coherence in both the novel and the film. However, when Mitchell was asked about the function of the comet birthmark in the BBC Book Club interview in the novel, he said:

"I guess that's just a symbol, really, of the universality of human nature. The title 'Cloud Atlas' itself, the 'cloud' refers to the ever-changing manifestations of the 'atlas',

which is that fixed human nature, which was always thus and ever shall be." (Mitchell, 2012b)

Therefore, Mitchell considers reincarnation of one character in the novel as a symbol of the cyclical repetition of the same patterns throughout the history of humanity. Dimovitz (2015) considers the comet in the novel a symbol of the "Fall" imprinted upon the mankind.

"The book's theme is predacity – the way individuals prey on individuals, groups on groups, nations on nations, tribes on tribes... reincarnation is a beautiful and elegant theory, and I wish that I could believe in it, but alas, I don't, no."(Mitchell, 2012b)

#### 9.2.1. New Medium, New Meaning

However, Mitchell is aware that the stories acquired a new level of meaning, having been transferred to the medium of film, opening up space for new interpretations. In the film, the six main characters are obviously separate people, rather than mere representations of "universal human nature". Each protagonist of the film reincarnates into different individuals, having an own evolution.

Mitchell was thrilled by this new level of interpretation given in the film, where the characters are on "ethical journeys through time", implying that the reincarnation of multiple characters was indeed his original idea, but he had difficulties putting it in a book. "Wachowskis and Tom Tykwer amplified this principle so that it extends to all characters (...) it's just ingenious", Mitchell stated (Roadshow Films, 2013).

#### 9.2.2. Stars and the Comet-Shaped Birthmark

In the first (and last) scene of the film, we see the stars in the sky. Motif of stars alludes to the comet-shaped birthmark which all protagonists carry, as a symbol of universality of human nature (according to David Mitchell). Dark sky itself, with numerous bright stars, is a metaphor of "bright" individuals willing to change history. Title of the book *The Zohar* (Meaning: Book of Splendor) is taken from the following line, alluding to the time of arrival of King Messiah (Daniel 12: 3): "And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn the many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever". In

"Cloud Atlas", the protagonists represent the Messiah, or coming of Messianic era, about to change the history of mankind.

Significance of their comet-shaped birthmark points in same direction, namely, The Zohar writes that the "pillar of fire" and a star "glowing with variety of colors" are two phenomena associated with the age of Messiah. "The star of Messiah will battle against the enemy stars as the Messiah ben Joseph appears and announces the beginning of the Messianic era." (Shemot 15: 101-103) The protagonists in "Cloud Atlas" have a star-shaped birthmark, which suggests their Messianic mission. Even though they are separate people, their souls might be coming from the same source. Perhaps these contradictions can be explained by a complex gilgul theory of Isaac Luria and Hajim Vital, who write that different levels of one soul can reincarnate in different people. It could potentially mean that all six characters portray different aspects of one bigger soul, stemming from the same spiritual source. They complement each other in order to fulfill their purpose. (Pinson, 1999)

When asked about how he felt when the same actors portrayed different characters in all six narratives, Mitchell said:

"I loved it! See, that's one of the things you can do in a film that you can't do in a book (...) I love this idea that you can show on a facial level that the main characters in the film are being reincarnated again and again in different time zones" (Roadshow Films, 2013).

According to the Wachowskis, both secular and religious interpretations of the film are possible (CineFix, 2012). According to Tykwer, the film is "open to audiences' perceptions and their spiritual relations to the world (...) neither dogmatic nor ideological". According to Lana Wachowski, the book is stimulative in both a secular and spiritual way. The quote from the novel: "The nature of our immortal lives is in the consequences of our words and deeds, that go on and are pushing themselves throughout all time" provides an Epicurean, rather than atheist understanding of karma and predetermination. Lana stated that there are clear references to immortal love, life beyond life and connectiveness beyond materiality in both the novel and the film (CineFix, 2012).

Even though Tykwer personally endorses a more secular idea of a "genetic strain" rather than reincarnation, the Wachowskis prefer a more spiritual interpretation. In another interview, the Wachowskis said that the main objective of their works "The Matrix" and "Cloud Atlas" is to



invite a viewer to leave behind their old cuckooned world and transcend the material understanding of life. (DP / 30: The Oral History of Hollywood, 2012)

### 9.3. Six Days of Creation

Similarly, six stories could refer to six days of the creation of the world. "We have learned that the world exists for 6000 years and that Shabbat eve is the 6th millenium, the ending of all" (Zohar, Chayei Sarah 20: 173). In this era all worthy dead would resurrect, there would be a peace on Earth, the Temple would be rebuilt as a consequence of uniting the "male principle", Upper world, and the "female principle", the Lower worlds.

In the movie, the first day is signified by Adam Ewing freeing one slave, which would be an onset for the end of all slavery. Therefore, it can correspond to the creation of the light. End to the slavery is like a light for human society. Being kind to the slave, Adam Ewing represented the sphere of Chesed, loving-kindness.

Second story, telling a story about depressed musician, ends with his suicide. Therefore, it corresponds well to the second day, when death came to be as a side-product of the creation. In Kabbalistic cosmology the second day corresponds to the sphere of Gevura, judgement and strict discipline. The fact that the musician had an affair with his employer's wife, obviously means he had lacked discipline, which indirectly resulted in his death at the end. The affair reminds of the temptation Joseph had with the Pharaoh's wife (Beresheet, 39: 5-15) – but the musician Robert Frobisher succumbed to it and had to pay the price. Apart from that, in the Zohar Chesed is the male sphere, while Gevura is the female sphere. Being bisexual, Frobisher obviously had plenty of Gevura in himself – which also led him to suicide as a "judgement" of himself.

The third story about the journalist investigating the ecologically irresponsible corporation corresponds to the third day of creation. Zohar explains it was the unification of male and female principle, signified by rain falling upon the Earth, that resulted in growth of the grass and first vegetables. Therefore, ecology becomes a major concern in this story. Luisa Rey stands for Tiferet (sphere of Beauty), being an investigative journalist, which is quite uncommon for female journalists. She unites in herself female and male aspects to benefit the ecology, or to cause the grass to grow in the Torah narrative. She also forces an employee of the corporation, a Tom Hanks character, to question his ways and criticize his own company.

It is also clear that there is attraction between them – which will lead to them marrying as new Adam and Even in the sixth story.

In the fourth day of creation, stars and planets were created. The Zohar tells that Netzah and Hod stand for revealing the prophecy. Obviously, the old book editor failed to realize the direction in which the future is going. By not noticing his own corrupt ways, he failed to accomplish his Tikkun and succumbed to selfishness. Therefore, this story is more about darkening of the Netzah, as it is followed by a terrible dystopia (story five). The people from the nursing home, including the protagonist, are focused on their microcosmos, failing to see a bigger picture.

The fifth story stands for Hod, or creation of animals. Workers in the dystopian reality are not only treated like animals – they are also grown like animals, being genetically engineered to do a specific job and be incompetent of anything else. Hod stands for their hidden potential, which they come to realize after coming to contact with media. In the book, Sonmi-451 and other fabricants are taught a very narrow vocabulary and forbidden to read or otherwise learn new words. Words are considered dangerous, as their cognition might evolve and make them aware of their position. Therefore, in the novel it is actually a fairy-tale book that first encourages Sonmi to think. In the movie, it is a short movie fragment. Anyway, a medium is for her like consumption from the Tree of Knowledge which "opened her eyes", even though it eventually led to her death. It is noticeable that Sonmi has not reincarnated in the sixth story – meaning that her purpose was completely fulfilled in this one.

In the Zohar, Moses starts in the sphere of Hod, being unable to speak publically; however, during the exodus he becomes an active leader of his people and assumes the role of Netzah. He ends up as Yesod, channel to the Promised land, who does not enter in it – and neither does Sonmi.

The last story is Yesod, a portal to Malchut, the promised land. The promised land is in the movie another planet, in the book another island. The fallen society is being rebuilt – the "man" is being created anew, which corresponds to the sixth day of creation.

The whole narrative is built upon the number six. The musical piece Cloud Atlas composed by Robert Frobisher in the second narrative is a sextet. It is sung by six fabricants in the fifth story.

## 10. Kabbalistic interpretation of each story

After remarks on central Kabbalistic theories, I explained how some major Kabbalistic themes are represented in the film as a whole. Now I will go into much more detail, explaining every single plot from the Kabbalistic perspective, using Zoharitic methodology.

### 10.1. 1849, South Pacific Ocean.

The first narrative in the novel is called "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing", albeit in the film it has no name. Jim Sturgess' character Adam Ewing is an American lawyer from San Francisco who makes a business agreement with Reverend Horrox (Hugh Grant) for his father-in-law Haskell Moore (Hugo Weaving). The meeting takes place on Chatnam Islands, where Ewing first witnesses how the slaves are treated. After seeing a slave being whipped, he faints, only in order to find the slave back on the ship as a blind passenger during his return. Experience of seeing the plantation slaves for the first time – and how they are treated – was kind of awakening experience. In his previous life, he took all things for granted without really questioning them – but now this experience changed his whole conception of reality.

#### 10.1.1. Slavery and Freedom

Experience of seeing the environment of the native American slaves is similar to Moses' seeing conditions of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt. Moses saw a Hebrew slave being whipped by an Egyptian, which made him think about the issue and take a side. Just like Moses killed an Egyptian to save the slave, Ewing helped the slave to become a free crew member on the ship. While Moses felt called to free all slaves, Ewing decided to join the abolitionist movement.

Autua (David Gyasi) is not a good slave because he saw too much of the world as a seaman. He was aware of his state – which is dangerous, since the slaves must live in ignorance. If they know about being oppressed, they will ask for help and God will "hear their cries", just as Autua did. According to the Zohar, the male principle is not allowed to give anything to the female principle unless it had requested for it. (Zohar Beresheet B, 50: 214) For example, the slaves could have only been freed after they asked God for it, because "God heard their

moaning" (Shemot, 2: 24) before freeing them. Similarly, the Hebrews were asked if they really wanted to receive the Torah before getting it – it was a matter of choice.

#### 10.1.2. Kindness (Chesed), the First Sphere

Journey on a ship reminds of a journey accross the Red Sea, which signifies the birth of a free nation. Ewing was reborn and symbolism of his name became clear. He is Adam, meaning the first human to become aware of injustice – to consume from the "Tree of Knowledge Good and Bad", which meant the end of his perfect world. However, knowledge forced him to make choice – by being compassionate, he chose the "Good" side of the Tree, unlike for example Reverend Horrox (Grant) or father-in-law Haskell Moore (Weaving).

Adam Ewing was the *first* compassionate *human* in this complex narrative – and his kindness (corresponding to the kabbalistic sphere of Chesed), set off future events in all six stories.

As I already mentioned, four basic worlds in the Zohar – Arich Anpin, Bina, Zeir Anpin and Malchut – are connected, and goods flow from the highest to the lowest. Chesed is the highest sphere of Zeir Anpin, connecting the bottom six spheres to the upper three. Chesed is the first sphere which was able to directly influence material reality, because through it, *the light* was created, corresponding to the first day of creation of the world (Idel, 1993).

Now, I will return to the first narrative of the "Cloud Atlas". This story, which chronologically goes first, alludes to the first day of creation, when "light" was created. This is only a spark, but it set off a powerful chain reaction which will soon reach others (for example, a musician from 1936 who will read Ewing's diary).

Adam Ewing is a lawyer, an educated intellectual in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century world. As such, he has a high level of Hochma (wisdom). His Hochma, which had existed before encounter with Autua, was now finally combined with Chesed. Even though Hochma (wisdom) had existed prior to the creation of the world, it was not able to act until there was Chesed (loving-kindness). Therefore, Chesed in the Zohar is a prerequisite for creation of the world. No world can be created through *wisdom* alone, without *loving-kindness*. Similarly, Adam Ewing's Hochma (wisdom of an educated lawyer) had to be united with his Chesed (feeling of loving compassion towards the slave Autua) in order to set off the following five narratives, which will "create" a new world in a post-apocalyptic era.

### 10.1.3. Bible as a Justification for Existence of "Natural Order"

Interestingly, Reverend Horrox justifies the reality of slaveowning by referring to the Bible, implying that the natural order had been created by God. Similar to the Biblical Adam, Ewing asks himself the following question: "if God created the world, how do we know what things we can change and what things must remain sacred and unviable?" Everyone in the 1849 story takes slavery for granted except plantation owner Horrox' wife (Susan Sarandon). Ewing is supposed to sign "a covenant" with Horrox (Hugh Grant): covenant is a clearly religious term for contract. In the end, Ewing will throw it in fire before his father-in-law, concluding that change is according to God's will rather than preserving fixed societal relations.

### 10.1.4. Similarities between Adam Ewing and Abraham

Ewing's situation is also kind of similar to Abraham's – even though he was promised to receive future wealth in a slave trade, his only focus was on being kind towards everyone, including a slave. As Abraham is a "chariot" for Chesed, so is Ewing. (Toldot 15: 120) There is also a symbolism regarding Ewing's wife Tilda (Doona Bae). As already explained, according to the interpretation in Zohar, Sarah is a body waiting for her husband, the soul, to return to her. Similarly, Adam Ewing's wife Tilda is alone for a long time while waiting for his return. There is also an obvious parallel with Penelope in Greek mythology.

Hugo Weaving's character, Ewing's father-in-law wants to prevent lifestyle change and belief in better tomorrow. He also reminds of Lot, as Ewing goes part of the way together with his beliefs, only in order to separate in the end. The Zohar narrates that Abraham separated from Lot, in spite of his effort Lot returned to evil ways after realizing his evil ways (Zohar, Lech Lecha 21: 192).

### 10.1.5. Vertical Movements of the Characters from the First Narrative to the Sixth Narrative

Many of the characters started in the first narrative as lower-class workers (Ben Whishaw as the "cabin boy") or slaves (Keith David as Kupaka, Halle Berry as a plantation worker) in order to progress up the social ladder during their lifetimes. Movement of the characters was

vertical as well as horizontal. Just as Hebrew slaves had to travel for 40 years through the desert and experienced many temptations and dangers on the way, so did Ewing. This is a story of his own redemption through redemption of a slave, Autua (David Gyasi). In both cases physical movement happened parallelly to cognitive change.

Character of Tom Hanks, dr. Henry Goose, used to be a close friend of Ewing – who ended up poisoning him to steal his money. He is an outer threat, in contrast to Ewing's father-in-law who signifies an inner threat, Satan. (Zohar, Beresheet A 47: 437) Greediness is a symbol of idol worshipping. David Gyasi's character, slave Autua, teaches the doctor what mercy means. In order to save Ewing, Autua kicks Goose with gold in the head, in order to demonstrate that idol worshipping kills. This ark with gold, which is present on the ship during the journey, is reminiscent of the Ark of Covenant which was carried when the Hebrew slaves were leaving Egypt – in order to replace it with the Golden Calf, which brought them all death. Namely, according to the Zohar, the "fall" of Adam and Eve was cancelled when people accepted the Torah. Death was once again exterminated from the world. Through worshipping of the golden statue, people once again brought death upon the world. Idol worshipping also represents materialistic greediness. In Tanakh, things are meant to be put to use rather than worshipped. (Shemot, 20:20)

#### 10.1.6. Symbolic Ressurrection of Self

As Ewing joins the abolitionist movement, he symbolically "resurrects" his conscience. We could say that he was mentally dead in the beginning of a journey. In the end, he is like humans waking up from the false reality of "The Matrix". His prior life was the "exile" from his real self. He had to sacrifice his lifestyle in order for his potential to be expressed – to become a full chariot for Chesed, like Abraham, who had to leave his hometown and start anew. (Zohar, Toldot 19: 197)

Ewing writes a diary (historical format) which will be read by Frobisher (Ben Whishaw) in the next story. Dimovitz (2015) considers the first story a metaphor for constructivism, as Ewing believes in a better future which everyone has to build – in past, present and future. When his father-in-law says that progressive action is "just one drop in a limitless ocean", Ewing answers: "What is an ocean but a multitude of drops?". This pertains to the kabbalistic notion of Tikkun, correction of the world in which everyone participates. Each person corrects

a small portion of the world and society, but all micro-actions of individuals add up to overall "Tikkun". According to the Zohar, the world is sustained through righteous individuals like Abraham. Their micro-actions of kindness pertain to the whole universe and prevent it from being destroyed. (Zohar, Lech Lecha 23: 225)

## 10.2. 1936, Cambridge, England and Edinburgh, Scotland

The title of the second story in the novel is "Letters from Zedelghem". Ben Whishaw's character, who was a cabin boy in the previous life, is now a young gay musician Robert Frobisher who works as an amanuensis to composer Vyvyan Ayrs (Jim Broadbent, the Captain in the previous life). He reads Ewing's diary and feels a connection to it. He writes "Cloud Atlas Sextet", a piece which Ayrs wants to take credit for. After Ayrs' threat to expose his sexual orientation, Robert shot him and hid in a hotel in order to finish his piece and execute suicide.

### 10.2.1. Similarities between Robert Frobisher and Biblical Isaac

Frobisher stands for the left column in the Zohar and sphere of Gevura, discipline and judgement. Gevura is a second sphere, located left of Chesed.

In the Torah, Isaac stands for Gevura, after Abraham representing Chesed. (Zohar, Toldot 19: 197) Just like Isaac was supposed to be sacrificed, Frobisher "sacrifices" himself by committing suicide. Even though Isaac was not actually murdered in his "sacrifice", the Zohar addresses the following issue: When God called Torah characters (Abraham, Jacob, Moses) he usually said each name twice, but Isaac's name was said only once. The Zohar states that Isaac's "bodily nefesh" representing biological level of the soul died of fear and "only the nefesh of the World to Come was returned to him". (Zohar, Noach 1: 13) Therefore, an aspect of Isaac's identity was indeed sacrificed on that day. Similarly, Frobisher's soul continued to journey (into a store clerk in 1973, femme fatale Georgette in 2012 and tribesman in 2321) after his suicide.

#### 10.2.2. Connection between the Second and the Third Narrative

James D'Arcy's character, Rufus Sixsmith, is Frobisher's lover. He is the only main character who appears in two different narratives as himself (and not his reincarnation). After his lover's death, he becomes a nuclear physicist. The medium between these two dimensions (1936 and 1973) are love letters from Frobisher to Sixsmith, read by Luisa (Halle Berry) in 1936.

#### 10.2.3. Halle Berry's Jocasta as Lilith

Luisa feels a sudden connection to Frobisher and his piece "Cloud Atlas" because in her past life she was a young wife of Vyvyan Ayrs, Jocasta, who had an affair with Frobisher. Her character is a typical Jewish femme fatale, based upon the figure of Lilith, Adam's first wife. After leaving Adam, Lilith became a demoness whose purpose is to tempt men. She is described in following words: "Her seductive features include her hair, which is red as a rose, and her face, which is white and red. (...) Wearing purple and having forty decorations less one, she is sweeter than all that is sweet in the world" (Zohar Vayetze 4: 26).

Typically for Lilith, Jocasta's hair is golden-red, and her dress is dark purplish. In the beginning, her hair is tidily up, but when she decided to seduce Frobisher, she walked to him with her hair down. Jocasta also tempted Ayrs' colleague, German composer played by Hugo Weaving. His pro-German ideals were brought into question by Jocasta Ayrs, even though he resisted the temptation (in contrast to Frobisher). Frobisher's temptation is similar to that of Neo in "The Matrix" (when Monica Bellucci's character Persephone promises to help him only if he kisses her). Inability to resist temptation brought both characters in trouble. The situation resembles that of Torah-character Joseph (Beresheet, 39: 5-15) who was tempted by Pharaoh's wife. Even though Biblical Joseph did not pursue this relationship, the temptation per se brought him into trouble.

#### 10.2.4. Differences between the Novel and the Film

In the novel "Cloud Atlas", Frobisher falls in love with Ayrs' teenage daughter Eva, whereas in the film his real love is Sixsmith. Since in the novel only the protagonist reincarnates, Adam Ewing's reincarnation from the first story falls in love with Eva from the second story,



thereby creating a possibility for new "Adam and Eve", even though this wish remains unfulfilled.

Hugh Grant's character (Horrox in previous life) is a hotel heavy who is neither explicitly positive nor negative in this narrative. Similarly, Jim Sturgess' character (Ewing in previous life) is a hotel guest about whom we do not know anything. Tom Hanks' character is a greedy manager in the hotel where Frobisher stays after shooting Ayrs. He asks Frobisher for money in order to hide him from the police; therefore, his greediness from past life is still present.

### 10.3. 1973, San Francisco, California

This story is called "Half-Lives: The Luisa Rey Mystery" in the book. Genre of this story is political thriller. Luisa Rey (Halle Berry) is a journalist to whom older Rufus Sixsmith (D'Arcy), now a nuclear physicist, tells about conspiracy about the safety of a new reactor in his company. Professional killer Bill Smoke (Weaving) kills him and Isaac Sachs (Hanks), who also wanted to help with information. Joe Napier (Keith David), nuclear plant's head of security, helps her to survive and expose the plot. A nuclear accident is used for the benefit of the oil companies. Luisa Rey's father is her greatest inspiration. Lester Rey, the brave investigative journalist killed in a mission, is another David Gyasi character and therefore also a reincarnation of the slave Autua from the first narrative.

Like "The Matrix", this narrative starts with a hint about the meaning of the whole film. Luisa Rey exits from a club, while a drunken man follows her saying "Luisa, we're meant to be together. Baby, you can't leave me. It's a past life thing, or a future life thing".

She answers with "for the last hour, all I could think of is throwing you off the balcony", alluding to Hoggins' (Tom Hanks) throwing the journalist Felix Finch (Alistair Petrie) off the balcony in 2012. The film has many such interplays between the narratives. For example, Sixsmith's niece attended the university of Caius in 1973, just like Frobisher in 1936; Frobisher calls Ayrs "a parasite" in 1936, alluding to the 1849 narrative where Ewing is supposedly sick with parasitosis; the ship is called "Prophetess" in 1849.

#### 10.3.1. Halle Berry's Luisa as Tiferet

According to Hicks (2010), it is belief that precipitates acts in the novel. Luisa's character believed in a better tomorrow in a way similar to Ewing from the first narrative. Luisa's story stands for Tiferet, beauty, representing balance between Ewing's Chesed and Frobisher's Gevura. Similarly, the Zohar writes that Jacob is Beauty (Tiferet), reaching a perfect balance between Abraham's unlimited loving-kindness (Chesed) and Isaac's strength (Gevura).

#### 10.3.2. Luisa as Nukva / Ima

As a woman, Luisa is also like Nukva, the Female principle, in each story waiting to receive information she could further distribute. Nukva, the Lower Female, in the Zohar has nothing of her own, but receives from her Male principle. However, she acts as a medium of broadcasting the plenty into Lower worlds. (Zohar Beresheet A, 6: 63) Her character starts off as a slave waiting to be freed, proceeds to be Jocasta Ayrs waiting for Frobisher's sexual input, goes on as Luisa waiting for information by Sixsmith and Isaac, and ends up as Meronym in need of Zachry's help and guidance. Her purpose is always bigger than herself and beneficial for everyone. In this narrative, the investigative journalist Luisa is a vessel for publishing the controversial report about the nuclear plant and benefiting the mankind in this way. She guards her providers and uses the resources for common good. Obviously, her character climbs up vertically in two ways – socially (from the slave to the Prescient) and spiritually (second narrative: demoness Lilith; third narrative: Nukva, the Lower Female; sixth narrative: Ima, the Upper Female). In the sixth narrative, Meronym will become just like the Upper Female representing Godly presence in space.

#### 10.3.3. Colors and Music

James D'Arcy's character, Rufus Sixsmith, is Frobisher's lover from the second narrative. After Frobisher's suicide, he seemingly became heterosexual and formed a family. After getting stuck with Luisa in the elevator, he transports the story of the disfunctioning nuclear reactor to her. The broken elevator turns red, representing Gevura (judgement), implying punishment for both individuals who decided to address this controversial issue. Soon after the meeting, Sixsmith will be murdered and Luisa will become the target.

Luisa also bought "Cloud Atlas Sextet" from Ben Whishaw's character, who works in a shop selling his own piece of music from the previous life (when he was Robert Frobisher). This is the way a narrative connection between the second and third narrative was established. This song will also be played throughout time in different arrangements (for example, in the fifth story in the ritual of "exaltation" of the clones who are unknowingly walking into death).

Tom Hanks' character, Isaac, who also works in the nuclear power company, helps Luisa with research after instantly falling in love with her. His name is an allusion to the Tanakh character, the promised son of Abraham. The Zohar writes that Isaac, representing Gevura, battles a lot with his negative tendencies, and so does Tom Hanks' character, who cannot decide whether to defend his evil corporation or help Luisa. Luisa's character brings a change in him, just like Rebecca influences Isaac.

#### 10.3.4. Luisa Rey and Isaac Sachs = Rebecca and Isaac

Precisely, Zohar explains that Isaac's eventual blindness is a metaphor for losing sense about good and evil, as he wanted to bless the evil Esau, falsely believing he is the good son. In contrast to Abraham (Chesed), Isaac stands for Gevura represented by absence of light. "'And darkness he called night'. This is Isaac, who is dark, and gets darker to receive the light within him. Therefore, when he grew older, it is written, 'and it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, his eyes were dim, so that he could not see' (Beresheet 27: 1). Assuredly he had to be dark, to cleave well to his grade" (Zohar, Toldot 15: 120). Rebecca realized his delusion and solved the issue by presenting Jacob as Esau, which awakened Isaac, as he felt this was the right son to receive the blessing. "'And he smelled the smell of his garments, and blessed him' (Beresheet 27: 27) (...) As long as Isaac did not smell the aroma of garments, he did not bless him. But then he knew that the wearer was worthy of being blessed" (Zohar, Toldot 17: 134). Before Rebecca's intervention, Isaac was "blind" because he defended Esau's evil ways. Just like Biblical Isaac, Isaac Sachs in the film was unable to see the truth until he met Luisa.

Tom Hanks' character Isaac Sachs defended the evil corporation before meeting Luisa, who "opened his eyes" in a way. His eyes were previously "closed" to the truth, namely that the nuclear power plant is evil, and this brought forth a major change in his character. Therefore, he brings hidden reality (truth about the corporation) to manifest reality (the journalist who wants to publish the story). In the film, "eye" is an important motif. At the very beginning,

Zachry (Tom Hanks' postapocalyptic character) tells the story of how he first encountered Old Georgie (evil inclination) "eye to eye", alluding to the fact that his left eyelid is scratched. "Eye" is an important motif, because that is how first contact between individuals is made. The novel makes a connection between "eye" and "I" implying that eyes are a "door to the soul". Following this logic, if two people gaze at each other's eyes, they see each other's souls. Since soul travel is an important element in this film, eye contact implies soul contact. For example, Adam Ewing's (Jim Sturgess) major character change, the first one chronologically, about to make a historically significant change, starts at the moment when he looks into the eyes of a beaten slave Autua (David Gyasi). Later, in a conversation, Ewing asked Autua: "I am a lawyer and you are a runaway slave. How could we possibly be friends?" and Autua shows to his eyes, then to Ewing's eyes, saying: "That's all it takes". It is implied that only one look into each other's eyes is necessary to establish a deep connection between people.

#### 10.3.5. Satan / The Accuser

Hugo Weaving's character Bill Smoke stands for Gevura, representing Satan, the Accuser, He is a professional killer. Dimovitz (2015) makes an interesting observation about the policeman Joe Napier and Bill Smoke being two halves of the same whole, and their fight representing an archetypal conflict between good and evil. In the end, "two forces of good and evil mutually destroy one another", but good triumphs because Luisa manages to escape (Dimovitz, 2015: 87). Napier's and Smoke's mutual destruction possibly points to hinduistic endless cycle of the tension between pairs of opposites which can only be transcended by realization that there is no separation, as everything is part of the absolute, Brahma which is the executive god of creation (Dimovitz, 2015). However, this illusion of dualism also exists in Judaism, since both positive and negative forces stem from the same source in order to achieve a certain purpose. Purpose of evil is to test humans. The Zohar states that the humans should have first consumed from the Tree of Life, before touching the Tree of Knowledge Good and Evil. In this way, they would have acquired objective and absolute capability of distinguishing unity in diversity, rather than worldview based upon Binary logic (Dimovitz, 2015: 88) Doona Bae, whose character was Adam Ewing's wife in previous life, is now the Mexican lady who eventually kills Bill Smoke. We also see her as a deceased relative of Rufus. Namely, it was Rufus Sixsmith from the narrative two that provided Luisa with a report about a dangerous nuclear reactor. After suicide of Frobisher, Sixsmith became the

nuclear physicist and started to work at the nuclear plant, in order to eventually expose its disfunction which was meant not to be repaired by the nuclear plant owner, previously a slaveowner (Hugh Grant). Hugh Grant's character stands for Esau, the evil twin to whom the present-day world was promised in the Torah narrative (while Jacob received the future) (Shemot 27: 28-30, 39-40).

#### 10.3.6. Mental Slavery

In this narrative, the whole world is in mental slavery, unaware of corporate frauds which will some hundred years from now will cause first societal degradation and later a nuclear disaster. Therefore, Luisa Rey wants to awaken the world by telling them truth, like Morpheus in "The Matrix". From Zoharitic perspective, his story is like a metaphor for the third day of creation, when plants started to grow as a result of permanent separation of good and evil. As left (Tom Hanks' character Isaac Sachs) was included in the right (Halle Berry's Luisa Rey), there was balance in the world.

#### 10.4. 2012, UK

This narrative is called "The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish" in the novel. Overall, the fourth story is a farce which takes place in the nursing home. The leading character here is a 65-years-old book publisher Timothy Cavendish (Jim Broadbent), who was Captain and Vyvyan Ayrs in his previous lives. His brother (Hugh Grant's character) put him into a nursing home to revenge for Cavendish's affair with his wife Georgette (Rufus Sixsmith's reincarnation). Cavendish previously wanted to cheat a writer (Tom Hanks' character) who murdered a movie critic and steal money from selling his books. This story contains numerous slapstick elements (CineFix, 2012).

The fourth story tells about the social downfall and degradation of the corrupt book editor. After his author (Tom Hanks) murders a book critic by throwing him off the skyscraper, the book editor Cavendish (Jim Broadbent) ends up receiving all profits from the bestseller. When author's gang comes to claim his percentage of the profit, Cavendish had already spent all money and his brother (Hugh Grant) comes to help him. However, his brother puts him

into a retirement home – as a revenge for Cavendish's affair with his wife (the female incarnation of Robert Frobisher). He ends up as a victim of his greed, stealing and lust.

#### 10.4.1. Different Stories in Same Spaces

Different stories were filmed at the same place: for example, dining room of a retirement home used to be Ayrs' musical salon in 1936. In 2012, Cavendish read all reports by Luisa Rey in a train similar to train in which Frobisher travelled in 1936, thereby providing a narrative connection between the stories two, three and five.

#### 10.4.2. Satan / Accuser

The main antagonist of the 2012 story is Nurse Noakes, whose character was most likely inspired by Nurse Ratched from the famous 1962 novel "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest". Nurse Noakes, played by Hugo Weaving, is a reincarnation of Ewing's father-in-law, Ayrs' friend and Bill Smoke, staying as evil as before. However, this character also represents temptation, perhaps alluding to Cavendish's own subconsciously unclean thoughts. In his 1936 life, Vyvyan Ayrs might have been tempted by his homosexual apprentice Robert Frobisher, while in 2012 Timothy Cavendish had an affair with a female reincarnation of Frobisher's lover Sixsmith (now his brother's wife Georgette, also played by James D'Arcy).

#### 10.4.3. Failure to Accomplish Tikkun

By not noticing his own corrupt ways, Cavendish failed to accomplish his Tikkun and succumbed to selfishness. Therefore, this story is more about darkening of the Netzah, as it is followed by a terrible dystopia (story five). The people from the nursing home, including the protagonist, are focused on their microcosmos, failing to see a bigger picture. This is why this story alludes to darkening of the Netzah in kabbalistic cosmology. Sphere Netzah also implies that one must actively resist to temptations and seek a way out of them. Also, just as Jacob's right thigh (body part representing Netzah in the Zohar) was scratched by Samael, which implies weakness to sexual temptations, Cavendish was subconsciously tempted by the Nurse Noakes. Being a "male soul" in a female body, mainly Nurse Noakes stands for Samael and Lilith in one, and thereby represents multiple levels of sexual perversion. "We have learned

that Samael descended from heaven riding on a serpent at that time"(Zohar, Beresheet A, 47: 437). Samael represents the male aspect, while serpent represents the female aspect in the Beresheet narrative according to the Zohar. While Samael seduced Eve, Lilith seduced Adam. Here, both of them act together in single incarnation.

#### 10.4.4. Gehenom Metaphor

Therefore, a nursing home also may be considered a kind of a metaphor for Gehenom, as Timothy Cavendish's brother tells him: "I am afraid your penance has come to you, Timbo, it's time to account for your crimes". (Denholme Cavendish) Later, when Timothy tries to apologize, his brother proceeds with: "your exile is more than enough reparation" (Denholme Cavendish), so there is a direct exile reference. In the Tanakh, Babylonian exile is considered a punishment for polytheism and idolatry. In the film, it is a punishment for breaking the commandments "Thou shalt not covet your neighbour's wife (...) or anything that belongs to your neighbour"(Shemot 20: 7). He did not only commit adultery with his brother's wife, but he took all profits from sale of the book written by Hoggins (Tom Hanks), thereby also breaking the commandment "Thou shalt not steal" (Shemot 20: 15).

Timothy Cavendish and three other residents of the retirement home physically run away in their quest for freedom. In the end, he reunites with his teenage love Ursula (Susan Sarandon). Cavendish in the end points out that he is actually enjoying his exile after settling down. The story ends by Cavendish writing a screenplay about his own life, which will become a movie by the story number five. Seeing an excerpt from this movie will ultimately inspire the genetically engineered waitress Sonmi-451 to rebel and become her own kind's Messiah ben Joseph. ."(Zohar Beresheet A, 21: 234)

#### 10.5. 2144, Neo Seoul, Korea

This story is called "An Orison of Sonmi-451". The protagonist is Doona Bae's character (Tilda Ewing, Megan's Mum, Mexican Woman) Sonmi-451, a fabricant genetically engineered to be a fast food restaurant waitress. Sonmi had to initiate her own runaway, as a Lower (female) worlds must initiate a call to the Upper (male) worlds. Zohar explains that freedom could not have been forced on the slaves in the Shemot narrative, had they not

requested it. Sonmi's desire for freedom is awakened just as "screams of the children of Israel" are heard in Shemot 2. If the slaves know about being oppressed, they will ask for help and God will "hear their cries". The slaves could have only been freed after they asked God for it, because "God heard their moaning" (Shemot, 2: 24).

#### 10.5.1. Slavery and Speech

The workers in the fast food restaurant are like the Hebrew slaves prior to their redemption, unaware of true nature of their condition. Hae-Joo Chang is a prophet-like character, proclaiming Sonmi-451 a Messiah. I speculate that Sonmi's serial number 451 may be an allusion to the famous dystopian novel Fahrenheit 451, wherein the books are burned in favor of the television. Interestingly, both books and television (films) are off-limits for the fabricants in the fifth narrative. They are dangerous because they may expand the workers' vocabularies and thought patterns, making them more aware of their oppressed condition and possibility of societal change.

Their slavery is conditioned with their limited vocabulary, as they are forbidden to learn any more words except those which they need for their job. Dimovitz (2015: 82) interprets the "Cloud Atlas" according to Lacanian linguistic castration metaphor: if the words have an inherent quality of creating inequality which causes fall and destruction, how could "merely better words save us"? Dimovitz (2015) argues that most important scenes in the "Cloud Atlas" are those without words. However, in narration patterns it is apparent that one character's thoughts are continued through other characters' narration.

Also, transmission of real-life spoken events into books or records proves importance of language in the novel. Dimovitz (2015) writes that Autua uses gesture as a more primary medium than language. The book in particular uses a pun between "I" and "eye". In the movie, Autua points into his and Ewing's eyes, saying: "That's all it takes". Therefore, identity of the body is different from identity of the soul, the "truer I". Even though Autua is a runaway slave and Ewing a respected lawyer, they are essentially equal when stripped of all societal functions. Both positive and negative words in Kabbala have power to create worlds: "These words of wisdom ascend and become the lands of the living". (Zohar Prologue, 11: 64). Therefore, words can be either constructive or harmful because they have an actual, direct impact on reality.



By expanding her vocabulary, Sonmi-451's awareness about own slavery developed. Just as Autua was "not good for a slave" because he saw too much of the world, and was additionally exposed to water as a sailor, and became aware of his slavery. According to the Zohar, water is a metaphor for knowledge attained by reading the Torah. Language of the Torah is a "water" to expand one's consciousness:

" 'Let me, I pray you, drink a little water from your pitcher', means give me a hint of the wisdom of the knowledge of your Maker that you dealt with in the world you left".  
(Zohar, Chayei Sarah 24: 278)

Yoona-939 was the one who became aware of her slavery and shared ideas about escape with Sonmi-451. The film based on Cavendish's life contains a sentence, wherein the retired author stands up against the nurses in the retirement home saying: "I will not be subjected to criminal abuse". This sentence motivated Yoona and Sonmi to rebel. After Yoona said "I will not be subjected to criminal abuse" to the rude customer, the power of this phrase immediately led to consequences. She was killed for breaking the basic rule of the world "honor thy consumer" – just like the three Israelis who rejected to bow to the golden statue of the king Nebukadnezar in Daniel 2 had been cast into the fire. However, Yoona's ideal of freedom survived and encouraged Yoona to give even more thought about it. She is helped by a member of the local Resistance group Hae-Joo Chang. This point differs a bit in the novel, where Hae Joo and Chang are two separate characters. Also, in the novel Sonmi is freed by progressive intellectuals and brought to study at the university, whereas in the movie she is led to a "Matrix"-like underground world, very ascetic and uncomfortable.

#### 10.5.2. "Testament" and "Sacrifice"

The fifth story is actually Sonmi telling an archivist a story of her life, known as "Orison" (Testament) before being killed. Her death will later be viewed as a "sacrifice" - a typically Christian religious element. In Judaism, Messiah is not to be sacrificed, rather, he is an active military and political leader. (Idel, 2000) However, there is a theory of two Messiahs in Judaism - Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David. Messiah ben Joseph is supposed to prepare the world for the coming of Messiah ben David. Getting killed is often viewed as a part of mission of Messiah ben Joseph. (Idel, 2000)

### 10.5.3. Two Messiahs

The Zohar writes that the first Messiah (Messiah ben Joseph) will appear and announce the beginning of the Messianic era. (Zohar, Shemot 15: 101-103) Afterwards, the first Messiah will ascend and become invisible. 12 months later, the second Messiah (Messiah ben David) will descend and "many nations will gather to him and he will wage wars throughout the whole world". (Zohar, Shemot 15: 103) In the movie, Sonmi might have been the first Messiah, and Zachry the second one, leading a war against the Kona cannibals.

Being Messiah ben Joseph, it is Sonmi's purpose to prepare the world for the coming of ultimate Messiah ben David. Messiah ben Joseph corresponds to the sphere of Yesod, the foundation upon which the world is built, connecting the Upper and Lower worlds in the Zohar. (Mishpatim, 10: 404) Her purpose is to tell the truth to the world, as Sonmi put it herself: "Truth is singular. Its 'versions' are untrue". The Zohar writes that the whole world stands upon truth, being a base for the whole world. "Truth prevails; falsehood can not, as it must become void. As such it (falsehood) has demolished the structure and caused the Fall of heaven and earth". (Zohar, Mishpatim 10: 407) Liars demolish the world by their lies, and it ends up void and formless. The world dictatorship of "Unanimity" obviously pursued these lies, rejecting the truth of Sonmi – just like many prophets in Tanakh have been rejected or even executed for telling the truth no one wanted to hear. The "Unanimity" therefore installed these lies in people's mentalities, causing the Fall on two levels: literal physical destruction of the earth and heaven, and downfall of society. According to the Zohar, the liar "is considered like one who demolishes the construction of heaven and earth, as he restores the world to void and formlessness". (Zohar, Mishpatim 10: 407)

In the sixth story, Sonmi will be proclaimed god of the physical world created by the main "god o'smart named Darwin" (as Zachry put it). Therefore, the story about her will continue to be present in the physical world. In the Zohar, the first Messiah will appear in the shape of "pillar of fire" when the second Messiah descends (Shemot 15: 101-103). This "pillar of fire" corresponds to judgement, but with mercy (since the righteous Messiah ben Joseph is included). The mythology of the sixth story is based upon what is preserved from the old world, including a recording of Sonmi's revelation. This structure of the myth can correspond to many existing narrations about origins of the world. In Christianity, Sonmi would be Jesus, "Son", and the main god Darwin would be "Father". In Hinduism, Sonmi would be Vishnu and Darwin Brahma. Finally, in Judaism, Sonmi would be Shechinah (Malchut), the female

aspect of God who preserves the world and guards physical space, whereas Darwin would be Elohim, the aspect of God in charge of executive creation of the world.

#### 10.5.4. Anti-Darwinism

Elements of Darwinism are reflected (and criticized) through all levels of the narrative. In the first story, it is Adam's father-in-law (Hugo Weaving) who tells him that "There is a natural order to this world". Similarly, the quotation "The weak are meat, and the strong do eat" is cited many times by dr. Goose in the first narrative and Zachry in the sixth narrative (both played by Tom Hanks). Obviously, the film and the book are critical towards social-Darwinist view of the world, wherein there is a natural selection within human society, and only the "most adaptable ones" deserve to live. This criticism is especially apparent in the sixth narrative, wherein the primitive tribepeople believe that there is "a god o' Smart named Darwin". Only the Prescients, to whom Meronym belongs, are aware that he is no God, nor is Sonmi his child, the goddess.

Through encounter with Meronym the character of Zachry (Tom Hanks) manages to overcome his social-Darwinist view and replace it by ultimate belief in unity of humanity, rather than its competition. The Zohar writes that evil people are not people, but beasts. "There are many evil kinds that are called cattle and beasts". (Zohar, Beresheet A 29: 291) This fits well in description of all literal and metaphorical cannibals in the "Cloud Atlas". In the end, humanity called "Yisrael" will win against the inhumane "beasts".

#### 10.5.5. Golem

Due to her nature of being a human-created clone, Sonmi can also be seen as a Golem. Apart from "Cloud Atlas", a golem is a motif present in many other popular films, such as Blade Runner (Davidowicz, 2017). Sonmi was made artificially to fulfill a specific societal purpose, rebelling against her own "makers", the system that creates and sustains the clones, including herself, just like in the "Blade Runner" the replicant character Roy also rebelled against the humans who created him. (Davidowicz, 2017)

Archivist who interviews Sonmi before execution of a death penalty is a reincarnation of Rufus Sixsmith from 1936. Hugo Weaving's character is an agent of the system with a role similar to that of Agent Smith (played by the same actor) at the beginning of "The Matrix".

This world is aesthetically very similar to "The Matrix", with a "civilized reality of the upper class", the place where the fabricants and oppressed groups live and the underground pivot of the rebels. Ecology being destroyed, dark clouds surround the Earth and no Sun can be seen. Just like in "The Matrix", this is another symbol of detachment from male and female aspects of life – as Earth is "divorced" from Sun whose light cannot approach its surface. Similarly, the light of Chesed, loving-kindness, is not reaching the humans, and there is no compassion on any level – only Gevura (judgement), standing for the Other Side when being alone without Chesed to balance it. Corporatocracy, oppression, self-interest and complete disregard for morality characterize this society with three main societal classes – the ruling minority, the exploited majority and small groups of rebels.

Sonmi's lover Hae-Joo Chang (Jim Sturgess) has a role similar to Trinity in "The Matrix". Hae-Joo made a "slave"(Sonmi / Neo / Israel) aware of her slavery and freed her, albeit not forever. According to the Zohar, the male principle is not allowed to give anything to the female principle unless it had requested it. (Zohar Beresheet B, 50: 214) Therefore, slaves cannot be freed without their request for freedom. As soon as Sonmi realized something was wrong (with help of Yoona), Hae-Joo Chang came to rescue her. She went away with him by her own free choice. Hae-Joo's boss, leader of rebels Ankor Apis (David Gyasi) is similar to Morpheus in "The Matrix". He is a typical prophetic character who proclaims the Messiah. According to Ankor Apis, Sonmi was supposed to be "the one" who would lead all genetically engineered workers out of their virtual slavery.

This narrative is also plotwise similar to "The Matrix". A slave of the system (Sonmi, Neo) is "awakened" by another person who already knows the truth (Hae-Joo Chang, Trinity) and explained the situation by the leader of the anti-system rebellion (Ankor Apis, Morpheus). Sonmi and Neo have to blindly trust their saviors, relying only upon own intuition, as they know association with the rebels will put them in danger. Therefore, Fritsch (2007) writes that this is similar to inner doubt regarding choice whether or not to accept a certain religion. However, truth is in both stories the negative one – the "real world" where human bodies are used as batteries for the machines is much more miserable than "The Matrix", and being an un-knowing waitress is much more pleasant than knowing reality about clones being

produced, exploited, eventually killed and fed to each other. Therefore, this theology is actually the negative one. However, it gives the protagonist a purpose of living and offers a possibility of changing reality (Fritsch, 2007). Therefore, kabbalistic notion of Tikkun, correction of the world, also applies here. Just like Neo, Sonmi is a Messianic character who does not enter the "promised land", but makes a difference nevertheless. Neo fought physically against Agent Smith, whereas Sonmi fought against the system by distributing knowledge to the world via media. Both battles ultimately resulted in destruction and possibility of starting anew by rebuilding the world. The Zohar writes that in the time when Messiah appears "the whole world will tremble and all the people of the world will hide in the caves and cracks in the rocks and will not expect to survive" (Yeshayah 2: 19) (Zohar, Shemot 15: 99).

#### 10.6. 2321, The Hawaiian Islands on post-apocalyptic Earth

This story is called "Sloosha's Crossin' and Ev'rythin' After". Events from this narrative are dated by Zachry as "106 winters after "The Fall", identified as 2321. Zachry narrates the story to his grandchildren in 2346 on another planet, so the metanarrative is set on a different location, in different time.

This story is set in post-apocalyptic context, which very much resembles prehistoric era. After most people died during "The Fall", the humanity is brought back to its beginnings. There are just some remnants of the civilization, such as pieces of technology, where some memory of the past life is preserved. Uselessness of technology is particularly apparent, as it takes the form of ancient superstition, connected to magic. No one knows how exactly it works, but it helps only somewhat educated individuals, the Prescients. The Zohar writes that the world was created and destroyed multiple times: "He created heavens and earth upon formlessness, without any foundation (Yesod), the covenant to support them." (Zohar, Beresheet A 19: 217) This interpretation suggest there was some kind of cycle of destruction and construction until the world was finally stabilized by human civilization: "Tora symbolizes the civilized world, the nation who did not accept it remained wasted and dry." (Zohar, Beresheet A 19: 219)

#### 10.6.1. The Fall

"The Fall" is obviously an allusion to the Christian reception of the story of Adam and Eve's consumption from the Tree of Knowledge Good and Evil, which caused introduction of death into the world. This was a death of whole humanity, except a small handful of humans, among which are technologically advanced "Prescients", regular "Valleymen" and the groups of "Kona" cannibals. The apocalypse is a Christian presumption that there might be a catastrophic end of the world, after which the final judgement will take place. I am mentioning Christian perspective, as the consumption of the Tree by Adam and Eve is not considered a sin in the Zohar. Similarly, Zohar does not include a concept of violent end of the world. However, visions of potentially catastrophic events were mentioned by many Jewish prophets. (e.g. Isaiah 24–27; 33; 34–35, Jeremiah 33:14–26, Ezekiel 38–39, Joel 3:9–17, Zechariah 12–14)

#### 10.6.2. Reasons of the Fall – Nuclear Disaster or anti-Humanism?

In the book "Cloud Atlas", the apocalypse happened due to a worldwide ecologic disaster, potentially connected to irregular operation of worldwide nuclear power plants, or a nuclear war. Unlike the novel, the film does not focus on ecologic issues, putting emphasis instead on relationships between people – we see an advancement and eventual decline in societal structure through the times. With reintroduction of slavery, the society collapses. Slavery is an important element of the story – in every story of the six, someone is enslaved or feels like a slave.

Therefore, the full collapse of society was necessary in order for people to regain their freedom. Unfortunately, as Earth is destroyed, they have to keep living elsewhere – in book it is the other island, and in the movie, it is another planet. The protagonists, the "chosen ones", were not able to stay at the same place because societal inequalities had persisted after "the Fall" – the "Prescients" had much better life conditions than regular tribesmen, while the "Kona" cannibals stand for presence of evil, which had obviously not been exterminated through the world destruction.

### 10.6.3. Satan / Accuser

In previous life, the protagonist Zachry (Tom Hanks) was an actor portraying Jim Cavendish in movie about his life. Today he is one of the tribesmen, tortured by visions of a mysterious "Old Georgie", who corresponds to image of Satan. His purpose is to tempt Zachry – as the civilization is just starting, Zachry takes role of the new Adam. Zachry takes place of the character named Adam (Zachry's brother-in-law, the incarnation of Adam Ewing) after he is killed by the cannibals. Zachry feels guilt for not interfering, whereas he could have saved his late wife's brother. Satan represents in the Zohar also the unconscious evil inclination, to which a person must desist.

" 'Now the serpent was craftier' (Ber 3:1) Rabbi Yitzhak said: The serpent is the evil inclination. Rabbi Yehuda said: It is a real serpent. They approached Rabbi Shimon who said: Both interpretations are correct." (Beresheet A 47: 437)

Old Georgie tempts Zachry multiple times to kill Meronym (Halle Berry), a member of the Prescients who helped him by curing his niece. Halle Berry's character was previously a member of the rebels' organisation who removed a workers' collar from Sonmi to help her. Therefore, she remains an educated believer in a better tomorrow also as a progressive Prescient.

Zachry leads Meronym to the mountains in search of Cloud Atlas so that she can send a message to other Prescients who live on different planets. This event is similar to Moses' ascent to the Mount Sinai, where he receives guidelines for a civilized life. According to the Zohar, the results of the "Fall" have been annihilated as soon as people accepted the Torah. However, the act of worshipping the golden calf brought death back to humanity.

Hugh Grant's character (in last life Seer Rhee, a manager of the fast food restaurant) is the leader of Kona cannibals. He is always an oppressor and opportunist, profiting from exploitation of the others. He seems to win in each lifetime, but after getting killed by Zachry in the sixth narrative, this chain is broken.

### 10.6.4. Sixth day of Creation

This story corresponds to the 6th day when creation of human beings took place. Male and female united. Postapocalyptic world is primitive and signifies the end of the beginning, the

end of creation of the world and beginning of the new era. Just as in "The Matrix", real world is "without form and void" (Beresheet, 1:2), but in reality, the promised world needs to be worked on (via Tikkun).

"The term 'was' is exact in that it implies the Earth's previous state (...) a mighty fire beat upon it and refuse was formed inside it. It then conceived and became without form." (Zohar, Beresheet A, 4: 17)

Just like in "The Matrix", the present-day Earth is literally formless and there are only remains of the civilization. Even though the Earth was originally in a good state, humans literally brought darkness to it sometimes between the stories 4 and 5. " 'Was' indicates that the Earth was originally in its ordered state, but now it has become formless, void and dark." (Zohar Beresheet B, 10: 35) The Earth, and whole human society, needs to be recreated again through Tikkun, correction of the world. (Zohar Pekudei, 52: 752)

The Zohar writes that "Malchut was not properly in its place before the sixth day, because only then was the image of man completed and properly established". (Zohar Beresheet A, 10: 117) At the end of the movie, the character of Zachry becomes "the image of man", as his choice reflects that he is more human than his previous reincarnations. This means that humanity can be properly established on the "seventh day", which starts when Zachry and Meronym move to the new planet, which will become their "Malchut". Humans populating the new planet is equivalent to the Hebrews populating the promised land, in Zohar signifying unification between Zeir Anpin and Malchut, male and female principle. "For by means of the seventh day, the world was finished and completed, as we have said". (Zohar Beresheet B, 44: 181)

#### 10.6.5. Theological Reasons of the Fall

According to the Zohar, Shechinah (denoting the physical divine presence in space) is in exile after the Fall, but her male aspect Zeir Anpin remains with her "as it did not part from her even at her Fall". (Zohar, Mishpatim 10: 408) Therefore, even though the earth is destroyed, there is still a possibility of rebuilding the society. In the film, Tiferet / Zeir Anpin (lower six spheres) refers to the humans. Zachry and Meronym are the new Adam and Eve, ready to rebuild humanity as final phase of Tikkun (correction) in their new Malchut (kingdom).



According to the Zohar, the reason for the downfall of the world is lies being accepted as truth. "When man removes the tip, denoting Yesod, from the letter daled of 'echad' (Heb. 'one'), what remains is an 'acher' (Heb. 'the other'), namely Samael, in whose place abides falsehood" (Zohar, Mishpatim 10: 407). As already explained, Yesod refers to truth, the foundation of the world. Zohar uses the interchange of similar words (echad and acher) to explain that the world can become "restored to void and formlessness" (Zohar, Mishpatim 10: 407) if truth is replaced by lies. Similarly, Samael (or Satan, the angel whose purpose is to test humans) will physically be present in the world after the "Fall of Heaven and Earth" (Zohar, Mishpatim 10: 407). In this narrative, the devil "Old Georgie" is literally there to tempt Zachry. This dark creature is introduced first as the protagonist Zachry is eating the apple. The "fruit of the Tree of Knowledge Good and Evil" is most often portrayed as apple in the renaissance paintings. The positive aspect in Zachry's character (soul) development is that his 'evil inclination' is now physically different from him and he can identify it as such. Even in the post-post-apocalypse (the "seventh" story narrated by Zachry), Old Georgie is there, but Zachry is aware of him and wants to warn his grandchildren to stay away.

Therefore, ultimately " 'Truth will spring out of the earth' (Tehilim 85: 12), which is the middle pillar upon which stands the structure (...) of heaven and the earth". (Zohar, Mishpatim 10: 408) Through the "middle pillar" of Zeir Anpin, being Zachry in the story, the truth will finally be triumphant and the society will be rebuilt.

## 11. Characters' Development

In this chapter, I will explain character evolution of each character according to their soul journey (Gilgul).

### 11.1. Dr. Henry Goose – hotel manager – Isaac Sachs – Dermot Hoggins – actor who portrayed Timothy Cavendish - Zachry

Tom Hanks' character evolves from evil dr. Henry Goose to the noble Zachry who will in the end become kind of Messiah ben David. In the first story, he poisons Ewing because he wants to steal his money. In the second story, he is a greedy hotel manager who asks Frobisher for money to keep his presence secret from the police. In the third story, he is a nuclear power

plant physician Isaac Sachs, a colleague of the murdered Sixsmith, who at first cooperates in the corporative plan to hide the malfunction of the nuclear reactor. However, everything changes when he sees Luisa Rey (Halle Berry). He tells her about the weird feeling that they belong together in past and future lives – and decides to help her with the report, only to get killed by the corporation. As I already explained, Isaac from the third story corresponds to Isaac from the Bible. Just like Isaac's eyes in the Bible were "closed to the truth" that Jacob was the good son who deserved blessing before Rebecca's intervention, Isaac Sachs was an evil character before encountering Luisa (Halle Berry). This brought forth a major change in his character. In his future reincarnations, he will continue to improve.

Isaac Sachs defended the evil corporation before meeting Luisa, who "opened his eyes" in a way. His eyes were previously "closed" to the truth, namely that the nuclear power plant is evil. Therefore, he brings hidden reality (truth about the corporation) to manifest reality (the journalist who wants to publish the story). In the film, "eye" is an important motif. At the very beginning, Zachry (Tom Hanks' postapocalyptic character) tells the story of how he first encountered Old Georgie (evil inclination) "eye to eye", alluding to the fact that his left eyelid is scratched. Eyes in Kabbala represent Hochma, wisdom. More precisely, the right eye means Hochma (wisdom) and the left eye Binah (intellect). Zachry's scratch on the left eyelid signifies that wisdom was indeed present in his character, but it failed to manifest itself prior to encounter with Luisa. Hochma is a male sphere relative to Binah, and they function as one unit – similarly, Zachry became able to intellectually (Binah) grasp evil around him and within himself only after meeting Luisa, his female counterpart.

In the fourth story, he shortly relapsed to his evil ways, being a criminal book author Hoggins who ends up in prison for killing the journalist who had written a negative review of his book. However, in a way, he wanted to fight against "the establishment". The audience perceived him as a "hero of a small man". Possibly, he became more aware about injustice the establishment is doing to the individuals, but he was not able to canalize this awareness in a right way because his soulmate, Halle Berry's character, was not his wife to help him.

In the fifth story, he is an actor portraying Timothy Cavendish in the movie about his life. It is not known much about this character.

In the sixth story, he is a complex, fully human character Zachry in the postapocalyptic society. He aims to lead the tribe as best as possible, even though he is sometimes tempted by the "Old Georgie". Zachry's name is clearly a reference to the Tanakh prophet, a protagonist

of the book of Zechariah. In this book, outline of events which will lead to Messianic era is given. Secondly, good life after arrival of the Messiah is promised to the faithful. Zachry's name, therefore, points out to his Messianic role. During his lifetimes, he had to fight against his own evil inclination (as Henry Goose in the first narrative and Dermot Hoggins in the fourth one), but also against outer powers (as Isaac Sachs, he was intending to fight against the evil corporation, while in the final narrative he fought against the Kona kannibals after getting over his initial cowardice).

He is a Messiah ben David, because he is fully human – he sinned, made mistakes, but in the end repented for them and fought for his truth. Unlike the Christian Messiah, who is perfect, pure and innocent (corresponding to Messiah ben Joseph in Judaism and Sonmi in *Cloud Atlas*), Messiah ben David is not so. He is fully human and imperfect – it was love towards Luisa Rey / Meronym that guided his actions, rather than a "higher goal". He progresses during the course of his reincarnations in order to overcome his evil aspect, as "whoever overcomes his inclination is called 'man' " (Zohar, Trumah 6: 38). In this aspect, he is similar to Neo in "*Matrix Reloaded*" (2003) and "*Matrix Revolutions*" (2003), who fulfilled his role of a Messiah by pursuing love for Trinity. As a Davidian character, Zachry in the sixth narrative stands for Malchut (kingdom), the potential of realization of the new world for humans.

Zachry and Meronym are also new Adam and Eve, because the whole humanity will start anew from them on another planet. They are two soulmates, and Meronym is "a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2: 18), because his major character change started only after meeting her.

#### 11.2. Native slavewoman – Jocasta Ayrs – Luisa Rey – Indian Party Guest – Ovid - Meronym

Halle Berry's character climbs the social ladder in her evolution. She begins as a native slavewoman in the first story, proceeds to become Jocasta Ayrs, Jewish wife of a famous composer. In this story, she is a Lilith character, seducing young Frobisher, probably only because her husband is pretty old. However, we also learn that she is a temptation for the Hugo Weaving's character Kesselring, who is not allowed to be with her due to her Judaism. In the third story, she is the protagonist Luisa Rey, the investigative journalist who aims to

provide the absolute truth to the readers. Her father, also journalist (played by David Gyasi, reincarnation of the slave Autua) got killed during an assignment – and she works hard to come close to him. In contrast to Tom Hanks' character, she is devoted to the higher cause and ready to pay any price to protect her journalistic source, as she tells Sixsmith in the evaluator. She proceeds to be a rich Indian guest at the book presentation in the fourth story, and a collaborator of the Resistance in the fifth story. Finally, in the post-apocalyptic world she is reborn as an intelligent and beautiful Prescient woman, from a more advanced tribe mastering modern technology (unlike the Valleymen). After coming to the Valley, she fell in love with Zachry and impacted him on a deeper level. She is responsible for giving the people a new chance to recreate humanity by inviting a spaceship from the other, more habitable planets. She stands for the believer, the merciful one, Tiferet. She is searching for the truth, and is always guided by this belief in a better tomorrow. She stands for Shechinah, Godly presence in space, relative to Zachry.

### 11.3. Captain Molyneux – Vyvyan Ayrs – Timothy Cavendish – Korean Musician - Prescient

Jim Broadbent's character starts as Captain Molyneux, an uneducated old man, who learns to give up prejudice by allowing the self-freed slave Autua to work as a free seaman on his ship. He proceeds to be a composer Vyvyan Ayrs. Even though he is already successful, his ambition is to compose a revolutionary masterpiece, which he was never able to do his apprentice Frobisher (Ben Whishaw) shoots him after Ayrs' attempt to steal his work. In the fourth story, he is a greedy book publisher Timothy Cavendish who ends up settling down for love. In the fifth story, he becomes a Korean musician, and ends up as one of the Prescients. Obviously, his character is a big opportunist, whose first priority is self-interest rather than morality. However, during time he learns to overcome his arrogance and become more humble. He stands for Netzah, because Netzah is the light that "ascends above" when desire for the Upper world awakens in the Lower world (Zohar, Trumah 7: 42). His wish for a peaceful and steady life after his punishment / repentance caused the appearance of Sonmi, standing for Hod, the light which descends into the Lower world (Zohar, Trumah 7: 42)

11.4. Tilda Ewing – Megan's mother – Mexical woman – Sonmi 451 – Sonmi Goddess

Doona Bae's character starts as Tilda, wife of the protagonist Adam Ewing (Jim Sturgess), then becomes a mother of Frobisher's niece Megan (and again wife of Jim Sturgess' character) in the second story. In the third story she is a neurotic Mexican woman who kills Hugo Weaving's killer character Bill Smokes for shooting her little dog; unconsciously, she also "saves the day" here. In the end, she becomes the Messianic Sonmi-451, in relationship with Hae-Joo Chang, another Jim Sturgess' character. Fulfilling her mission, she does not reincarnate in the sixth narrative. She is always fully innocent being, becoming enlightened and educated by her love (Jim Sturgess' characters) or by her own nature (in the third story). Her sphere is Hod, placed between Tiferet and Yesod. After desire for the Upper world (representing the ultimate truth) was awakened in the Lower world (representing miserable reality) in the story of Timothy Cavendish (Netzah), "light" descended to physical reality through Sonmi. This descension of light is typical for Hod (Zohar, Trumah 7: 42). However, as an innocent Messiah ben Joseph, Sonmi-451 also stands for Yesod, the portal between the Upper and Lower world. Soon after her "revelation", the world was destroyed, but her words were preserved as a connection between the old and the new, the civilization and wilderness. Doona Bae's characters' main contribution was revelation of knowledge to the world. A knowledgeable person teaching the uneducated individuals is another way of overcoming the gap between male and female worlds and bringing them closer together. (Zohar, Prologue 21: 215-218)

Sonmi is the ultimate believer. Her character being central, her sentences are crucial for understanding the film's theosophical meaning. When the Archivist asks her if she loved Hae-Joo, she says: "Yes, I do" in present tense. Confusedly, the Archivist asks if she is still in love with him, and she says "I mean that I will always be". (02:33:00) He further asks her if she believes in "afterlife, heaven and hell"(02:35:13). She responds: "I believe death is only a door. When it closes, another opens. If I care to imagine heaven, I would imagine a door open. Behind them I would find him waiting for me." (02:35:41). As she says this, her eyes are brightly shining, and we see a white door opening in 1849. Her soulmate Adam Ewing enters, and she runs towards him. As they hug, their eyes tear up: "My love, I missed you so much", he says (02:36:00).

In the final story, Sonmi is believed to be a God-like being, a child of "God o' smarts Darwin" who delivered the world with her sacrifice. In the fifth narrative, she told the Archivist that General Apis had asked of her to sacrifice herself in order to get an opportunity to tell her story. "Had I remained invisible, the truth would have stayed hidden", she says. This opens up a possibility of Christian interpretation. While Sonmi is being taken to execution, we hear Haskell Moore's voice (1849), telling to his daughter Tilda that her life will end up in a bad way because she had chosen to become an abolitionist.

"There is a natural order to this world, and those who try to upend it do not fare well. At best, you will exist a pariah to be spat at and beaten-at worst, to be lynched or crucified." (02:40:00)

Crucifixion was mentioned to make a connection with Jesus. Parallely, we see Sonmi's execution by two red-clothed figures in a white room, surrounded by viewers wearing black.

Sonmi was murdered wearing a long white dress, signifying pureness and Chesed, but when deciding to become an abolitionist, her dress was green, signifying Tiferet, a balance in the universe. In both scenes she is surrounded by reddish tones, Gevura. Sonmi's minimalistic clothing and hairstyle imply innocence, while Tilda's green luxurious gown, red hair and long purple coat make her look like a Shekhinah, a Godly presence in the world.

#### 11.5. Haskell Moore – Tadeusz-Kesselring – Nurse Noakes – Boardman Mephi – Old Georgie

Hugo Weaving's character starts off as a rich slaveowner Haskell Moore in the first story. His above-mentioned statement to his daughter Tilda implies that he is in fact a nihilist, a coward. "For what? No matter what you do it will never amount to anything more than a single drop in a limitless ocean." His character is aware that evil is happening, but is too afraid to fight against it. Moreover, he believes that individual pursuits are pointless. Therefore, his character may be classified as an "atheist" one, believing that everything is short-termed and random, without seeing the bigger picture. This is the final proof that the film favors a spiritual interpretation over the secular one, as the secular one is too short-sighted. Even though Moore considers himself religious, in fact his arguments are scientific, Darwinist ones, rather than religious. A big conformist, he sees no bigger purpose to the world and fears to stand against the conventions.

In next life, he proceeds to be a German musician Tadeusz-Kesselring, unhappily in love with Ayrs' wife Jocasta. In the third story he is a professional killer working for the corrupt owners of the nuclear power plant, becoming an executive force (Satan) behind the mind of the owner Lloyd played by Hugh Grant (Samael). Seeing no purpose in life or bigger picture, he becomes increasingly corrupt, focusing on short-term goals rather than higher aims. His actions are pragmatic, rather than truly meaningful.

Hugo Weaving's character in the fourth story reincarnates into the aggressive nurse Noakes, obviously inspired by the character of the Nurse Ratched from "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest". Just like the Nurse Ratched mistreats patients in the psychiatric hospital, nurse Noakes mistreats old people at the nursing home. In the fifth story, this character is reborn a boardmember Mephi, a member of the Unanimity police force defending the existing world order. Finally, he becomes the postapocalyptic humans' notion of devil or Satan, Old Georgie. His character is an antagonist representing Satan, or temptation, in each story. He is trying to convince Adam Ewing to accept slavery, to tempt Jocasta Ayrs to marry him even though it is forbidden, to prevent Luisa Rey from researching the nuclear plant, to force Tim Cavendish to face his subconscious perversions and get punished for them, to stop Sonmi from making a revolution and to talk Zachry into murdering Meronym.

This array of negative characters is somewhat similar to the multitude of Agent Smiths in "The Matrix", who are also stand-in for Satan. However, Satan in Judaism is not an ultimate dark force, but an angel in charge of testing people and making them accept responsibility for their decisions. His sphere is *Gevura*, judgement. His character seems as a regular human in the beginning, but towards the story six his non-human nature becomes visible. Representing supernatural forces of evil, he may be interpreted a kind of anti-thesis to the holy and pure Sonmi, representing supernatural forces of good. This dualism is also a part of Kabbalistic teaching, wherein it is believed that each human has a "good inclination" and an "evil inclination". These inclinations stem from otherworldly realities and dimensions, which are transcendent and immanent at the same time, present within and without humans. Depending on which side the humans will strengthen, Good or Evil inclination can prevail. In the film, the Evil inclination triumphed at many points throughout the history, allowing racially based slavery (1849), intolerance towards minorities (1936), corruption related to environmental safety of the nuclear power plant (1973), mistreatment of old people (2012), genetically based slavery at the fast food restaurant (2144). Consequently, in the final story the Evil

became more physical and more present than ever. As a kabbalistic Satan, he tempts Zachry to murder Meronym in the sixth story. Luckily, Zachry overcame this temptation, decreasing power and influence of "Old Georgie" who does not appear in the film anymore. Thereby, it is hinted that the evil inclination may have been permanently weakened by a bold action of one individual. In the final story, he is but an idea.

11.6. Adam Ewing – Hotel Guest – Megan's father (Frobisher's brother) – Highlander – Hae-Joo Chang - Adam

Jim Sturgess' character is first born as a lawyer Adam Ewing, who learns about inequality and harsh treatment of slaves through encounter with the intelligent slave Autua. Helping him to escape, Ewing ultimately becomes an abolitionist, fighting for human rights at the end of the 19th century. He proceeds to be Frobisher's brother in the second / third narrative, a Highlander in the fourth. In the fifth story, he is Hae-Joo Chang, Sonmi's liberator and her big love. He stands for the idealist, believing in a better world. His sphere is Chesed, standing for loving-kindness. Adam (Hae-Joo, Frobisher's brother) is a soulmate of Tilda (Sonmi-451, Frobisher's sister-in-law) and his love towards her was the strongest motivating force behind her revolutionary actions. In each narrative, he is "sacrificed" in a way to serve the bigger picture: in the first, he refuses financial welfare and social prestige in order to become an abolitionist, in the fifth, his murder inspires Sonmi to leave the final testament, in the sixth, his murder strongly influences Zachry.

Even though Sonmi's soulmate had a different wife in the sixth narrative (Zachry's sister Rose is a reincarnation of Yoona-939 played by Xun Zhou), the Zohar also makes it clear that people may marry whomever else, who is not their soulmate, in order to fulfill a Tikkun. Sonmi-451 had no further need of reincarnation, having achieved all of her Tikkunim in the fifth narrative, but Hae-Joo Chang did. His murder by the Kona cannibals, while Zachry was hiding, led to major changes in Zachry's mindset.

11.7. Cabin Boy – Robert Frobisher – Store Clerk – Georgette – Tribesman

Ben Whishaw's character starts as a poor cabin boy. In the second story, he proceeds to be Robert Frobisher. He is reborn as a store clerk selling his own record from the previous life.



In the fourth narrative, he is Denholme Cavendish's wife Georgette. In the end, he is one of the tribesmen. His character is always either a bisexual male or a female. He stands for Isaac, self-imposed Gevura, as his true talents are hidden and overshadowed by the issues of his intimate life.

#### 11.8. Rufus Sixsmith – Nurse James – Archivist

James D'Arcy starts off as young Rufus Sixsmith, lover of Robert Frobisher. He retains the same identity in the third story, becoming old Rufus Sixsmith, nuclear physicist who gives Luisa Rey a hint about unorderly operation of the nuclear power plant before being murdered. In the fourth narrative, he is reborn to become Nurse James. In the sixth story, he became an Archivist interrogating Sonmi. He may have joined the resistance after talking with Sonmi, as hinted at the end of their conversation. He asks: "What if no one believes in your truth?", and she answers, smiling knowingly: "Someone already does". Therefore, his character is responsible for preserving Sonmi's memories and transmitting them into the post-apocalyptic world.

#### 11.9. Madame Horrox – Ursula – Yusouf Suleiman – Abbess

Susan Sarandon's character stands for wisdom / intellect (Hochma / Bina in Kabbalistic system of spheres). In the beginning, she is obviously annoyed by her husband's pro-slavery activism, advocating for plurality of opinion and trying to make him question status quo. In the fourth narrative, she is the reason why Timothy Cavendish decides to settle down and give up his not-so-ethical lifestyle. In the fifth narrative, she is a psychogenomicist, an influential professor Yusouf Suleiman who was murdered due to his research activities. In the end, she is the Abbess, the lead matriarch of the Valleysmen tribe. Her cosmological sphere is Hochma / Bina, as she is directly connected to the Upper worlds. Her role is that of a regular prophet, to point out the difference between right and wrong.

11.10. Rev. Gilex Horrox – Hotel Heavy – Lloyd Hooks – Denholme Cavendish –  
Seer Rhee – Kona Chief

Hugh Grant's characters are also a prototype of evil, just like Hugo Weaving's. The difference is that Hugo Weaving's characters are more of an angelic, supernatural, non-human type, while Hugh Grant's are corrupt and immoral humans. In the first story, he is a selfish slaveowner. In the second story, he is a hotel heavy; in the third story, he is a nuclear plant owner Lloyd Hooks who advocates for a nuclear catastrophe in order to benefit the oil companies.

In the fourth story, he is an evil rich man Denholme Cavendish, who puts his younger brother into a nursing home. It may be deducted that Timothy's (Jacob's) wrongdoings motivated his brother Denholme (Esau) for revenge. However, Hugh Grant's character had a major switch since the last narrative. Whereas in the past he was a selfish Darwinist slaveowner and nuclear power plant owner, his character has become more refined. Prior to this, he was led by cold emotionless calculation, while in this life, he became passion-driven. He was clearly in love with his wife Georgette (Ben Whishaw), while

Conflicts between brothers are a common topic in the Tanakh, always the older brother being the evil one – e.g. Cain, Yishmael, Esau. It is usually the evil older brother who loathes his younger brother. While Timothy is certainly not innocent, neither is Jacob, who stole first son's blessing from Esau. According to rabbinic interpretation of Jacob's marriage with Leah, she was supposed to marry Esau, but Jacob arrived first. Due to these wrongdoings (acquiring a first-son blessing and heritage, marrying Esau's potential wife), Esau decided to revenge himself.

After Timothy had slept with Denholme's wife Georgette (Ben Whishaw), Denholme decided to revenge himself after initially helping Timothy to escape the mafia. Even though Jacob's actions are righteous in Jewish perspective, in Christian view he was unfair to Esau. Therefore, this particular motif may incline to Christianity more than Judaism. Overall, relationship between Timothy and Denholme can be compared to that of Jacob and Esau, but without the Biblical happy reconciliation.

In the fifth narrative, Grant's character was born as Seer Rhee, the executive manager of the restaurant where the clones work. He used clones' food as drugs and took advantage of Yoona-939, but had no problem with shooting her after she had raised her voice. However,

after having her murdered, Seer Rhee died of overdose. If that is interpreted as a suicide, Seer Rhee may have actually been in love with Yoona-939. She may have had feelings for him too, as their relations were clearly consensual, giving her a "taste" of what life "up there with the consumers" looked like, as she told Sonmi.

Apparently, his character was in love twice – with Georgette in 2012, and with Yoona-939 in 2144. Neither of these romances was successful, as Georgette cheated on him with his brother, and Yoona also ended up tragically. If he was truly in love with Yoona, it must have felt horribly wrong to murder his own lover, therefore, he committed suicide by overdose, overwhelmed by feelings of guilt. It is implied that Seer Rhee may have been the one to connect Yoona with the Union, the resistance movement, who had wanted her to be the Messiah, however, she was not "the One". Just like Seer Hae-Joo found Sonmi, Seer Rhee may have found Yoona. After his two relationships failing horribly, Hugh Grant's character finally gave up on higher ideals, becoming a leader of the cannibal tribe in the final story.

Disappointed in love, he literally abandoned the humane part of himself, degrading himself to an animal-like cannibal, led solely by the instinct to survive. In the Zoharitic view, it could be argued that his Godly soul Neshama perished, while only the lower soul Nefesh remained. Animals also have Nefesh, but unlike humans, they have no Ruach or Neshama. Hugh Grant's character remained without higher aspects of himself. He was degraded to Nefesh of the "other side", Sitra Achara, becoming only a "dust of the ground" to be slaughtered by Zachry. "How foolish are men who neither know nor care for the ways of the Holy One, blessed be he. They are all asleep, and sleep never leaves their eye sockets." (Zohar Vayeshev, 16: 155) To make a connection, the Kona leader was literally killed in his sleep. Focused only on his own feelings of hurt and disappointment in lives 4 and 5, he was unable to grasp the bigger picture, nor consistently employ ethical behavior, referred to in the Zohar as "ways of the Holy One", and he failed to acquire knowledge like other characters.

In the course of his reincarnations, he was well-off in different political systems and societies – feudalism, capitalism, corporative totalitarianism and post-civilized world. Cannibalism is often seen as a metaphor for capitalist competitiveness and social Darwinism, where "weak are meat and the strong do eat" (Dr. Goose in the first narrative). In Kabbalistic system, he represents a "beast". As the Zohar writes: "A man does not transgress, only he who is shapeless matter and is not a man transgresses (...) he behaves like a beast, who does not care or know". (Zohar, Chayei Sarah 8: 39) As such, his soul belongs to the "other side".

### 11.11. Other Characters

Some of the slave characters ended up as prescients or otherwise respected society members (Keith David's slave character Kupaka transits from being a policeman Joe Napier and rebellion leader An-kor Apis to the respected Prescient; David Gyasi's Autua evolves through Lester Rey, to Duophysite; Xun Zhou's Yoona-939 ends up as Zachry's sister Rose). In the end, the civilization had to fall for everyone to become "equal" again.

However, also the supporting actors and even extras reincarnate. Sonmi's friend Yoona (Xun Zhou) from 2144 is a hotel manager in 1973 and Zachry's sister Rose in 2321. Three (Niall Greig Fulton, Louis Dempsey, Martin Docherty) of Haskel Moore's (Hugo Weaving) dinner guests in 1849 advocating slavery become Hoggins' (Tom Hanks) mafia relatives in 1973. Their short evolution demonstrates development from slavery supporters to bandits. Another pro-slavery dinner guest (Sylvetra Le Touzel) becomes Nurse Judd in 2012, oppressing the inmates, whereas in 2144 she becomes an aide in execution of the clones. Parallely to main characters' positive transformation, many minor negative characters progress in a negative direction.

## 12. Concluding Remarks

### 12.1. Fulfillment of Tikkun through Interactions

Love is the most important element of the story and the primary motivation for characters' actions, either good or bad. Judaism believes in perfect soulmates, two halves of one person. Zohar writes that human "is comprised of both male and female" (Beresheet A 44: 415) and both are required for a totality. The Zohar writes that the purpose of incarnation of souls in the Lower world is to raise it toward the Upper world by awakening its desire to receive from the Male principle (Zeir Anpin). Basically, a marriage between the Male and Female dimensions is a goal of all history. In The Zohar, the Messianic era will be signified by a "marriage" between the Lower world and the Upper world, representing Male and Female principles. According to Zohar, "He made the Lower world in the likeness of the Upper world. And he made one the exact reflection of the other, so that they can be elevated and thus united as one." (Zohar Beresheet B, 1: 1) Their love is the purpose of the whole Tikkun, correction of the world. In order to be able to find out one's particular Tikkun, a person must first find a soulmate. Then their purpose will become clear to them. By connecting with their soulmate,

people can "imitate" this relationship which has to happen between the two worlds. The soulmates are actually two halves of one soul, but "when they descend into this world, they are separated from each other, each one turns his way. And the Holy one, blessed be He, mates them again." (Zohar, Lech Lecha 22: 207) Therefore, love is the basis of whole Tikkun. In particular, the following love stories are prominent throughout the Cloud Atlas film: Tom Hanks' character and Halle Berry's character (being together in third and sixth narrative), Doona Bae' character and Jim Sturgess' character (first, second/third and fifth narrative). There are other romances, but they do not last longer than one lifetime: e.g. Frobisher (Whishaw) and Sixsmith (D'Arcy), Ursula (Sarandon) and Timothy Cavendish (Broadbent), Georgette (Whishaw) and Denholme Cavendish (Grant), Yoonah-939 and Seer Rhee (Grant), Madame (Sarandon) and Rev. Horrox (Grant). Doona Bae's character of Sonmi-451 is asked whether she "had loved" commander Chang, and she answers in present tense: "Yes, I do". The archivist then asks: "Do you mean, you are still in love with him?", and she answers: "I mean, that I always will be. I believe death is only a door, when it closes, another opens. If I care to imagine heaven. I would imagine a door opening. And behind it, I would find him there, waiting for me." The next scene we see is reunion of Tilda (Doona Bae) and Adam Ewing (Ben Whishaw) in the first story. Thereby, the film makes it clear that their love actually transcends time and space. Similarly, in the Zohar the soulmates have been designed as one soul in the Upper world and then separated into two bodies before descending into the Lower world, only in order to find each other and reunite. "All the souls in the world who are the fruit of handiwork of the Holy One, bbbh, are one in the same secret. Only when they descend to the world are their souls separated as male and female. And every soul has a male and female part, united together as one." (Zohar, Lech Lecha 22: 204)

Another way of connecting the Upper and Lower worlds is through kindness (Chesed). Since socially deprived individuals are considered female in comparison to the well-off humans, pursuing equality is considered as bringing male and female principles together. "From the aspect of the Male, people are rich, from the aspect of the Female, they are poor. But as they are united as one, show compassion to each other, share with each other, and are benefactors to each other, so should man below behave". (Zohar, Prologue 21: 223). Therefore, according to the Zohar, the issue of slavery is also based upon relations between male and female forces; abolition of societal inequalities would again mean a marriage between the Upper and Lower world.

## 12.2. Similarities between "The Matrix "and "Cloud Atlas"

There are similarities between Wachowski's film trilogy "The Matrix"and "Cloud Atlas". Especially the fifth story (Neo Seoul 2144.) is visually and thematically very similar to "The Matrix" story. However, I will not go into much detail, because this is not the objective of my thesis.

Baudrillard writes that "consumerism deprives us from our real world and by distorting the actual reality, creates its own, artificial and distorted type of reality"(1998: 35-36). In "The Matrix", the world is literally artificial, as humans' bodies are physically just energy source for the machines. Similarly, McLuhan (1994) wrote that humans are reproductive organs for technology. In "Cloud Atlas", this artificial reality is more a symbolic one, as the governing force (the corporations and states as their pawns) enforce the social-Darwinist ideology of "natural world order"to make the people obedient and prove that resistance is futile. Most of humans in "Cloud Atlas" in the beginning believe in the illusory, oversimplified world presented to them by the authority figures, while in the course of the film (novel) they realize that the reality is much more complex. For example, the fabricant Sonmi in the fifth story believes that her sisters fabricants reach a better life after their "exaltation", a ritual used to deceive everyone, while in reality they are brutally murdered after a few years of servitude and turned into food for other fabricants. Similarly, Ewing in the first story believes that slavery is the natural order of things, while with time he realizes that there is no such thing as "natural order", as society is shaped by people's values and actions. There is a corresponding "realization" in each of six stories, as I have described earlier in the thesis.

The image where Sonmi realizes that the fabricants are murdered and their bodies turned into food for the living ones is similar to the scene where Neo sees endless plants of human bodies, which are used as energy source for the machines in "The Matrix", and dead individuals are turned into food for the living bodies.

In the same story, An-kor Apis is the leader of underground opposition, just like Morpheus leads the battle against the machines. Visuals of the opposition headquarters in the "Cloud Atlas"are very similar to the visuals of Zion in "The Matrix". Just like Morpheus is "a prophet"to annotate Neo a Messiah of mankind, An-Kor Apis annotated Sonmi a Messiah of the oppressed classes.

Neo and Sonmi are both Messianic characters, liberated by groups of rebels fighting against the oppression. Both Neo and Sonmi had been innocently ignorant at the beginning, and after learning about the state of things, they became warriors. Both had to die in order to fulfill their mission, in the way of kabbalistic "Messiah ben Joseph". Furthermore, character Hae-Joo Chang is in many ways a male counterpart of Trinity from "The Matrix". Trinity found Neo in the name of Morpheus, while Hae-Joo found Sonmi in the name of An-kor Apis. Trinity was Neo's liberator and his big love, giving him strength to proceed with the mission in difficult moments. Hae-Joo Chang was Sonmi's first and final love, giving her strength and inspiration.

Even though in "The Matrix" the machines triumphed in the end, and in the fifth story of the "Cloud Atlas" the world was destroyed through nuclear disaster, both of these unhappy endings signify the end of the old world, which had to die in order for the new one to appear. Therefore, "The Matrix" ended with a new version of the software without Agent Smith, while "Cloud Atlas" ended up in postapocalyptic reality with a hope to rebuild the society once again, after defeating the inner "Old Georgie". Just like there is a threat of the machines at the end of "The Matrix", there is still a threat of the Kona cannibals at the end of the sixth "Cloud Atlas" story, but there is hope. The planet that Zachry and Meronym's family moved to in order to preserve the mankind from cannibals is visually similar to Zion from "The Matrix", where liberated humans were hiding from the machines. This similarity implies a new beginning.

### 12.3. Differences between "Cloud Atlas" Film and Novel

I will not go into much detail regarding the differences, because they are numerous. The film put more emphasis on interhuman relationships, societal relations and motivational power of emotions. The book emphasized ecological and environmental impacts, while emotions were not as important. While the film clearly postulated reincarnation of the characters, the book did not. In Mitchell's book, the main character of each story (Adam Ewing, Robert Frobisher, Luisa Rey, Timothy Cavendish, Sonmi, Zachry) has an unusual birthmark in shape of the comet, but as I already mentioned, the author said that this was meant to portray universality of human nature, rather than reincarnation. The film used a linear plot, wherein all dimensions intertwine in order to end in a certain result, implying progressivity of human history, while the book used a cyclical "boomerang-shaped" structure, starting and ending with the first

story. Therefore, the structure of the film is based upon Judeo-Christian idea of linear history, always progressing, leading to a certain result after arrival of the Messiah, while the book employs more Buddhist and Eastern philosophy. In the film, individual decisions are shaping history, as the characters are actively contributing to the world around them, while in the book they are more passive, led by the course of reality without having much influence, as "what goes around, comes around". No matter what the characters did, the history reached its peak in the sixth story and returned back to the first one. Characters are more superficial and their destinies are fatalistically defined, unlike the film, where the plot could have gone in many different directions, and the ending is very open, hopeful, promising for a better future. In very brief notes, those are the most noticeable differences.

#### 12.4. Secularism vs. Spiritualism, Body vs. Soul

In the novel and film "Cloud Atlas", this battle between Good and Evil inclination is based upon the dualism between ultimate humanism and Darwinistic evolutionary premises. Characters have a freedom to choose whether to eat from the Tree of Knowledge Good and Evil or the Tree of Life, that is, whether to act according to their holy Neshama, the higher soul, or bodily Nefesh, the lower soul. They have to choose between the soul and the body. While the soul is capable of ultimate goodness, the body is a biological item shaped by its DNA. According to Shoop / Ryan, the "Cloud Atlas" focuses on "a central agon between deep evolutionary premises that seem to shape the fate of characters within the novel's fictional worlds and certain countervailing possibilities that suggest that the human and post-human actors in these worlds might transhistorically determine the fate". (2015: 93)

In Kabbala, there is a constant tension between Godly soul and bodily soul (Nefesh haElohit vs. Nefesh haBahamit). Nefesh haBahamit desires to be succumbed by the Nefesh haElohit, however, it does not always succeed. In "Cloud Atlas", Hugh Grant's and Hugo Weaving's characters are examples of humans who fail to follow their Godly soul, succumbing to temptations of the material world. They are the main antagonists, unable to see the bigger picture. Some protagonists are Zaddikim, endorsing their Godly soul from the very beginning to the very end (such as Jim Sturgess' and Doona Bae's characters), while the others learn to do so through time, starting off as evil or otherwise lacking (Tom Hanks', Halle Berry's, Jim Broadbent's characters), and ending up as righteous. (Kremnizer, 2016)



To conclude with, the film endorses a spiritual perspective more than the secular one. While the novel functions in both secular and spiritual ways, with many characters stating many things, the film clearly takes up a more philosophical viewpoint on existence. Even though small humans sometimes fail to see the "bigger picture" (such as Haskell Moore, 1849), it does not mean that it does not exist. Everything is interconnected and there are no coincidences. There are indeed "enlightened" characters such as Adam / Tilda and Hae-Joo / Sonmi who feel that they are part of something "bigger". Characters endorsing nihilistic and social-Darwinist "scientific" perspectives (Hugo Weaving's characters) as well as one focused on material well-being and selfish pragmatism (Hugh Grant's characters) are antagonists, while the believers and idealists (characters played by Jim Sturgess, Doona Bae, Tom Hanks, Halle Berry) are the protagonists, those who are right, those who can see a bigger picture. Through their faith and fight for the ideals, they ultimately change the world.

### 13. Conclusion

The "Cloud Atlas" is a complex film adaption of a complex novel, however, there are significant differences between these two. While the film employs many direct references and indirect allusions to Judeo-Christian cultural world, the book is more heavily leaning towards Buddhist philosophy. The film consists of multiple layers of meanings which can be interpreted from numerous religious and philosophical perspectives. The objective of the paper was to identify in particular Jewish theosophic elements within the film.

In my analysis, I have focused primarily on following Jewish theosophic theories: 1) theory of interchange between Upper and Lower worlds, 2) system of cosmological spheres (Sefirot), 3) reincarnation (Gilgul), 4) theory of Tikkun and human role in "correction" of the world, 5) progression of history towards Messianic era, 6) role and characteristics of the Messiah, 6) implication of language for creation of the world. I explained how each one of them connects Kabbala and the film.

Now I will list some of the most important findings of the thesis in regard to elements of Jewish theosophy present in the film "Cloud Atlas".

Since the same actors play multiple characters, it is clear that these characters are same souls journeying through their Gilgul (reincarnating) in order to participate in Tikkun (correction of

the world). History in the film is linear, rather than circular, which points towards Judeo-Christian world view (and not Buddhist).

Elements of Voice and Speech are very important, because language is a means of reality construction in both Judaism and "Cloud Atlas". Through their speech, characters are saving the world. Language in the film is also a means of acquiring knowledge (corresponding to Kabbalistic sphere of Da'at).

Moreover, written text is an essential plot trigger. Just like the history takes place due to Torah in Judaism, all six plots of the "Cloud Atlas" unravel because of the written text, as each character reads a piece of writing left behind by their predecessor.

Music in the film has a profound importance as a "cord" intertwining between past and future lives of individuals and connecting the whole mankind.

Numbers are essential for the plot, as six narratives pertain to six days of creation of the world, and six lower spheres in the theosophical system of the Zohar.

Main characters have a Messianic potential, and they are bringing the world towards redemption. Each protagonist of one narrative can be compared to one (or more) protagonists from the Torah, and therefore with a certain kabbalistic sphere. Adam Ewing (Jim Sturgess) in the first narrative is similar to Biblical Abraham, demonstrating loving-kindness (Chesed) to the runaway slave, and to Adam, being the "first man" who is abolitionist. Adam and Tilda (Doona Bae) / Hae-Joo and Sonmi-451, being played by the same actors, are perfect soulmates, whose love transcends time and space.

Second protagonist, Robert Frobisher (Ben Whishaw) is similar to Isaac, representing the sphere of Gevura (strength) because of the oppression he has endured. Luisa Rey (Halle Berry) and Isaac Sachs (Tom Hanks) in the third narrative are in a way similar again to Rebecca and Isaac, because Luisa's insight "open Isaac's eyes". Luisa Rey represents Kabbalistic sphere of Tiferet (Beauty), exposing the truth to improve the world. Halle Berry's character climbs up the social and spiritual ladder from Lilith-like Jocasta towards the Upper female character, Meronym.

Jim Broadbent's Timothy Cavendish represents a darkened Netzah (victory), while interaction between him and his brother Denholme (Hugh Grant) reminds of a clash between Jacob and Esau.

Sonmi-451 (Doona Bae) is the transcendental "Messiah ben Joseph", whose purpose is to be sacrificed for a greater good, while Zachry (Tom Hanks) is a human "Messiah ben David", who ends up saving the mankind in spite of temptations by Old Georgie (Hugo Weaving's character representing Satan).

Many symbols and elements pertaining to Jewish religion and Kabbala are present within the plot, as well as film structure and its visuals. Many kabbalistic motifs in the film were analyzed, such as idea of Messianic redemption, Tikkun, Gilgul, symbolism of number six, as well as cosmological structure. To conclude with, many narrative and visual aspects of the film fit well within the Jewish theosophic cosmological picture.

Finally, I conclude that the film itself, its motifs, dialogues and character development, point singularly towards a spiritual interpretation. The most "atheistic" characters are those who fail to see a bigger picture, being stuck in their short-sighted zone of comfort, afraid to fight for their ideals. Symbols and characters in the film make it clear that the overall message of the film is a transcendental, rather than secular one.

#### 14. Filmography

*Cloud Atlas.*

Germany, USA, 2012.

Running time: 172 minutes

Directors: the Wachowskis, Tom Tykwer

Screenplay: the Wachowskis, Tom Tykwer

Based on: "Cloud Atlas" by David Mitchell

Cinematography (color, 35 mm, 2.39:1): John Toll, Frank Griebe

Music: Tom Tykwer, Johnny Klimek, Reinhold Heil

Edited by: Alexander Berner, Klaus Wehlisch

Production: Cloud Atlas Production, X-Filme Creative Pool, Anarchos Productions

Distributed by: Warner Bros. Pictures (USA), X-Verleih (Germany)

Producers: Grant Hill, Stefan Arndt, Lana Wachowski, Tom Tykwer, Lilly Wachowski

Actors (in order of credits):

Tom Hanks (Dr. Henry Goose / Hotel Manager / Isaac Sachs / Dermot Hoggins / Cavendish Look-a-Like Actor / Zachry)

Halle Berry (Native Woman / Jocasta Ayrs / Luisa Rey / Indian Party Guest / Ovid / Meronym)

Jim Broadbent (Captain Molyneux / Vyvyan Ayrs / Timothy Cavendish / Korean Musician / Prescient 2)

Hugo Weaving (Haskell Moore / Tadeusz Kesselring / Bill Smoke / Nurse Noakes / Boardman Mephi / Old Georgie)

Jim Sturgess (Adam Ewing / Poor Hotel Guest / Megan's Dad / Highlander / Hae-Joo Chang / Adam, Zachry's Brother-in-Law)

Bae Doona (Tilda / Megan's Mom / Mexican Woman / Sonmi-451 / Sonmi-351 / Sonmi Prostitute)

Ben Whishaw (Cabin Boy / Robert Frobisher / Store Clerk / Georgette / Tribesman)

Keith David (Kupaka / Joe Napier / An-kor Apis / Prescient)

James D'Arcy (Young Rufus Sixsmith / Old Rufus Sixsmith / Nurse James / Archivist)

Xun Zhou (Talbot (Hotel Manager) / Yoona-939 / Rose)

David Gyasi (Autua / Lester Rey / Duophysite)

Susan Sarandon (Madame Horrox / Older Ursula / Yusouf Suleiman / Abbess)

Hugh Grant (Rev. Giles Horrox / Hotel Heavy / Lloyd Hooks / Denholme Cavendish / Seer Rhee / Kona Chief)

Robert Fyfe (Old Salty Dog / Mr. Meeks / Prescient 1)

Martin Wuttke (Mr. Boerhaave / Guard / Leary the Healer)

Brody Nicholas Lee (Javier Gomez / Jonas / Zachry's Older Nephew)

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