

Vilnius University  
Faculty of Philology  
Department of English Philology

Edvinas Belevičius

The Cartography of Narrative in David Mitchell's Novel "Cloud Atlas"

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of BA in English  
Philology

Supervisor: Lect. Dr. Linara Bartkuvienė

Vilnius 2016

# Contents

Abstract.....	2
1.Introduction .....	3
2.Theoretical Framework.....	8
2.1 Narratology: Theory and Terms .....	8
2.2 Grand Narrative .....	10
2.3 Beyond Postmodernism .....	11
3.Navigating through the Narrative and Outside It in David Mitchell’s Novel <i>Cloud Atlas</i> ...	14
3.1 The Narrative Topography: Narrative Embedding and Framing in <i>Cloud Atlas</i> .....	14
3.2. Little Narratives within the Grand Narrative of <i>Cloud Atlas</i> .....	18
3.3. Beyond the Postmodern Fallout: Predatory Coexistence in <i>Cloud Atlas</i> .....	21
4.Conclusions .....	24
5. List of References .....	25
6. Summary in Lithuanian .....	27
7. Appendices .....	28

## **Abstract**

David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas* (2004) explores the intricacies of time-transcending human connections by introducing six seemingly unrelated narratives in a recursive, multi-layered narrative structure. Therefore the object of this BA paper is the novel's embedded narrative structure and its major themes of rebirth and predacity with relation to the contemporary aesthetic and cultural mentality beyond postmodernism. The time transcending soul's journey and human coexistence conveyed through the symbol of a comet-shaped birthmark is explored with the novel's embedded narrative structure making it an ontological grand narrative, a term introduced by Jean-François Lyotard to define a unique kind of metanarrative which "sees" an inner connection between events related to one another. The symbol of a comet-shaped birthmark symbolizes a cyclical return of the soul, which incarnates into different characters throughout different historical epochs. The characters are bound to each other through the past, the present and the future. Jean-Luc Nancy claims that there is no being without "being-with", no existence without coexistence which resonates with Ihab Hassan's reasoning on a necessity to establish a sense of planetary civility grounded on truth and trust in order to emancipate from postmodern fallout or the "clash of civilizations" that resulted in tribalism and fundamentalism. Therefore the aim of this BA paper is to analyse the novel's embedded narrative structure and the aforementioned themes, and to facilitate an intellectual discussion with regards to supplanting postmodernism. The novel's strive for civil human coexistence and planetary civility makes it a post postmodernist novel. It is as if this novel is laying the road for some new cultural and aesthetic mentality yet to be defined by providing a sense of hopefulness and emancipation from the postmodern fallout characterized by numerous, violent military conflicts in the end of the twentieth century.

# 1. Introduction

In his interview with Kim Skotte, *David Mitchell: Stories Have a Number of Beginnings* (2015) David Mitchell (born 1969) defines the creative process emphasizing his focus on the narrative structure and words as semantic units: ‘I just get unhappy if I don’t spend time transferring what I imagine into text. And transferring into text sets the feedback loop: the process of transferring into text creates demand for more imaginative things to transfer, so this virtuous spiral gets set up. I love all this stuff. I’m an unreformed word-nerd. Probably always have been. And why? Who knows...?’<sup>1</sup>

The English novelist David Mitchell was born in 1969 Southport in Lancashire (now Merseyside), England and raised in Worcestershire. He obtained a degree in English and American Literature followed by M.A. in comparative Literature at the University of Kent. After graduation, he lived for a year in Sicily before moving to Hiroshima, Japan, where he taught English to technical students for eight years, before returning to England (Holcombe, 2013). In one of his essays Mitchell writes: ‘I knew I wanted to be a writer since I was a kid, but until I came to Japan to live in 1994 I was too easily distracted to do much about it. I would probably have become a writer wherever I lived, but would I have become the same writer if I'd spent the last six years in London, or Cape Town, or Moose Jaw, on an oil rig or in the circus? This is my answer to myself’ (Mitchell 2005:01). The influence of oriental cultures and cosmopolitanism is prominent in his literary works with regards to multi-voiced characters, trans-cultural and trans-historic narratives, and Japanese animistic tradition evident in such novels as *Cloud Atlas* (2004), and *Ghostwritten* (1999).

Mitchell’s cosmopolitanism is not the only factor responsible for shaping his literary style. His speech impairment of stammering created the conditions in which the only outlet of his imagination was writing. Writing allowed Mitchell to further kindle his passion for words and structure, or to use his own term – word-nerdery<sup>2</sup>. ‘I'd probably still be avoiding the subject today had I not outed myself by writing a semi-autobiographical novel, *Black Swan Green*, narrated by a stammering 13 year old’ (Mitchell 2011).

Mitchell’s literary works often deal with questions of civilization, history and human nature. His first novel *Ghostwritten* (1999) tells the interlocking and intersecting story of nine narrators in nine different locations from Okinawa to Mongolia to New York City. The episodic structure of the novel, first person narration, and its themes continue in his following works such as *Cloud Atlas* (2004), and *The Bone Clocks* (2014). Mitchell’s third novel *Cloud*

---

<sup>1</sup> Louisiana Channel 2015, interview at: 08:43 – 10:00 min

<sup>2</sup> Louisiana Channel 2015, interview at: 15:10 – 16:45 min

*Atlas* turns back to the trans-cultural and trans-historic narrative structure previously exercised in his first novel, and consists of six interconnected stories set in different times and places. The six stories have their own genre, type of narration, and move across the nineteenth century South Pacific to dystopian South Korea, to post-apocalyptic future. The sixth novel *The Bone Clocks* (2014) is divided into six stories that are set in different times to tell the life of Holly Sykes. The novel shares a number of characters with Mitchell's other works, which the author describes as "uber-novel" (Kellogg 2014). For instance Hugo Lamb, one of the narrators, appears as the protagonist's cousin in *Black Swan Green* (2006). Also, *Spyglass Magazine* and a writer Felix Finch are both mentioned, featured in *Cloud Atlas*.

Mitchell's technique of writing that transcends the boundaries of time, culture and space that is prevalent in his novels such as *Ghostwritten* (1999) and *The Bone Clocks* (2014) also prevails in his novel *Cloud Atlas*. The major formal aspect of the novel is the non-linear fragmentary narrative structure which consists of five seemingly unrelated stories, each of which breaks at a critical point. The sixth story of the novel *Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rytin' After*, is central and uninterrupted, followed by other halves of the five previous stories in reverse order. *Cloud Atlas* tells six different, seemingly disconnected narratives. 'Once more we have a merry dance of genres, a chorus of voices, and a fusion of comedy and pathos. Six separate, but once more interlinked narratives range across time: from the colonial era of the nineteenth century through to a future of soap-eating "fabricants"' (Holcombe 2013).

The novel begins with the first half of *The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing* and sets in the Chatham Island in the year 1850. It tells the story of an American notary Adam Ewing, who while waiting for his ship's repairs witnesses the cruelty of slavery and is diagnosed with a fatal parasite rapidly weakening his health. The next story *Letters from Zedelghem* is set in Belgium, Zedelghem in 1931. It tells the story in the form of letters by a young bisexual musical genius Robert Frobisher who becomes an amanuensis to a composer Vyvyan Ayrns, who is dying from syphilis. In letters to his lover Rufus Sixsmith, the protagonist Robert Frobisher mentions finding a half of *The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing*. The following story *Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery* is a mystery/thriller novel set in a fictional city Buenas Yervas, California in 1975. A young journalist Luisa Rey investigates a new nuclear power plant only to find out that it is unsafe. She meets Rufus Sixsmith, who was working as one of the scientists of the power plant, but was forced to quit due to his safety report concluding the power plant to be dangerous. The fourth story in the novel *The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish* sets in present day Britain, wherein Timothy Cavendish, a 65 year old publisher is threatened by the brothers of his previous client. The protagonist is put to the

retirement home by his own brother and cannot escape. He mentions reading a manuscript of *Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery* and ends up plotting an escape together with other residents. The fifth story *An Orison of Sonmi~451* is set in a dystopian future state in South Korea run by technocratic capitalist corporation *Nea So Copros*. The story's protagonist Sonmi~451 is a genetically crafted fabricant of a fast food restaurant like many others. She becomes self-aware due to the members of rebellion and becomes their leader. She describes watching a film excerpt of *The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish*. The sixth and the central story of the novel *Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After* is the only uninterrupted story of the novel. Zachry, an old man and the protagonist, tells the story from his youth to children. The story is set in a post-apocalyptic Big Island of Hawaii inhabited by peaceful Zachry's people called valley folk and the savage cannibals – Kona tribe. The valley folk worship the goddess named Sonmi and recall the fall of civilization that has led them to primitivism. The island is occasionally visited by technologically advanced people and anthropologists known as Prescients who study the valley folk and trade with them. One of the anthropologists, Meronym reveals Sonmi's history to Zachry which he finds hard to believe.

The novel seems to attract two main readings to itself. A number of critics focus on the aspects of history, human nature and character connections, while others tend to focus more on the narratological aspects of the novel. For example, Jason Howards Mezey in his study argues that the epic of *Cloud Atlas* provides a means for Mitchell to yoke 'a vast array of human existences throughout time and space into an integrated process of human evolution and devolution' (Mezey 2011:13). Also he underlines a multi-faceted concept of recursion which bounds the sense of temporality, textual transmission and trans-generational human connections. Similarly, in his review of the novel George Gessert argues that through the play of styles Mitchell explores human condition in different places and times to suggest patterns that transcend historical circumstance (Gessert 2005:425). Further he adds that Mitchell's metaphor of a cloud symbolizes humanity as interconnected, fragmented and a constantly flowing stream of particles containing possibilities of others. Gessert also indicates Darwinism and Buddhism as possibly explaining human experience that implies Garden of Eden and no fall, and promise nothing like a universal progress and suggest no historical direction (Ibid.). Casey Shoop and Dermot Ryan also emphasize the theme of Darwinism in the novel which 'offers a timely literary staging of this impasse: iterations of the biologically-driven narrative of human predacity in which the strong engorge themselves on the weak' (Shoop and Ryan 2015:94). Furthermore they focus on the presence of Big History in the novel and argue that the novel's theme of transhistorical predacity resonates with certain

discourses that explore the possibility of history being driven by imperatives that render the desires, intentions, and actions of traditional ethics as subjects of historiography (Ibid. p. 93).

Mark Currie in his study focuses on the narratological aspects of the novel and distinguishes between narration and time as the acts of reading and being, and turns to Paul Ricoeur's concept of hermeneutic circle (Currie 2009:355). He argues that 'according to Ricoeur, the relationship of narrative and temporality is undeniably circular, in the manner of all hermeneutic activity, in the sense that narrative reconfigures the experience of time in the act of representing it, and in so doing, it inflects the temporality that it represents with the shape that narrative gives to it' (Ibid. p. 355). Currie reasons that the embedded narrative structure of the novel created by including future inside the past 'produces both kinds of prolepsis, one which is a simple leap forwards in narrative order, and the other which produces a self-conscious temporal loop between the act of reading and the act of writing which represents it' (Ibid. p. 363). Samuel James Waldron in his thesis argues that narrative embedding in the novel explores power dynamics of the narrative and questions 'whether it even has a hierarchy of embedding or whether it is simply a series of related narratives on one level' (Waldron 2012:107). Nevertheless he concludes that both readings of the narrative structure informs an understanding of the novel as a whole. On the other hand, Theo D'Haen focuses more on the literary movement of postmodernism by studying the novel's regressive-repetitive narrative structure and argues that it is undeniably postmodern in terms of transgressive narrative technique (D'Haen 2013:280). Yet he concludes that such narrative technique would be hardly imaginable in classic postmodernism and differs from multicultural or postcolonial counter-postmodernism, therefore it 'underwrites a truly "cosmic" humanity appropriate to our new age of planetarity' (Ibid. p. 280).

To sum up, due to its complicated and deviant narrative structure, and the multiplicity of themes David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas* provides vast grounds for various academic studies, for example analyzing human nature, history or the narratological aspects. Some scholars and literary critics such as Mezey, Gessert, Shoop and Ryan tend to focus more on the aspects of history and human nature, while others including Currie, Waldron, and D'Haen focus more on the narratological aspects of the novel.

The object of this BA paper is the narrative structure of the novel, its grand narrative characteristics and the themes of rebirth, and predacity. The aim of this BA paper is to analyse the novel's embedded narrative structure and the aforementioned themes, and to facilitate an intellectual discussion with regards to supplanting postmodernism. Consequently, the theoretical section of the BA paper falls into three parts: the theory of narrative is presented,

which is then followed by Jean Francoise Lyotard's insight on grand narratives, followed by Jean-Luc Nancy's discussion on singular plurality which resonates with Ihab Hassan's attempt to conceptualize the contemporary cultural and aesthetic period beyond postmodernism.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The first part of the theoretical framework introduces the theory of narratology focusing on the aspect of narrative embedding. A type of complex narrative embedding called hyp-narrative is introduced and analysed with its relation to the framing text known as the thematic analogy. The second part of the theoretical framework is focused on Jean Francoise Lyotard's terms of grand narrative – a totalizing theory grounded on universal truths and values, and little narratives (petits récits) – localized contexts focusing on a single historical event. The third part of the theoretical framework draws on Jean-Luc Nancy's theory on singular plurality which is linked to Ihab Hassan's ideas on planetary civility. Nancy comments on recent events regarding armed conflicts between various groups and countries, which Hassan call the postmodern fallout, and draws his attention on the necessity of compassion and coexistence. Hassan argues a need for a sense of planetary which signals a need for a new aesthetic and cultural mentality to supplant postmodernism.

### 2.1 Narratology: Theory and Terms

Narratology can be understood as an ensemble of theories of narratives, narrative texts, or simply as a study of narrative structure (Bal 2009:03). Narratology provides certain intellectual tools that can be helpful in order to interpret a particular cultural artifact, for example, a novel. As Mieke Bal rightly observes, the interpretation obtained with the help of these intellectual tools can by no means be regarded as the only one adequate interpretation possible, for reading is of subjective nature (Ibid. p. 04). The purpose of narratological analysis is therefore not to provide the most "correct" interpretation, but to facilitate an intellectual discussion of the proposed interpretation (Ibid. p. 4). It is important to make clear that narratology does not focus solely on the linguistic text.

*A text is a finite, structured whole composed of signs, which can be linguistic units, such as words and sentences, but they can also be different signs, such as cinematic shots and sequences, or painted dots, lines, and blots. The finite ensemble of signs does not mean that the text itself is finite, for its meanings, effects, functions, and background are not. It only means that there is a first and a last word to be identified; a first and a last image of a film; a frame of a painting (Ibid. p. 5).*

In the analysis of David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas*, a narratological aspect of embedding will be analysed in order to uncover the text's structural complexity and uniqueness.

Bal clarifies the meaning of metadiscourse as 'a discourse in which a discourse is embedded' (Bal 1981:42). A metanarrative therefore becomes a narrative within a narrative, so narrative embedding may be considered as a quintessential feature of metanarratives.

Bal claims that *to embed* is a synonym of *to insert* and deduces three criteria: insertion, subordination, homogeneity (Ibid. p. 43). The criterion of insertion signifies a transition 'when the two units are related by embedding, the transition between them must be

perceptible or capable of becoming perceptible after adequate analysis' (Ibid. p. 43). If the transition is implicit rather than explicit it can be perceptible only by superimposing explanatory phrases (Ibid. p. 43).

The criterion of subordination signifies a hierarchical relationship between the units. Nevertheless, there are many kinds of hierarchies, for example, 'based on master-servant relation, the one and the many, the whole and the parts; the valid and the useless; the important and the futile; container and contained, etc.' (Ibid. p. 43-44). The criterion excludes juxtaposition.

The criterion of homogeneity denotes that the two units must belong to the same class. Class is a relative concept, but from the narratological perspective it can be said that 'a phenomenon is embedded whenever it is composed of two units which are subordinate to each other following a transition, and when these two units can be described in homogeneous narratological terms' (Ibid. p. 44). A sequence can be said to be embedded 'when it is inserted into another sequence, for example a narrative, descriptive, brief, long, personal or impersonal; but one cannot say that a sentence is embedded in a bicycle or vice versa' (Ibid. p. 44). The criterion excludes heterogeneous units.

Nevertheless, narrative embedding can be broadened, which makes it possible to account for complex embedding which is, in principle, unlimited (Ibid. p. 46). One type of complex embedding can be found in narratives that consist of hypo-units.

Bal argues that 'an embedded unit is by definition subordinate to the units which embeds it; but can acquire relative independence' (Ibid. p. 48). This is the case if the unit can be defined as a specimen of a delimited genre (Ibid. p. 48). The signification of embedding, therefore, becomes 'enriched and even radically transformed but it [the unit] has absolutely no need of it [signification] to be coherent' (Ibid. p. 48). Analeptic interior monologues, flashbacks, dreams can acquire a certain measure of independence and quality as complete hypo-units.

The relation of hypo-units to the embedded unit is complex. 'The more independent and complete the hypo-unit, the more problematic can its relation to the embedding unit become. If this relation is not explanatory, it may merely consist in a thematic analogy' (Ibid. p. 48). The thematic analogy is often expressed through various links, themes or metaphorized analogies.

Sometimes the thematic analogy may take a form of the frame narrative. If the embedded text meets the criteria of hypo-unit (coherence, relative independency), and tells a complete story in the second or the third level it becomes a frame narrative. 'When the embedded text

presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, we gradually forget fabula of the primary narrative' (Bal 2009:57). If the embedded texts function within the implicit thematic analogy, the thematic analogy may function as a frame narrative containing the embedded narrative units.

Mieke Bal expresses her postmodern view by arguing that narrative applies not only to the text, but is omnipresent in culture and applies to virtually every cultural object: 'Practically everything has a narrative aspect to it, or at the very least, can be perceived, interpreted as narrative' (Ibid. p. 225). The notion of narrative is the notion of construction particularly pertinent to history.

## 2.2 Grand Narrative

Grand narrative according to Lyotard is a theory which attempts to give a totalizing, comprehensive account of history by revealing an interconnection between historical events and other phenomena based upon universal truth or values (Lyotard 1979:xxiv). The term can be applied to such ideologies as Marxism, the Enlightenment, Christianity or other religious doctrines, etc.

Lyotard in his work analyses the problem of knowledge in a postmodern digital age where vast amounts of information can be accessed by everyone at any time. He argues that knowledge became a commodity and that the control of information is most likely to become the 21<sup>st</sup> century's definition of power (Ibid. p. 4-5). He brings the term of metanarrative (or grand narrative) into prominence by arguing that postmodernism is characterized by the incredulity towards grand narratives:

*Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements—narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on (...) Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside? (Ibid. p. xxiv).*

This incredulity is the result of technological progress in communication, digital technologies, mass media and computer sciences which are grounded on evidence and proof rather than universal truths and values.

Lyotard proposes that the authoritarian universalizing grand narratives such as Marxism are no longer feasible in postmodernity and should give way to little narratives (*petits récits*), which bring a singular event or a phenomenon into focus rather than an interconnection between events or the phenomena, without any claims to universal truth or values (Ibid. p. 60).

*We no longer have recourse to the grand narratives – we can no longer resort neither to the dialectic of Spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity as a validation for postmodern scientific discourse. But as we have just seen, the little narrative remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention most particularly in science (Ibid. p. 60).*

This signifies the postmodern move beyond grand all-encompassing theories towards specific localized contexts symbolizing the postmodern multiplicity and relativism.

### **2.3 Beyond Postmodernism**

Jean-Luc Nancy in his work *Being Singular Plural* (1996) tackles the problem of being and argues that “we” is always a substantial and singular identity. Nancy emphasizes the situation of the earth and humanity by drawing his attention to the recent events in the end of the twentieth century with regards to armed conflicts concerning Chechnya, Rwanda, Islamic Jihad, Bangladesh, the Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia, Hamas, Kazakhstan, Somalia, Burma, Iraq, Islamic Front Salvation, etc. (Nancy 1996:xii). ‘Of course, it would be difficult to bring this list to an end if the aim was to include all the places, groups, or authorities that constitute the theater of bloody conflicts among identities, as well as what is at stake in these conflicts’ (Ibid. p. xii). Nancy defines this world as anything but a sharing of humanity, a world which does not even manage to constitute a world (Ibid. p. xiii). In the face of this turmoil he highlights the necessity of compassion. ‘Compassion is the contagion, the contact of being with one another in this turmoil. Compassion is not altruism, nor is it identification; it is the disturbance of violent relatedness’ (Ibid. p. xiii). Compassion is grounded on being with one another, on being the singular plural.

According to Nancy ‘being cannot *be* anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the *with* and as the *with* of this singularly plural coexistence’ (Ibid. p. 3). Being to Nancy is coexistence, being is meaning ‘there is no meaning if meaning is not shared (...), because meaning is itself the sharing of *Being*’ (Ibid. p. 2). Meaning is a circulation of coexistence which goes in all directions of all the space-time: all things, all beings, all entities, past and future, alive, dead, inanimate, etc. – and humans who expose sharing and circulation by saying “we” to themselves and for the totality of all being (Ibid. p. 3).

Nancy concludes that the world is made of diversity, and even disparity and opposition resulting in the multiplicity of worlds: ‘the world is a multiplicity of worlds, and its unity is the mutual sharing and exposition of all its worlds—within this world’ (Ibid. p. 185). Human existence appears in more ensembles, masses, tissues, or complexes than one perceives at first, for it appears in the infinite community, circulation and transformation of all existences among themselves (Ibid. p. 186).

*Existence is not done alone, if one can put it this way. It is Being that is alone, at least in all the ordinary senses which are given to Being. But existence is nothing other than Being exposed: beginning from its simple identity in itself and from its pure position, exposed in appearing, in creation, and, as such, exposed to the outside, exteriority, multiplicity, alterity, and change (Ibid. p. 187).*

According to Nancy there is no existence without co-existence, no being without being-with as a mutual exposure to one another.

Ihab Hassan, an influential critic of postmodernism tackles the question of being from a different point of view. He argues that a sense of crisis and identity, a deep-felt need to assert plurality, multiplicity and diversity in order to achieve respect for difference, otherness, and alterity that was prevalent to postmodernism has manifested in forms of tribalism, fundamentalism, the “clash of civilizations” and even genocide ‘witness Palestine, Bosnia, Kosovo, Ulster, Rwanda, Chechnya, Kurdistan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Afghanistan, Tibet, etc.’ (Hassan 2003:202-203). Hassan claims that the recent armed conflicts, which Nancy emphasizes, are a consequence of the postmodern identity crisis. Consequently, he argues for the need to establish “planetary civility” which is dependent on such notions as truth, trust, spirit, respect, sympathy and empathy, similarly to Nancy’s notion of compassion grounded on mutual coexistence (Ibid. p. 204). The notions of truth and spirituality do not comply with the postmodern mentality, i.e. the postmodernist denial of truth itself, which signals a need for a conceptualization of a new mentality to supplant postmodernism.

Hassan claims that in order to avert the postmodernism’s path from relativism to nihilism literature has to return to some form of realism, which would be grounded on the notions of pragmatism, truth, trust, subjectivity and identity (Ibid. p. 208). This new form of realism is vital in reconnecting us with the sense of reality abandoned by postmodernism (Ibid. p. 208-209). ‘The contemporary arts now tend towards articulation of the values of truth, sincerity, spirituality, and authenticity rather than the postmodern shibboleths of irony and relativism’ (Ibid. p. xviii). The changes in the contemporary arts and culture signals an end of postmodernism as an adequate intellectual tool of interpretation.

To sum up, the first part of the theoretical framework introduced the theory of narratology focusing on the aspect of narrative embedding and a type of complex embedding called hyp-narrative together with its relation to the framing text called the thematic analogy. The second part of the theoretical framework focused on Jean Francoise Lyotard's terms of grand narrative as a totalizing theory grounded on universal truths and values, and little narratives (petits récits) as localized contexts focusing on a single historical event. In the third part of the theoretical framework Jean-Luc Nancy's theory on singular plurality was introduced and linked to Ihab Hassan's ideas on planetary civility and the end of postmodernism.

The analysis section of the BA paper studies David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas* with the help of the intellectual tools acquired from the theoretical framework.

### 3. Navigating through the Narrative and Outside It in David Mitchell's Novel *Cloud Atlas*

The first part of the analysis will focus on the novel's embedded narrative structure with the help of Mieke Bal's theory of narratology. The novel's narrative characteristics will be analysed. Furthermore, the second part of the analysis draws on Jean Francoise Lyotard's theory on grand narratives and analyses the novel from this perspective. Lastly, the third part of the analysis will focus on the novel's other major themes of predacity and coexistence and analyse them with the help of Jean-Luc Nancy's and Ihab Hassan's reasoning on coexistence and planetary civility.

#### 3.1 The Narrative Topography: Narrative Embedding and Framing in *Cloud Atlas*

David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas* consists of six seemingly unrelated stories arranged in a recursive order constituting the novel's peculiar narrative structure which can be seen in Figure 1 in the appendices. This unusual narrative structure is created through the extensive use of the embedding technique. Narrative embedding is an act of incorporating one narrative into another or simply including a story within a story (Bal 1981:42). The novel begins with the nineteenth century voyage narrative of Adam Ewing, an American notary sailing through the Pacific, written in his journal which is found by the protagonist of the second story Robert Frobisher:

*Poking through an alcove of books in my room, I came across a curious dismembered volume, and I want you to track down a complete copy for me. From what little I can glean, it's the edited journal of a voyage from Sydney to California by a notary of San Francisco named Adam Ewing. Mention is made of the gold rush, so I suppose we are in 1849 or 1850 (Mitchell 2004:64).*

The letters of Robert Frobisher to his lover Rufus Sixsmith further embed the third story of the novel titled *Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery*. In fact Rufus Sixsmith plays an important role in this story as a character whose safety report regarding the power plant allows Luisa Rey, the protagonist, to reveal the truth and reach her goal: 'In his hotel room at the Bon Voyage, Dr Rufus Sixsmith reads a sheaf of letters written to him nearly half a century ago by his friend Robert Frobisher. Sixsmith knows them by heart, but their texture, rustle and his friend's faded handwriting calm his nerves' (Ibid. p. 112).

The story of Luisa Rey embeds the fourth story of the novel *The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish*, where it is read as a novel by the protagonist Timothy Cavendish: 'I opened my briefcase for a bag of Werner's toffees but came up with Half-lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery. I leafed through its first few pages. It would be a better book if Hilary V. Hush

weren't so artsily-fartsily Clever. She had written it in neat little chapteroids, doubtless with one eye on the Hollywood screenplay' (Ibid. p. 164).

This recursive narrative structure continues throughout the entire novel. For example, the story of Timothy Cavendish is watched as a film by Sonmi ~451, the protagonist of the fifth story. Sonmi ~451 herself is looked upon as a Deity by the protagonist Zachry and his tribe of the sixth and the central story titled *Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After*. The structure then continues in reverse order.

By definition the act of narrative embedding implies a hierarchy of narrative levels. The relations between the embedded and the embedding texts may be different in kind and intensity, which is directly proportional to the quantity of the embedding text, i.e. the more sentences frame the embedding text, the stronger is the dependence (Bal 2009:57). In the case of *Cloud Atlas*, however, the hierarchical relationships between the six novel's stories are present only at the narrative layers: the first story constitutes the first narrative layer, the second story – the second layer, etc. This is because the six stories are coherent and relatively independent from one another – they are complete narratives themselves, one story is not more prominent than the other. This is because the framing or the containing text is only implied and constitutes only a theme. Nonetheless, the hierarchical relationship between the embedded units can be regarded as the thematic analogy.

*Cloud Atlas* due to its complex use of embedding may be regarded as a hypo-narrative. This kind of narrative consists of hypo-units – coherent, relatively independent narrative units which may take form of analeptic interior monologues, flashbacks and dreams (Bal 1981:48). In the novel the six hypo-units take form of complete narratives written in different genres and mediums, for example, the first story as a voyage narrative written in the pacific journal, the second story as an epistolary record written in letters, the third story as a thriller novel, the fourth story as farce in a form of a film, the fifth story as a dystopian science fiction in a form of an interview, and the sixth story as post-apocalyptic future told as a tale. The significance of different genres and mediums will be discussed more thoroughly in the second part of the analysis.

Nevertheless, it is important to indicate the relation between the hypo-units and the framing narrative if such even exists. 'The more independent and complete the hypo-unit, the more problematic can its relation to the embedding unit become. If this relation is not explanatory, it may merely consist in a thematic analogy' (Ibid. p. 48). The thematic analogy is often expressed through various links, themes or metaphorized analogies.

The most prevalent theme of the novel is the theme of rebirth expressed through a birthmark shaped like a comet which a number of characters share such as Robert Frobisher, Luisa Rey, Timothy Cavendish, Sonmi ~451, and Meronym. The birthmark that connects the characters implies that they are different incarnations of the same soul. In fact the relations between the stories and the characters gradually emerge, for example, Luisa Rey meets Rufus Sixsmith – Frobisher’s lover, Meronym leads Zachry towards the truth about Sonmi – his Deity, etc.

The symbol of a birthmark is shaped like a comet ‘She plays with the birthmark in the hollow of my shoulder, the one you said resembles a comet’ (Mitchell 2004:85). The comet shape symbolizes a cycle because many comets have circular orbits and reappear every few years in the sky. In this case the comet birthmark stands as a symbol of some sort of return; in the novel, the return of a soul, which is expressed in Zachry’s son’s speech: ‘(...) in his loonsome old age he even b’liefed Meronym the Prescient was his presh b’loved Sonmi, yay, he ‘sisted it, he said he knowed it all by birthmarks an’ comets’n’all’ (Mitchell 2004:324). From the quotation it is evident that Zachry, the protagonist of the central story, is aware of Sonmi’s reincarnation as Meronym.

From this perspective it can be said that the novel explores different incarnations of the same soul and its journey throughout eons of time (Robert Frobisher 1931, Luisa Rey 1975, Timothy Cavendish current day Britain, Sonmi~451 year ~2044, and Meronym in the year 106 post fall). This theme of rebirth or incarnation in fact constitutes the so called thematic analogy that links the six hypo-units together. Because the embedded text functions within the implicit thematic analogy of rebirth, this analogy functions as the framing narrative of the novel containing the embedded narrative units.

One may argue the framing narrative of the novel to be the central story titled *Sloosha’s Crossin’ an’ Ev’rythin’ After*. It is surely central and the only one uninterrupted story of the novel, but it is not framing, because it does not superimpose the other five narratives, like the thematic analogy of rebirth does, therefore the sixth story becomes of equal value to the other five surrounding stories. For example, in *Arabian Nights*<sup>3</sup> the framing narrative ‘presents a story of Scheherazade, threatened with death by her husband, the king. Only if she succeeds in fascinating him with her stories will she survive the night, night after night. Every night she tells a story; in that story new stories are embedded’ (Bal 2009:57). The narrative of Scheherazade being threatened by death is framing and superimposing the embedding stories

---

<sup>3</sup> *The Arabian Nights: Tales from a Thousand and One Nights* (translation and notes by Sir Richard Francis Burton). Published by Modern Library in 2001.

she tells in order to survive. In this case the embedding narratives become subordinate to the framing narrative.

‘When the embedded text presents a complete story with an elaborate fabula, we gradually forget fabula of the primary narrative’ (Ibid. p. 57). In the case of *Arabian Nights* as well as in *Cloud Atlas* the reader is gradually forgetting the story of the primary narrative like Scheherazade’s husband who forgets his threats to kill her. For example, while reading the Luisa Rey mystery the reader may feel involved and drawn to the thriller, feeling it to be real, but after reading the story of Timothy Cavendish, the Luisa Rey thriller appears to be fictional and forgettable, especially due to Cavendish’s comments criticizing the thriller novel: ‘*Half-lives* – lousy name for a work of fiction – and subtitled *The First Luisa Rey Mystery*. Lousier and lousier’ (Mitchell 2004:158). The Cavendish story also loses its credibility when Sonmi ~451 is said to watch it as a film: ‘A picaresque entitled *The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish*, made before the foundation of Nea So Copros, in a long-deadlanded province of the European democracy. Have you ever seen film dating from the early twenty-first century, Archivist?’ (Ibid. p. 243). The sense of the stories’ loss of credibility is achieved through the recursive narrative embedding technique extended throughout the novel.

To sum up the novel’s extensive use of the narrative technique of embedding creates a metanarrative (a narrative within a narrative). The novel’s complex embedding transgresses the criterion of subordination by making the six stories of equal hierarchical value. Consequently, *Cloud Atlas* may be considered as a hypo-narrative which consists of hypo-units – relatively independent, coherent and complete narratives. These six hypo-units are connected through the symbol of a birthmark shaped like a comet which a number of characters share. This symbol signifies a return of a soul, therefore the characters who share this birthmark are implied to be different incarnations of the same soul. This results in the theme of rebirth which acts as a thematic analogy framing the narrative and linking the six stories together by exploring the soul’s journey through time. Narrative embedding in the novel is used to such extent that the novel becomes a piece of metafiction which evokes a sense of incredulity towards the six narratives. *Cloud Atlas* due to its narratological characteristics can be considered as a metanarrative. In fact, it is a metanarrative in both senses of the word: a narrative within a narrative, and a grand narrative.

### 3.2 Little Narratives within the Grand Narrative of *Cloud Atlas*

The second part of the analysis draws on Jean Francoise Lyotard's reasoning on metanarratives (also called grand narratives), and little narratives. The six novel's stories can be regarded as little narratives for they are localized in time and space. *Cloud Atlas* therefore can be seen as a collection of these six little narratives making it a grand narrative itself. The grand narrative of the novel due to its theme of predacity and metaphysical human connections expressed through the symbol of a birthmark and various allusions between the six novel's stories can be understood as an ontological grand narrative.

From the narratological analysis it becomes clear that the six novel's stories can be regarded as coherent and relatively independent hypo-units each constituting a complete narrative of its own. From the philosophical perspective the six novel's narratives can be viewed as little narratives (*petits récits*) – a term coined by Francoise Lyotard in his influential work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge. In Theory and History of Literature*.

He defines little narratives as localized contexts bringing a singular event into focus without any claims to universal truths or values rather than showing an interconnection between events and giving a totalizing and comprehensive account of history – which he assigns to be the features of grand narratives also called metanarratives (Lyotard 1979:60). Little narratives provide a series of individual truths rather than the singular objective truth.

In this sense Mitchell's novel can be viewed as a collection of six little narratives, each bringing a different genre, historical period and an individual point of view into focus. For example, the first narrative titled *The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing* provides a voyage narrative of the mid nineteenth century from the point of view of an American notary Adam Ewing. He expresses his view on slavery by disagreeing with radical missionaries: 'I protested, to *civilize* the black races by conversion should be our mission, not their extirpation, for God's hand had crafted them, too' (Mitchell 2004:16). In fact his views on slavery resonate throughout the entire story, therefore it can be said that Adam Ewing's story is a little narrative of one man's attempts to protest slavery in the mid nineteenth century.

Another example of little narrative could be the second story of the novel titled *Letters from Zedelghem*, which provides an epistolary record of the mid twentieth century Zedelghem from the point of view of a musical genius Robert Frobisher. Frobisher's perspective on life is somewhat hedonistic: '*Cloud Atlas Sextet* holds my life, now I'm a spent firework; but at least I've been a firework' (Mitchell 2004:489). With his magnum opus finished he decides to commit suicide for there is no more meaning in life therefore this story can be seen as a little narrative of a bohemian artist in the mid twentieth century Zedelghem.

In fact, every story constitutes a little narrative, for every story is localized in time space and genre, for example, the first story – a 1850 voyage narrative set in Chatham Islands; the second story – epistolary record set in Zedelghem in 1931; the third story – a thriller set in California in 1975; the fourth story – a farce set in current day Britain; the fifth story – a dystopian science fiction set in Neo Seoul in ~2044, and finally the sixth story – a post-apocalyptic future set in Hawaii in year 106 post fall. It can be seen that the six independent stories localized in a specific time, space and genre constitute six little narratives. The novel therefore can be regarded as a collection of little narratives.

Due to its theme of rebirth the novel becomes an ontological grand narrative which explores different incarnations of the same soul throughout various historical epochs or little narratives by providing subtle hints that link the characters who share this birthmark. For example, Ayr asks Frobisher to write a song inspired by his dream of a café reminding of a fast-food restaurant where Sonmi ~451 works ‘a nightmarish café, brilliantly lit, but underground, with no way out. (...) The waitresses all had the same face. The food was soap, the only drink was cups of lather’ (Mitchell 2004:80). Also Timothy Cavendish mishears Zachry’s, the protagonist’s of the sixth story name: ‘Sick teen-squid Zachary. I don’t know anyone of that name. He looked at me, puzzled, then repeated, Sixteen – quid – exactly’ (Ibid. p. 174). Also the fact that Luisa Rey’s mother lives on ‘Ewingsville Hill’ (Ibid. p. 412) correlates to Adam Ewing’s, the protagonist’s of the first story name. In some cases the stories even seem to foreshadow one another, for example, Luisa Rey’s story foreshadows the consequences of the corporatic world view correlating to Sonmi’s ~451 corporatic Neo Seoul: ‘The corporation is the future. We need to let business run the country and establish a true meritocracy’ (Ibid. p. 420). The novel contains plenty these subtle intentional hints that indicate interconnections between the six little narratives and their characters. These allusions between the characters and the stories signify a deeply interconnected human existence making *Cloud Atlas* an ontological grand narrative.

Lyotard argues that grand narratives are grounded on universal truth and values (Lyotard 1979:xxiv), in fact the novel seems to evoke a sense of universal truth: ‘As many truths as men. Occasionally, I glimpse a truer Truth, hiding in imperfect simulacrum of itself, but as I approach, it bestirs itself & moves deeper into the thorny swamp of dissent’ (Mitchell 2004:17). In fact a number of characters mention a singularity of truth for example Zachry and Sonmi ~451: ‘*Abbes is quite correct*, answered Meronym. *Then the true true is diff’rent to the seemin’ true?* Said I. *Yay, an’ it usually is*, I mem’ry Meronym sayin’, *an’ that’s why true true is presher’n’rarer’n diamonds*’ (Ibid. p. 287); ‘Truth is singular. Its “versions” are

mistruths....' (Ibid. p. 187). The universal truth that the novel seems to explore is the predacity of human nature which will be analysed in the third part of the analysis.

To sum up, the six novel's stories can be regarded as little narratives for they are localized in time and space. *Cloud Atlas* therefore can be seen as a collection of these six little narratives that explore the soul's journey and human coexistence throughout eons of time, making the novel an ontological grand narrative. The human coexistence and predacity as yet another major theme of the novel will be analysed in the third part of the analysis.

### 3.3 Beyond the Postmodern Fallout: Predatory Coexistence in *Cloud Atlas*

The third part of the analysis focuses on the novel's themes of predacity and coexistence. The analysis indicates parallels between Jean-Luc Nancy's insight on the armed conflicts in the end of the twentieth century, which Ihab Hassan calls a postmodern fallout, and the novel's theme of predacity.

Jean-Luc Nancy claims that meaning is a circulation of coexistence which goes in all directions of space and time: all things, all beings, all entities, past and future, alive, dead, inanimate, etc. (Nancy 1996:03). The journey of a soul explored in the novel signifies this circulation of coexistence through space and time: 'I glimpsed all the lifes my soul ever was till far-far back b'fore the Fall' (Mitchell 2004:302). Moreover, the reincarnations of the soul are symbolized by a comet-shaped birthmark, and comets are known to have circularized orbits – meaning they reappear every few years in the observable sky. The circularization is also noticeable from the novel's recursive embedded narrative structure, i.e. the novel starts with *The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing* and ends with it. Like a comet, the soul reapers every few years starting with Adam Ewing in 1850, Robert Frobisher in 1931, Luisa Rey in 1975, Timothy Cavendish in ~2004, Sonmi ~451 in ~2044 and Meronym in 106 post fall. As Nancy concludes, 'the world is a multiplicity of worlds, and its unity is the mutual sharing and exposition of all its worlds—within this world' (Ibid. p. 185). *Cloud Atlas* in that sense becomes a world in itself for it consists of the multiplicity of worlds – the six interconnected little narratives within the world (the novel). Nevertheless, the theme of coexistence in the novel takes a form of predacity.

In fact, as David Mitchell has said himself, the novel seems to explore 'the way individuals prey on individuals, groups on groups, nations on nations, tribes on tribes<sup>4</sup>'. This correlates to Jean Luc-Nancy's account of the situation of humanity in the end of the twentieth century characterized by various armed conflicts in Chechnya, Rwanda, etc., which Ihab Hassan calls the postmodern fallout or the clash of civilizations (Nancy 1996:xii, Hassan 2003:203). What Mitchell appears to be suggesting with the novel is that conflicts and violence are an integral part of human coexistence. Predacity therefore becomes yet another major theme of the novel.

The novel opens with a relatively grotesque scene of doctor Goose picking cannibals' teeth on the beach:

*Dr Goose shook his head, knotted loose his 'kerchief & displayed its contents with clear pride. 'Teeth, sir, are the enameled grails of the quest in hand. In days gone by this Arcadian strand was a cannibals' banqueting hall, yes, where*

---

<sup>4</sup> Interview with David Mitchell in "Bookclub". BBC Radio 4. June 2007. Retrieved 13 May 2016.

*the strong engorged themselves on the weak. The teeth, they spat out, as you or I would expel cherry stones* (Mitchell 2004:03).

Consequently every story of the novel contains a predator and a prey. For example, in the first story of the novel Adam Ewing acts as a prey of Dr. Goose who attempts to poison Adam with arsenic for his wealth: ‘To wit, the doctor was a poisoner & I his prey. Since the commencement of my “Treatment,” the doctor had been killing me by degrees with his “cure”’ (Ibid. p. 523). Also in Luisa Rey’s story she is a prey to the assassin named Smoke hired by Seaboard Corporation who attempts to assassinate her by pushing her car off the bridge: ‘He [Smoke] yanks the wheel sharply, and metal screams as the Beetle is sandwiched between his car and the bridge railing until the railing unzips from its concrete and the Beetle lurches out into space’ (Ibid. p. 144). In fact, every story has its prey and its predators, for example, Robert Frobisher is a prey to his prosecutors, Timothy Cavendish – a prey to his captivators who lock him up in a retirement home, Sonmi ~451 – a prey to Nea So Copros law enforcement, and Zachry – a prey to the Kona tribe cannibals. The novel seems to reincarnate the theme of predacity in each story by depicting it in different historical epochs and characters.

Although the novel starts with a grotesque image of Dr. Goose picking up cannibals’ teeth, it ends on a hopeful note with Adam Ewing’s soliloquy:

*If we believe humanity is a ladder of tribes, a colosseum of confrontation, exploitation & bestiality, such a humanity is surely brought into being, & history’s Horroxes, Boerhaaves & Gooses shall prevail. You & I, the moneyed, the privileged, the fortunate, shall not fare so badly in this world, provided our luck holds. What of it if our consciences itch? Why undermine the dominance of our race, our gunships, our heritage & our legacy? Why fight the “natural” order of things? Why? Because of this:—one fine day, a purely predatory world shall consume itself. Yes, the Devil shall take the hindmost until the foremost is the hindmost. In an individual, selfishness uglifies the soul; for the human species, selfishness is extinction* (Mitchell 2004:528).

Adam’s soliloquy seems to suggest the necessity of planetary civility that Ihab Hassan mentions in order to emancipate from the turmoil characterized by various violent conflicts:

*We need to discover new relations between selves and others, margins and centres, fragments and wholes – indeed, new relations between selves and selves, margins and margins, centres and centres – discover what I call a new, pragmatic and planetary civility. I mean words like truth, trust, spirit (...) in addition to words like reciprocity and respect, sympathy and empathy* (Hassan 2003:204).

This allows to view the novel’s themes of predacity as a postmodern fallout, which Hassan mentions. The only way to emancipate from this predatory postmodern fallout is to establish a

sense of planetary civility through civil coexistence. The fact that the novel ends with these thoughts on civility suggests that there is still hope for the contemporary human world to recover from the grotesque postmodern clash of civilizations and not end up in a foreshadowed corpocratic Nea So Copros dystopia as Sonmi ~451.

To sum up, the novel's theme of predacity correlates with the late twentieth century events involving numerous armed conflicts, which can be regarded as the postmodern fallout. Although the novel opens with a grotesque image, it ends on a more hopeful note expressed through Adam Ewing's soliloquy on a need for civil coexistence. This resonates with the contemporary situation in the human world as a hope to recover from the postmodern fallout characterized by numerous, violent armed conflicts between nations and groups in the end of the twentieth century.

## 4. Conclusions

David Mitchell with his novel *Cloud Atlas* transforms the narrative world by establishing new tendencies in narrative technique of the twenty first century. The novel is formally divided up between genres within an embedded recursive narrative structure. The novel's extensive use of the narrative technique of embedding creates a metanarrative (a narrative within a narrative). By containing six seemingly independent narratives interconnected through a symbol of a comet-shaped birthmark – a thematic analogy of rebirth that frames the narrative, the novel becomes a hypo-narrative – a special kind of metanarrative which consists of hypo-units – relatively independent, coherent and complete narratives. Numerous allusions and self-reflexive comments between the stories make the novel a piece of metafiction and create a sense of incredulity towards the six narratives where the previous story seems less real than the next one.

The six novel's stories can be regarded as little narratives for they are localized in time and space (1850 Chatham Islands, 1931 Zedelghem, etc.). *Cloud Atlas* therefore can be seen as a collection of these six little narratives that explore the soul's journey and human coexistence throughout eons of time, making the novel an ontological grand narrative. Within this ontological grand narrative Mitchell explores the time and space transcending human connections through the symbol of a comet-shaped birthmark, which a number of characters share. The symbol of a comet signifies a cyclical return of a soul because of the comets' circularized orbits. Like a comet, the soul reappears throughout different historical epochs and incarnates into different characters, who all share the similar roles of a prey.

Although, the novel opens up with a grotesque scene of Dr. Goose picking cannibals' teeth on a beach – introducing the novel's theme of predacity which is reincarnated throughout the six novel's stories, it ends on a hopeful note expressed through Adam Ewing's soliloquy. The theme of predacity correlates with the late twentieth century events involving numerous armed conflicts, which can be regarded as the postmodern fallout. The novel seems to suggest that in the face of the postmodern fallout characterized by numerous violent military conflicts in the world, there is still hope for rebirth and recovering. The only imperative is to remember that there is no being without being *with*, no existence without co-existence, and seek for planetary civility not to end up in a dystopian future as fabricants. This signals a need for a conceptualization of a new aesthetic and cultural mentality to supplant postmodernism, appropriate to our new age.

## 5. List of References

### Primary Sources

Mitchell, David (2004). *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre. Kindle edition retrieved from amazon.com.

### Secondary Sources

Bal, Mieke (2009). *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Third Edition. University of Toronto Press.

Bal, Mieke and Tavor, Eve (1981). *Notes on Narrative Embedding in Poetics Today*, Vol. 2, No. 2, *Narratology III: Narration and Perspective in Fiction* (1981). Duke University Press.

Currie, Mark (2009). *The Expansion of Tense*. Published in *Narrative*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Oct., 2009), pp. 353-367. Published by Ohio State University Press.

D'Haen, Theo (2013). *European Postmodernism: The Cosmodern Turn*. Published in *Narrative*, Vol 21, No. 3 (October 2013) Copyright 2013 by The Ohio State University.

Gessert, George (2005). *Leonardo Reviews: Cloud Atlas*. Published in *Leonardo*, Vol. 38, No. 5 (2005), pp. 425-426. Published by MIT Press.

Hassan, Ihab (2003). *Beyond Postmodernism: Toward an Aesthetic of Trust in Supplanting the Postmodern: An Anthology of Writings on the Arts and Culture of the Early 21st Century* edited by David Rudrum and Nicholas Stavris. Bloomsbury.

Holcombe, Garan (2013). *David Mitchell. Biography*. Available at: <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/david-mitchell> Accessed on: February 08, 2016.

Interview with David Mitchell in "Bookclub". BBC Radio 4. June 2007. Retrieved 13 May 2016.

Kellogg, Carolyn (2014). Review. In *'Bone Clocks,' David Mitchell Ties His Universes Together*. Available at: <http://www.latimes.com/books/jacketcopy/la-ca-jc-david-mitchell-20140831-story.html> Accessed on: February 06, 2016. Los Angeles Times.

Louisiana Channel (2015). David Mitchell: *Stories Have a Number of Beginnings*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SbLNRxw3tZ8>. Accessed on: February 08, 2016. Copyright: Louisiana Channel, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2015.

Lyotard, Jean-François (1979). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. In *Theory and History of Literature*, Volume 10. Manchester University Press.

Mezey, Jason Howards (2011). *A Multitude of Drops: Recursion and Globalization in David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas*. Published in *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2011), pp. 10-37. Published by Modern Language Studies.

Mitchell, David (2005). *Japan and My Writing*. Available at: [http://www.jrtr.net/jrtr42/pdf/ap60\\_dav.pdf](http://www.jrtr.net/jrtr42/pdf/ap60_dav.pdf). Accessed on: February 10, 2016.

Mitchell, David (2011). *Lost for Words*. Available at: <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/features/david-mitchell-stammering-kings-speech>. Accessed on: February 08, 2016. Prospect Magazine.

Nancy, Jean-Luc (1996). *Being Singular Plural*. Stanford University Press.

Shoop, Casey and Ryan, Dermot (2015). "*Gravid with the ancient future*": *Cloud Atlas and the Politics of Big History*. Published in *A Review of Theory & Literary Criticism*. Published by University of Wisconsin Press.

*The Arabian Nights: Tales from a Thousand and One Nights*. Translation and notes by Sir Richard Francis Burton. Published by Modern Library, 2001.

Waldron, Samuel James (2012). MA Thesis. *Challenging Narrative Hierarchies: Embedded Narrative Structure in David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas and Mark Danielewski's House of Leaves*. Victoria University of Wellington.

## 6. Summary in Lithuanian

David Mitchell romanas „Debesų atlasas“ (2004), pateikdamas šešis iš pažiūros nesusijusius naratyvus, atskleidžia painius transcendentinius žmonių tarpusavio ryšius postmodernioje daugiasluoksniėje naratyvo struktūroje. Šio bakalauro darbo tyrimo objektas yra įterpta romano naratyvinė struktūra - jame nagrinėjamos esminės romano temos, tokios kaip atgimimas ir grobuoniškumas bei jų sąsaja su dabartiniu estetiniu ir kultūriniu mentalitetu anapus postmodernizmo. Laiką persmelkianti sielos kelionė ir žmonijos koegzistencija, perteikta per kometos formos apgamą, yra nagrinėjama vadovaujantis romano įterpto naratyvo struktūra. Romaną tai paverčia ontologiniu metanaratyvu, t.y. Jean-François Lyotard terminu, kuris apibūdina unikalų metanaratyvo tipą, „matantį“ istorinių įvykių tarpusavio ryšius. Kometos formos apgamas simbolizuoja ciklišką sielos, kuri inkarnuojasi į skirtingus veikėjus skirtingose istorinėse epochose, sugrįžimą, kuris susieja veikėjus tarpusavyje praeityje, dabartyje ir ateityje. Jean-Luc Nancy teigia, kad nėra buvimo be buvimo kartu, nėra egzistencijos be koegzistencijos –, tai rezonuoja su Ihab Hassan samprotavimu apie būtinybę įtvirtinti pasaulietinį pilietiškumą, pagrįstą tiesa ir pasitikėjimu vardan išsilaisvinimo nuo katastrofiškos postmodernizmo baigties, kitaip žinomos kaip civilizacijų susidūrimas, pasireiškęs fundamentalizmu.

Bakalauro darbo tikslas yra išanalizuoti romano įterpto naratyvo struktūrą bei anksčiau paminėtas temas ir skatinti intelektualinę diskusiją, kalbant apie postmodernizmo pakeitimą. Romano pilietišką žmonių koegzistencijos siekis daro jį post postmodernistiniu. Suteikdamas vilties ir išsivadavimo nuo katastrofiškos postmodernizmo baigties, charakterizuotos įvairiais žiauriais kariniais konfliktais dvidešimto amžiaus pabaigoje, jausmą, romanas tarsi grindžia kelią naujam, postmodernizmą keičiančiam kultūriniam ir estetiniam mentalitetui.

## 7. Appendices

Figure 1. *Cloud Atlas* Narrative Structure.

