Between

Ad imaginem suam. The Adamic Model and Exclusive Monoanthropism in Human Simulacra

Matteo Zupancic

Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to trace the *Nachleben* of the logics characterizing the Adamic episode within the fictional reflection on human simulacra. In fact, Judeo-Christian 'exclusive monotheism' is based on the strict ontological differentiation of God, the unique Creator, from the World, as his Creation. Such a conception of monotheism is, as Jan Assmann pointed out, strictly connected to a repressive exercise of violence and to God's opposition against every possible form of ontological rivalry. In the Genesis, Yahweh turns this law machinery even against his simulacra, the creatures made «in his own image»: Adam and Eve are removed from Eden and condemned to mortality only as a result of their attempt to become «like God, knowing good and evil». By means of a brief analysis of some exemplary literary cases, an attempt will be made to show how the fear and violence exercised by man towards his simulacra are deeply linked to a secular revival of the theological-juridical complex intertwined with the Adamic model.

Keywords

Adam; Genesis; Simulacra; Frankenstein; Isaac Asimov; Ernst Jünger; Transhumanism; Posthumanism; Antihumanism

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1. Introduction and methodological premises

Human simulacra. Copies, emulations of the human being, modelled in his own image. Artificial anatomical creatures, golems, clones, androids. In an almost stereotypical fashion, we are used to look at them as a mockery of the Genesis. Victor Frankenstein plays the game of God, thus creating a second Adam. He emulates the 'miracle of life'. The imagery of the Genesis is so widespread throughout the fictional and theoretical reflection on human simulacra that it would be impossible to recollect it into a single, comprehensive study. It is a cultural, almost pop-cultural trope. But what is the attractive force behind this facade? Surely, the Adamic episode is one the most cardinal mythologies of all western thought and a simple reference to it provides a powerful narrative background for such stories. But maybe it is also possible to look beyond that. Our main thesis is that such iconographies and the apparatus of motifs surrounding a specific subject (the Adamic episode) should rarely be taken as mere narrative ornaments, namely as the diegetic guise of otherwise independent, self-sufficient contents. Following this presupposition, in fact, we could either fall into the oversimplifications of an exclusively infraliterary *Stoff-* and *Motivgeschichte*, or resort to the more sophisticated, but ideologically problematic ways of Gadamerian hermeneutics, which proposes to extrapolate the hidden 'semantic dimension' of a textual material from its detachable linguistic 'expression'. Following the latter option, we could even be tempted to apply the category of secularization in order to describe the movement of the Adamic episode from its religious roots to its artistical and philosophical adaptations in contemporary science fiction. Quoting Blumenberg's reflections on the subject, in fact, we could look at the narrative garments of the

Genesis as some sort of «trojan horse» (Blumenberg 1986: 89) that secretly propagated a religious agenda of patriarchy, speciesism and ontological difference between creature and creator in the very heart of a secularized modernity. This represents a strong ideological stance, which could provide interesting theory-building cues but could also deeply affect the way we perceive the history of the adaptations of the Adamic episode. Regardless of ideological biases, we think that the multifaced *Nachleben* of the Adamic episode in contemporary science fiction must be understood in any case as a proof of its inherent expressive potential. In fact, it seems to provide not only a quite effective narrative material, but also a theoretical framework that allows different authors to assert, criticize and rethink a specific paradigm concerning the relationship between creator and creature, between Man and his simulacra. In other words, the Adamic 'episode' can as well be seen as an Adamic 'model': an expressive formula describing a certain way of thinking about and regulating the power dynamics between a sovereign subject and a subjugated copy made from the mold. Like Warburg's *Pathosformeln*, form and content are one, fused together by a theoretical structure that we will try to identify[1]. In the present paper we will firstly trace the dynamics of the biblical Adamic episode, in order to recognize a possible pattern. Thereafter, we will shift this structure to the field of human simulacra and build some theoretical framework. Through a brief series of paradigmatic examples, we will then try to explore and test the limits of our theory, looking dynamically at its wandering through different works, narrative situations, and cultural contexts.

[1] As can be inferred from our terminology, we will try to navigate this precarious field through a mixture of Warburgian iconological perspective, Foucauldian analysis of discourse (2002) and Agambian 'paradigmatic' method (2008). Loosely speaking, the common ground between those similar but also diverging approaches can be found in the controversial concept of morphology, which is recently gaining noticeable traction, at least from the history of theory (Vercellone-Tedesco 2020; Gilodi-Marfè 2021; Axer-Geulen-Heimes 2021). Offering a combination of synchronic clarity and diachronic perspective, the study of dynamic forms can indeed be seen as a flexible method for cultural and literary enquiry, able to identify theoretical structures without plunging into the pitfalls of ahistorical structuralism or neglecting the specificity of each case study.

2. The dynamics of the Adamic episode: exclusive monotheism

In order to grasp the basic structure of the Adamic model, we need to look briefly at the dynamics of the system in which it is embedded: Judeo-Christian monotheism. As Jan Assmann has pointed out, this kind of monotheism shows a revolutionary character that sets it apart from other monotheistic-related theologies of antiquity. This difference is summarized by the so called 'mosaic distinction', that is the distinction between true and false religion (Assmann 1996: 44). This ideological position was uncommon in the ancient world. In fact, polytheism worked through a practice of cultural translation, by which different deities could be integrated and accepted across foreign pantheons. «Gods were international, because they were cosmic», writes Assmann: «nobody contested the reality of foreign gods and the legitimacy of foreign forms of worship» (*ibid*.: 49). In a temporary phase between polytheism and the development of monotheistic religions, this practice of translation also led «to a form of inclusive monotheism - the idea that "All Gods are One"» (*id*. 2008: 57): a heterogeneous set of different gods could be connected analogically to one overarching deity and included in a single, 'softer' paradigm. On the contrary, the mosaic revolution introduced an irreconcilable distinction between God's covenant and all other religions, marking it as a form of 'exclusive monotheism' (cf. *ibid*.: 106 ff.). As Jan Assmann says:

> We may call this a "counterreligion" because it not only constructed but rejected and repudiated everything that went before and everything outside of itself as "paganism". It no longer functioned as a means of intercultural translation; on the contrary, it functioned as a means of cultural estrangement. Whereas polytheism or rather, "cosmotheism", rendered different cultures mutually transparent and compatible, the new counterreligion blocked intercultural translatability. (*Id*. 1996: 50).

Judeo-Christian monotheism as 'exclusive monotheism' means that its identity is not shaped through the definition of what it is, but rather through the declaration of what it is not. This idea sits at the core of its whole belief system and informs God's stance not only toward other deities, but also toward his own Creation. Indeed, unlike the cosmic identification of ancient polytheisms, the God of Isaac, Jacob and Abraham is characterized by a radical distinction from immanence itself, his *maior dissimilitudo* from the rest of the world. Both those aspects (distinction from

other gods, distinction from Creation) are perfectly expressed by the first of the Ten Commandments, which constitutes the juridical backbone of the exclusive monotheism itself:

> Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
> Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.
> Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. (Ex 20:3-5).

This incipit of the Mosaic law structures what we can call the theological-juridical complex of exclusive monotheism. God is one and ontologically divided from the rest of Creation. The distinction is guaranteed and lawfully enforced by the first of the Ten Commandments, which prevents every other entity from being equal to the one and only God. Every transgression has to be met with condemnation and with the exercise of repressive violence. This applies not only to rivaling pantheons and believers, but also to all the creatures that try to challenge divine exceptionality. The Bible provides at least two notable examples: the conflict with Lucifer and the original sin of Adam and Eve, that is, the Adamic case.

Here we come closer to our main topic: the relation with simulacra. In fact, Adam and Eve, as well as Lucifer, were all creatures made in the very image of God. It is important to stress the concept of 'image', which ties together both the simulacral quality of God's creations and the aniconic imperative that reinforces the First Commandment[2]. In the Biblical text (Gen 1:27), as said, Adam and Eve are created in God's likeness (*demuth*) and image (*b'tselem Elohim*). Both expressions appear in wildly different contexts of the Biblical text, usually with a derogatory meaning. Given its more material connotation, deriving from the root 'to carve out', *tselem* is used to describe carved images or statues, whose idolatry is explicitly prohibited by Ex 20:4. Adam and Eve are then *tselem* of God's *tselem*: they are, in a sense, artifacts, luminous idols carved out from God's own matrix. This likeness

[2] «Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth» Ex 20:3.

to God's *tselem* also serves a double function. On one side, Adam and Eve are set aside from the rest of Creation, granting them a dominion over the earth that depends on their analogy with God (cf. Seidenberg 2015: 97). At the same time, however, this likeness emphasizes the subsidiary nature of the first Men, who are 'just' similar, but cannot achieve equality to the *tselem Elohim*. That is the twofold essence of man's relationships with God, as expressed by the theologian Erich Przywara (2014: 234-235) through the *analogia entis*: an undeniable positive similarity (*tanta similitudo*) is always matched by a far greater, negative dissimilarity (*maior dissimilitudo*). Within the Scriptural tradition, correspondingly, the concept of resemblance, *demuth*, is also usually marked by a negative connotation. One of the most prominent examples is precisely that of Lucifer, who in Isaiah 14:14 describes his desire to 'make himself like the Most High' (*'edammeh le-elyon*). Interestingly, some kabbalistic sources have also tried to equate the very name of Adam to the expression *'edammeh le-elyon*, thus parting themselves from the Scriptural etymology *adamah*, meaning 'earth, soil' (Wolfson 2014: 4-5). As we can notice, the notions of 'similarity' and 'image' are able to tie together all these otherwise very different *loci* of the Biblical text, thus forming a coherent semantic whole that hints to the real nature of the conflict between God and its simulacra: the attempt to overcome a pejorative similitude in order to achieve equal likeness. Before this, in fact, both Adam and Eve and Lucifer did not show any uncanny trait and were embedded in a non-threatening relationship with their Creator. Although, when they tried to cross the line that separates God from the rest of Creation – thus emancipating themselves from a subsidiary position and gaining an ontological equivalence with their master[3] –, they violated the first of the Ten Commandments, which prescribes the existence of one and only divine Being. This action triggers a juridical mechanism of condemnation and exercise of repressive violence, through which God preserves his status and secure the hierarchy prescribed by the exclusive-monotheistic system. Lucifer is banned from Heaven and turned into Satan, the Enemy; Adam and Eve are banned from the Garden of Eden and turned into sinful, mortal beings. In this interesting antecedent of the question about human simulacra, *das Unheimliche* (uncanny) does not arise, as in Freud's interpretation (1919), from the sudden emergence of the unfamiliar from the familiar, or from the unsettling interplay between animate and inanimate matter etc. There seems to be no room for psychological interpretations. What is at

[3] «For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil» Gen 3:5.

stake here is an almost Foucauldian question of power and its preservation[4], which is deeply connected with the theological-political content of the book of Genesis (Reichenbach 2003).

3. The dynamics of the Adamic model: exclusive monoanthropism

Given the self-evident fortune of the Adamic trope within the fiction on human simulacra, we could try to identify a possible homological connection between the secular transposition of the creature/creator dynamic and its religious prior formulation. It is well established by the secondary literature that many *loci classici* of this theme are actually based on the explicit or implicit analogy between God-as-creator and Man-as-creator. Above all, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* provided not only an in-depth analysis of this cultural lineage, but also became one of the most well-known vessels of the stereotype. In a rich intertextual game with Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Tannenbaum 1977; Gilbert 1978; Cantor 1984: 103ff; Lamb 1992; Shohet 2018), in fact, the catastrophic bond between Victor Frankenstein and his creature is read precisely through the lenses of the relationship between God and his rebellious simulacra (Satan and Adam). Victor displays clear resemblances with the God of Genesis, wanting to create a being in his own image[5] and even paraphrasing the famous verse «And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good» (Gen 1:31)[6]. Moreover, the creature conversely looks at humans «as superior beings»

[4] A similar interpretation has been proposed by Posner (2009) in his reading of Milton's *Paradise Lost*: «The distinctively monarchical punishment (in Michel Foucault's sense) to which God subjects Satan reflects a typically monarchical anxiety about the ability to maintain order without extravagant displays of power» (Posner 2009: 256).

[5] Cf. «I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a being like myself or one of simpler organization; but my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man» (Shelley 1992: 55).

[6] Cf. «His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! – Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion, and straight black lips» (*ibid*.: 58).

and refers to them as «arbiters of my future destiny» (Shelley 1992: 102), thus putting himself in the inferior position of Adam. Trying to convince his Creator to provide him with a female companion, he also clearly states his unwillingness to cross the ontological gap between them[7] and embraces his creaturely and servant condition: «I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king» (*ibid*.: 90).

As we can see, the premises of the theological-juridical complex inscribed into the biblical exclusive monotheism are all present. It seems that the substitution of the actors of the Genesis-scheme has led to a recreation of the dynamics of exclusive monotheism on a human scale. That applies also to the epilogue of the story: «I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Every where I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded» (*ibid*.). In the eyes of the Creature, Victor is a careless and irresponsible divine Father, but in the eyes of the Creator, the Creature is something rivaling with his own, undisputable human status: «Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies» (*ibid*.: 90-91). The ontological threshold that divides the one and only Mankind from its simulacrum had already been partially crossed during the birth of the creature, as Victor's horror proves, but the process is completed only when the creature finally aspires to be like other humans, that is, capable of sharing love. This circling around the line between Human and Simulacrum comes off strikingly clear in Victor's reaction to the creature's heartfelt request:

> His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him, and sometimes felt a wish to console him; but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened, and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred. (*Ibid*.: 126)

Victor is not horrified by the allegedly monstrous features of the creature. As we know, indeed, he created him to be a beautiful, well-proportioned and almost Olympian figure. The repulsion seems to derive from a moral, rather than a physical dimension: Victor's expression «filthy mass that moved and talked» can then be read as an attempt to dehumanize and maintain an ontological difference with a lesser simulacrum made in his own image. This radical Other-from-the-human stood in front of Victor showing knowledge, articulated thought, almost illuministic rationality

[7] Cf. «I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee» (*ibid*.: 90).

and, above all, the capability of feeling and desiring love. Summarizing, the Creature is a Not-Human that suddenly appears in the eyes of his Creator as human all-too-human. This further realization removes any possible common ground between the two figures and triggers a mechanism that replicates the one found in Genesis: From tormented Adam, the Creature is turned definitively into Satan (condemnation) and, in the eyes of the Creator, needs to be destroyed (exercise of repressive violence).

After this brief analysis, we can now formulate some theoretical key-concepts. If the system, upon which the theological-juridical mechanism of the Adamic model is built, is that of 'exclusive monotheism', its human version could be defined as 'exclusive monoanthropism': there is one and only possible form of the Human (mono-anthropism) and its identity is defined, *ex negativo*, by the violent distinction from any 'other-from-itself'[8] (exclusivity). As we can see, that is the very model of counterreligion as explained by Assmann: monoanthropic humanity constructs its identity by «opposing and rejecting what went before and what goes on outside of itself» (Assmann 2008: 7). Moreover: just as exclusive monotheism blocks the possibility of intercultural translation, by which, as in the case of inclusive monotheism, different and 'alien' deities could be subsumed into a single, enlarged paradigm, Victor's exclusive monoanthropism prevents him from translating the alterity of his creature into an inclusive concept of the Human, thus starting an 'inter-anthropic' conflict with his simulacrum.

As can be inferred, the presence of this basic formula and its many deviations could actually be traced in a far wider array of texts, which spans from further sources of early and late Romanticism (e.g. the demiurgic interplay between Coppelius, Melchior, and Olympia, the robotic Eve of E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Sandmann*) to the classical age of modern science fiction (Eeando Binder's *Adam Link Robot*, Asimov's robot stories, Philip K. Dick's rebellious androids in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* etc.), and survives in a countless number of more contemporary high and pop-cultural products, from film (Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, the genesis of the Matrix as described by the Wachowski sisters in *Animatrix*, Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*, Neil Blomkamp's *Adam*-trilogy etc.) to literature (above all, Ian McEwan's *Machines like Me*). Unfortunately, a complete recollection of all those works largely exceeds the scope of the present contribution and,

[8] Interestingly, this coincides with the considerations that Fred Botting made in his famous study of *Frankenstein*: «What is human cannot be defined in itself, but only by what it is not, by its difference from others» (Botting 1991: 95).

therefore, a limited selection of heterogeneous, but highly paradigmatic cases has been necessary. In fact, given the aim of this article, that is, the presentation of a theoretical framework and the explanation of its fundamental features, they have been chosen due to their heuristic quality, in order to describe the inner workings of the Adamic formula through different epochs and cultural contexts.

Before moving on to a more in-depth differentiation of the possible applications of the Adamic model, let us summarize once more the dynamics of exclusive monoanthropism through a more contemporary case study: Isaac Asimov's short story *Robot Dreams* (1986). The protagonist LVX-1 (Elvex) is a classic example of Asimovian robot: It is a simulacrum of the Human and is subjugated to the famous Three Laws of Robotics, which can be easily seen as the «postbiblical Three Commandments» (Bailey 2005: 180) of monoanthropism. Thanks to a reconfiguration of the code encrypted in its positronic brain, the robot starts to experience a psychic phenomenon which can be assimilated to human dreams. At the same time interested and unsettled by it, the famous robopsychologist Susan Calvin tries to understand this unexpected evolution of Elvex's mind and seeks to evaluate its dangerousness. In a series of dialogues, the android shares with her a recurring dream in which a crowd of robots is depicted as enslaved and exploited under human rule. But there is one crucial point that reveals all the hidden power of the Adamic model:

> "Did your dream continue? You said earlier that human beings did not appear at *first*. Does that mean that they appear afterward?"
>
> "Yes, Dr. Calvin. It seemed to me, in my dream, that eventually one man appeared."
>
> "One man? Not a robot?"
>
> "Yes, Dr. Calvin. And the man said, 'Let my people go!'"
>
> "The *man* said that?"
>
> "Yes, Dr. Calvin."
>
> "And when he said, 'Let my people go', then by the words 'my people' he meant the robots?"
>
> "Yes, Dr. Calvin. So it was in my dream."
>
> "And did you know who the man was? – in your dream?"
>
> "Yes, Dr. Calvin. I knew the man."
>
> "Who was he?"
>
> And Elvex said, "I was the man."
>
> And Susan Calvin at once raised her electron gun and fired, and Elvex was no more. (Asimov 2004: 29-30)

At the very moment in which Elvex declares his ontological equivalence with the Human («I was the man»), the threshold of the theological-juridical complex has already been crossed. Consequently, he is immediately perceived as a threat, resulting in his condemnation and in the exercise of repressive violence by Susan Calvin. Furthermore, it is also worth noticing how Elvex introduces a subtle twist within the ideological narrative of this Creator/Creature dialectics – a twist which is also, interestingly, structured around a religious hypotext. By quoting the famous Exodus 5,1[9], the android strips away his role as subjugated Adam in order to become the positronic counterpart of Moses, leader of his people and prophet of a new, competing idea of the Human. This Foucauldian recodification of the previous power dynamics leads to a corresponding destitution of the Human from a godlike status. In fact, by equating himself to Moses, Elvex also forces his former masters to fit into the biblical analogy, making them the equivalent of pharaoh Ramses II. Instead of legitimate and ontologically superior rulers, the Humans have thus been re-semanticized into secular tyrants, no more human than their own slaves. This interference in the established discourse of exclusive monoanthropism and in the hierarchical power-structure that underlies it shows clear subversive connotations and lets us observe the mechanics of the Adamic model in their most paradigmatic form.

4. An inclusive monoanthropism? Isaac Asimov's *The Bicentennial Man* (1974)

Next to exclusive monoanthropism, we could also speculate about the existence of an inclusive monoanthropism, namely a (still) single ideal of the Human which is open to the 'translation of alterity'. An interesting example of the difficulties of such a process within the monoanthropic system can be found in another famous novel by Asimov, *The Bicentennial Man* (1974). Andrew, the main protagonist, is an experimental domestic android whose story can be read as a sort of replica of the Genesis: he does not want to be a perfect, prelapsarian Adam, but rather wants to be included in the covenant

[9] «After that, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let My people go, so that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness» Ex 5:1. Asimov's interest and high competence in the Biblical Scriptures is testified to by the monumental *Asimov's Guide to the Bible*, published in two volumes (Asimov 1968-1969).

of his masters, which is, ironically, that of imperfect postlapsarian Adams. For example, following the growth of his positronic mind, Andrew starts to wear clothes. This event is received with perplexity by his family: «But why do you want trousers, Andrew? Your body is so beautifully functional it's a shame to cover it» (Asimov 1974: 146). The argumentation is clearly based on the presumed Edenic condition of the android, who should be incapable of feeling shame. Andrew replies: «Are not human bodies beautifully functional, George? Yet, you cover yourselves», adding also that he feels «bare» (*ibid*.) without clothing. Just like Adam and Eve, who opened their eyes after the Fall and «knew that they were naked» (Gen 3:7), Andrew's journey into the human condition is marked by the acquisition of self-consciousness. At this point, we could foresee a violation of exclusive monoanthropism and a possible, violent epilogue of the story. But this does not happen. Lingering on the very limits of exclusive monoanthropism, Andrew does not force his way through the emancipation from the subsidiary condition of the simulacrum. Instead, he chooses to work within its theological-juridical boundaries, aiming not to a conflictual revolution but rather to a categorical extension of monoanthropism itself. He aspires to be legally recognized as human. In order to do so, he wants to close the physical gap between him and his creators through a pioneering work in the field of prosthetics: «People will say you did it only for yourself. It will be said it was part of a campaign to roboticize human beings, or to humanify robots; and in either case evil and vicious» (Asimov 1974: 167). As in the previous examples, the attempt to overcome the ontological distinction is immediately liable to moral and vaguely religious condemnation, by which the human simulacrum can be turned – like Satan or Adam – into an evil and vicious being. In the long run, however, the android manages to progressively humanize his physical appearance, while, at the time, fostering the acceptance of a debiologization of the human condition. We can clearly see how this operation within the theological-juridical framework is then marked by a bilateral confluence. The more Andrew strives towards the Human, the more the Human comes closer to a hybridization with the Machine:

> We've done two things […] both of which are good. First of all, we have established the fact that no number of artificial parts in the human body causes it to cease being a human body. Secondly, we have engaged public opinion in the question in such a way as to put it fiercely on the side of a broad interpretation of humanity, since there is not a human being in existence who does not hope for prosthetics if they will keep him alive. (*Ibid*.: 168)

This passage is crucial for our analysis, especially for what concerns the «broad interpretation of humanity» mentioned in the novel. In order to humanize himself and be recognized as such by the system, Andrew needs to promote nothing else than transhumanism, which could be seen as the perfect expression of a loosely broadened but still exclusive monoanthropism. In fact, as an «intensification of humanism» (Wolf 2010, XV), the transhumanist movement does not abdicate from «Reinassance humanist ambitions for the cultivation of human virtue» (MacFarlane 2020, 15) and, therefore, limits itself to the technological prosecution of the very same anthropocentric worldview and the very same monoanthropic ideal of Man that have produced the distinction between Human and Not-Human in the first place. What is being challenged in transhumanism are, in fact, the mere boundaries of human potential – the questions about what it means to be human or if it is actually possible to posit an ontologically defined human 'entity' (Nayar 2014) are not fully addressed. In view of those aspects, the transhumanist enhancement as conceived in the *Bicentennial Man* does not represent the formalization of an actual inclusive monoanthropism, but only an intensification of the core values of exclusive monoanthropism itself. This comes off strikingly clear if we look at the epilogue of Asimov's tale. In spite of his achievements and this broadening of the paradigm, Andrew stills succumbs to the prescriptive power of the exclusive monoanthropism that he tried to soften. In fact, the trajectory of his quest towards the Human leads to a formal recognition, but at the cost of his own alterity. As stated by the android:

> Who really cares what a brain looks like or is built of or how it was formed? What matters is that brain cells die; *must* die. […] Isn't *that* the fundamental barrier? Human beings can tolerate an immortal robot, for it doesn't matter how long a machine lasts. They cannot tolerate an immortal human being, since their own mortality is endurable only so long as it is universal. And for that reason they won't make me a human being. (Asimov 1974: 170-171)

Even though the biological foundations defining the 'humanness' have been dismantled, this monoanthropism reveals its old-fashioned humanist stance and, therefore, its normativity by setting mortality as the ultimate condition for inclusion. In fact, Andrew will then renounce completely the last thing that defined him as a simulacrum or as a potential alternative to the dominating human standard, in order to satisfy his longing for recognition: he will give up the immutability of the positronic brain,

undergoing a medical procedure that sentences him to mortality. Because of this, Andrew's final proclamation as the bicentennial 'man' cannot be seen in the light of inclusivity, but rather as the triumph of an untouched exclusive monoanthropism, which accepts the android only because of a complete 'conversion' to its (lawfully enforced) idea of 'anthropos'.

5. Beyond inclusion and exclusion: unravelling the Adamic model in Ernst Jünger's *Gläserne Bienen* (1965)

The final case study of this brief journey through the forms of the Adamic model comes from a very different cultural field and takes us nine years backwards. After a sequence of allegorical and utopian novels (*Auf den Marmorklippen*, *Heliopolis*), the German writer Ernst Jünger published the sci-fi novel *Gläserne Bienen* (1957), the narrative transposition of a series of reflections on time and the role of technology started three years before with the collection of essays *Das Sanduhrbuch* (1954-1957). The main protagonist, Richard, is an ex-*Rittmeister*, a cavalry officer whose job faded into obsolescence owing to the introduction of panzers in modern warfare. He is portrayed as a veteran of two World Wars, a man from the 'long century', lost in an epoch that is evolving at a quite unsettling speed. His story revolves around a job interview, which ironically is held at the very heart of the same phenomenon that led him to unemployment. In fact, he applies for a position at the famous enterprise Zapparoni-Werke, a giant of the technological and entertainment industry specialized in robotics. The company CEO is the brilliant entrepreneur Giacomo Zapparoni, whose Italian name is just one of numerous intertextual references to E.T.A Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* that can be found throughout the novel (cf. Diebitz 1994). Depicted as a techno-demiurge or a posthuman Walt Disney, Zapparoni has placed his residence and headquarters in an ex-monastery. His reign is described in fabulous as well as in uncanny terms, in allusion to the two-faced nature of technological advancement[10], and Richard looks at him with both admiration and suspicion. After an initial meeting with Zapparoni, Richard is taken to the walled garden of the monastery and

[10] Cf. «Im Großen glichen die Zapparoni-Werke einem Janustempel mit einem bunten und einem schwarzen Tore, und wenn sich der Himmel bewölkte, quoll aus dem dunklen ein Strom von ausgeklügelten Mordinstrumenten hervor, die sich durch eine widerwärtige Art der Nachstellung auszeichneten» (Jünger 1978: 483).

let there waiting for the prosecution of his job interview. This artificially enhanced *hortus conclusus* represents a sort of technological Eden, where nature is being perfected through rigorous gardening practices and the calculated introduction of nanorobots. As a sort of Adam, Richard is put into the garden[11] by Zapparoni, while the entrepreneur, looking down from an elevated terrace, shouts the warning «Seien Sie mit den Bienen vorsichtig!» (Jünger 1978: 497), which recalls God's admonition about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil[12]. All the basic iconography of the Adamic model falls into place, but with one important deviation from the norm. This point needs further analysis. As Richard will discover, the bees are in fact the only 'living' simulacrum of the novel: resembling the creation of a demiurge[13], they are unmanned aerial drones, whose features are inspired by a rich intertextual game with various religious and legendary sources. The drones are transparent and made of glass like the homunculus of Paracelsus, and their entomorphic appearance resembles the mechanical fly allegedly created by the mathematician Regiomontanus[14]. Next to them, Richard will then discover the second, inert simulacra of the garden: looking at the bottom of a pond, he will see a number of severed human ears, which, later on, will be revealed as artificial as well. Here is where the usual mechanics of the Adamic model come into play. When confronted with the uncanny perfection of the glass bees, Richard showed concern but also fascination, because the ontological dominance of the Human was not involved. Facing the perfect replica of a human body part, his viewpoint changes completely, and we can clearly see the 'activation' of the whole

[11] Cf. «And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it» Gen 2,15, and «Ich betrat den Gartenpfad mit dem Gefühl, mit dem wir bei der Prüfung die Glocke hören, die eine Pause ankündet», (Jünger 1978: 497).

[12] «But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die» Gen 2:17.

[13] Cf. «An diesem Wesen konnte ein Demiurg in fremden Reichen geschaffen haben, der einmal von Bienen gehört hatte» (Jünger 1978: 504).

[14] Cf. «Zapparoni wollte jedoch den Automaten im alten Sinne, den Automaten des Albertus oder des Regiomontanus verwirklichen» (Jünger 1978: 511). Regarding the mechanical fly, we can just look at the word 'Automat' from the widespread *Meyers Konversationslexicon* (1905): «Der Android von Albertus Magnus öffnete die Tür und grüßte die Eintretenden; Regiomontanus verfertigte eine laufende Fliege und einen Adler» (Meyers Großes Konversationslexikon 1905: 189).

theological-juridical system:

> Hier aber war der Geist am Werke, der das freie und unberührte Menschenbild verneint. Er hatte diesen Tort erdacht. Er wollte mit Menschenkräften rechnen, wie er seit langem mit Pferdekräften rechnete. Er wollte Einheiten, die gleich und teilbar sind. Dazu mußte der Mensch vernichtet werden, wie vor ihm das Pferd vernichtet worden war. (*Ibid*.: 547)

When the «free and untouched» image of man is concerned, there could be no room for fascination. Enraged, Richard grabs a golf club and smashes an approaching mechanical device with a gesture that clearly emulates the story about Thomas Aquinas' destruction of the android created by his master Albert the Great[15]. The procedure is always the same: threat to the ontological gap, metaphysical horror/condemnation, and exercise of repressive violence. Where, then, is then the deviation from the Adamic formula? In Jünger's novel, we find a godly creator and an Eden, but no real 'simulacral' Adam as in the previous examples. There is a reason for this. As Jünger suggested, in fact, the main consequence of posthuman technology does not lie in the substitution of the Human with a simulacrum made in his own image (such as an ominous glass man[16], a real homunculus). Rather, what the German writer is trying to describe is the complete dissolution of an established idea of the Human, which could be interpreted in contrasting ways. In fact, as Richard says: «Menschliche Vollkommenheit und technische Perfektion sind nicht zu vereinbaren. Wir müssen, wenn wir die eine wollen, die andere zum Opfer bringen» (*id*. 1978: 521). Here, Richard speaks like a pre-industrial and religious humanist, who cannot even see

[15] Jünger knew this part of the tale, as we can read in *Sanduhrbuch*: «Abertus, der ähnlich wie Gerbert der Nachwelt als Zauberer erschien, hatte einen Androiden erschaffen, der in Köln seine Gäste begrüßte und ihnen die Tür öffnete. Bekanntlich zerstörte Thomas von Aquin, den der unvermutete Anblick erschreckte, dieses Wesen durch Stockschläge» (Jünger 1979: 178).

[16] As Ernst Jünger wrote in the collection of essays *Das Sanduhrbuch* (1954): «Heute, wo wir in einen Zusammenhang, in eine Welt von Automaten eingetreten sind, erblicken wir in den Androiden kaum mehr als eine Spielerei. Dort, wo wir Androiden formen, kommt es uns nicht mehr auf äußere Ähnlichkeit mit dem menschlichen Körper an. Wohl vermögen wir sie zu schaffen, wie der Gläserne Mensch beweist, der schon vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg das Prunkstück der Dresdner Hygiene-Ausstellung bildete» (*ibid*.: 172).

the possibility of an enhancement of the human condition by means of technological advancement. In his worldview, which corresponds to the observations made by Friedrich Georg Jünger in his essay *Die Perfektion der Technik* (1946), Man and Technology are two insoluble domains, and one involves the destruction of the other. Because of that, Richard does not face an antagonizing reproduction of the Human in Zapparoni's techno-Eden, but rather a formless, radical alterity, which stands for the true, autonomous essence of technology itself. As Jünger wrote in *Sanduhrbuch*, the *Uhrwelt*, the clockwork-world (or the clock-world) of technology does not proceed analogically, through the imitation of the exterior appearance of things, but rather functionally, through the reproduction of their inner working principles (*id*. 1979: 172). Technology has then its own nature, an anti-nature, which does not correspond to the image of the world as Creation. This explains Jünger's interesting twist in the tradition of the Adamic model: instead of a robotic humanoid, Richard confronts the featureless but highly efficient *Ungestalt* (Horn 2009: 103) of a swarm of nanorobots. Both the Vitruvian Man and the old Adam dissolve into the faceless collective lifeforms of technological perfection and what is left behind is only a severed, artificial ear. Also: the anthropocentric scale of human simulacra is completely removed and substituted by the unhuman nanoscale of entomic simulacra, as Devin Fore (2008) has pointed out.

Even though these considerations can make sense in the logic of the text, we have to remember the ideological background of Richard's observations and consequently look at his Luddist horror with caution. As Bernd Stiegler noticed, in fact, the gaze of the *Rittmeister* is largely influenced by the romantic dualism of man and machine, nature and culture (Stiegler 2012: 307) – a dualistic thinking that has been completely obliterated by Zapparoni's idea of modernity[17] and that represents the most posthuman feature of his techno-Eden. The whole episode concerning the severed human ear speaks of the impossibility of distinguishing between natural and artificial within the garden, and it is also revealing of Richard's inability to renounce this distinction[18]. In other words, Richard is the old Adam, a man from the past, a byproduct of humanist anthropocentric preconceptions,

[17] Post-humanism and post-dualism are deeply connected, as explained by Ferrando 2019.

[18] Cf. «Als ich das Ohr betrachtet hatte, war es mit dem Wunsch geschehen, daß es ein Spuk, ein Kunstwerk, ein Puppenohr sei, das niemals den Schmerz gekannt hätte» (Jünger 1978: 546).

like the technological nihilism by which he is frightened. His humanist stance and his conception of the nihilistic religion of technology are, indeed, two sides of one ideological complex[19]: The very same exclusive monoanthropism that made man 'the crown of Creation' is also the one that, after the death of God, tries to make him the Creator himself. Following those premises, we can infer that the whole relationship between Richard and Zapparoni has been structured around this duality. In the eyes of our old humanist beholder, Zapparoni looks profoundly like the expression of a nihilistic technocratic power that we have described so far, but, in reality, his status is way more subtle. Interestingly, Zapparoni is described in fact as a Nietzschean «Übermensch», a notion which «has been recognized as a source of inspiration by Transhumanism, Posthumanism, and Antihumanism, for different reasons and with divergent interpretations» (Ferrando 2019: 48). In the same way, Zapparoni tries to overcome the Human, but it is not clear if this attempt has to be understood as the enhancement of human power and freedom through technology (Transhumanism), as the proclamation of the death of man (Antihumanism), or as the critical revision of all humanist and dualistic thought, overcome by an amorphic mixture of nature and technology as in the case of the techno-Eden (Posthumanism).

In such a fragmentation of different perspectives, we can only glimpse Ernst Jünger's own position, which is suspended between Richard's religious concerns and the titanic possibilities offered by Zapparoni. Along with Heidegger, indeed, Jünger saw the necessity of overcoming the anthropocentric worldview but, at the same time, feared the radical autonomy of technology and, in some ways, the death of man as such. As an old Adam in a post-Adamic age, he hesitated at this doorstep till the very end of his century-long life, looking at the future with apprehension but also with the cold, analytic gaze of one of the greatest *Kulturkritiker* of the twentieth century: «Der Homunkulus öffnet die Tür – und diesmal nicht für einen Thomas von Aquin, der ihn erschlägt» (Jünger 1990: 138).

[19] In this regard, we can quote the words of Gregor Streim, who analysed the complex dialectics between humanism, nihilism and theology in Jügers *Heliopolis*: «Humanismus und Nihilismus sind nur verschiedene Spielarten anthropozentrischen Denkens» (Streim 2008: 159).

6. Final remarks

After this heterogenous series of case studies, some final remarks are necessary. First of all, it is important to stress that the present work does not aim to assert any causal relation between religion and negative anthropism. In fact, what seems problematic both in exclusive monotheism and in exclusive monoanthropism is only the combination of the logics of 'mono-' and 'exclusive', which means the glorification of one category over the others (one God; one Man), paired with the restriction of this category to an unchangeable and non-negotiable set of core features. Quoting Assmann: «Violence – always understood as propensity and not as consequence – is inherent not in the idea of the One God but in the exclusion of other gods, not in the idea of truth but in the persecution of untruth» (Assmann 2008: 110). Where the idea of One Entity and One Truth is, at least from our point of view, still problematic and open to dangerous interpretations, the most destructive consequences arise only from its fusion with the parameter of exclusivity. Together they form the basic grammar upon which any (religious and non-religious) dialectics of oppression can be built[20].

What direction can we take as humans? A possible answer seems to come from critical posthuman studies. As Donna Haraway has written in the influential *When Species Meet* (2008), in fact, «"posthumanities" is another word for "after monotheism"» (Haraway 2008: 245). Historically, this comment is undeniably true: the whole reflection on our idea of Man was unthinkable under the weight of metaphysical preconditions. Conceptually, however, the question is more problematic. The end of exclusive monotheism, in fact, does not involve the end of exclusive monoanthropism. Jünger's text shed light on that: the two phenomena can be culturally related, but exclusive monoanthropism is way more resistant than God itself. We could renounce God, but we could not easily renounce the image of ourselves. Nevertheless, we think that the Adamic model, together with its rhizomatic subsystems (exclusive and inclusive monoanthropism etc.) could serve as a powerful tool for contemporary Posthuman Studies. First of all, its basic structure can function as a litmus test in order to evaluate the transfor-

[20] Cf. «The dialectis of otherness is the inner engine of humanist Man's power […]. All other modes of embodiment are cast out of the subject position and they include anthropomorphic others: non-white, non-masculine, non-normal, non-young, non-healthy, disabled, malformed or enhanced people» (Braidotti 2013: 67).

mations at work within different epochs, cultural spheres and individual *Weltanschauungen*, as our examples have shown. Jünger's substitution of the human simulacrum with its entomic counterpart, as well as Asimov's play with the boundaries of the theological-juridical complex in the *Bicentennial Man*, are nothing more than morphological deviations from a basic formula, which, however, signalize monumental conceptual differences regarding the approach to the problem of human simulacra. In other words, the Adamic formula is a powerful hermeneutical grid, which enables the reader to rapidly recognize the diegetic scheme of a text, as well as to identify its subtle variations and their conceptual repercussions. Following the same premises, it can be argued that the focus on the concept of 'anthropos' and its relationship with alterity (exclusivity, inclusivity) described by the Adamic model could also work well along the different critical labels (posthumanism, transhumanism, humanism) already used in the present research field. In fact, when the theoretical framework of traditional Humanism can be seen as an archetypical form of exclusive monoanthropism, the transhumanist stance fluctuates between an exclusive and an inclusive form of monoanthropism, dealing with the development of a single idea of the Human and a more or less open confrontation with its technological reproductions. Conversely, the wildly different streams of critical posthumanism seemed to have identified the dangerous nature of these two forms of monoanthropism[21], as well as their connection with the metaphysical bequest of Judeo-Christian culture, and gravitated toward a reflexion on the 'anthopos' freed from the Commandment of uniqueness[22]. Whether such a deconstructive approach is leading us to an anthropic counterpart of 'atheism', in which the idea of Man is totally dismantled, or to some form of 'polyanthropism', in which the 'anthropos' is completely detached from its original referent and used to denote every form of self-aware being, is up for debate. In this sense, however, the Adamic model functions as a roadmap to further differentiate those labels, while hooking them to the history of religious forms on which they so strongly depend.

[21] Cf. Rosi Braidotti's reference to our concept of monoanthropism: «Post-anthropocentrism displaces the notion of species hierarchy, and of a single, common standard for 'Man' as the measure of all things» (Braidotti 2013: 67).

[22] Cf. «The posthuman overcoming of human primacy, though, is not to be replaced with other types of primacies (such as the one of the machines). Posthumanism can be seen as a post-exclusivism: an empirical philosophy of mediation which offers a reconciliation of existence in its broadest significations» (Ferrando 2013: 29).

One final note: nowadays, it is clear that our self-investiture as masters of the natural world and the establishment of a unique *imago hominis* to which all humans need to conform have played a crucial role in various forms of exploitation and oppression throughout the history of the Western world: speciesism, sexism, racism, heteronormativity, ableism, to quote but a few examples. Frankenstein's frontier, the actual problem of human simulacra, has only been confined to the realm of speculative fiction and has worked mainly as a device of self-reflexion, through which the episteme of the 'anthropos' could observe itself. With the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, however, the necessity of a serious dialogue on roboethics[23] is becoming more and more urgent. That is where Posthuman Studies and the Adamic model are actually drifting away from fiction and entering the field of science: are we ready to renounce the primacy of self-awareness? Or, in other words: would we let an android eat from the tree of knowledge, and be like us? In this sense, roboethics should be ethics regulating robotic behavior as well as ethics regulating our behavior towards the robots themselves. Looking at history, in fact, the main concern of such an ontological trespass is not what they could do to us, as our dystopic Adamic phantasies have always projected, but, instead, what we could do to them.

[23] On this topic see Campa 2015: 77-108.

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