

Zarathustra in Surinam: Albert Helman's Prophecy of the 'New Man' in *Zuid-Zuid-West* (1926)

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Abstract

The philosophical novel *Zuid-Zuid-West* (South-Southwest, 1926) by the Dutch-Surinamese author Albert Helman (1903-1996) is famous for the sharp critique of Dutch colonial policy in its epilogue. The remaining part of this novel has traditionally received little attention. This is all the more surprising since *Zuid-Zuid-West* represents one of the first examples of the turn towards 'mestizaje' in Latin American literature. By comparing Helman's *Zuid-Zuid-West* with José Vasconcelos's prophecy of the 'new man' in *La raza cósmica* (The Cosmic Race, 1925), this article intends to highlight how these Latin American intellectuals attempted to concretize Friedrich Nietzsche's prophecy of the 'new man' in the shape of the multiracial 'mestizo'.

Keywords: Albert Helman, José Vasconcelos, Friedrich Nietzsche, New Man, Miscegenation, Mestizaje, Surinam

With the country's capital Paramaribo as vantage point, Dutch scholarship on Surinam has traditionally used an intellectual compass that points in the direction north-northeast. Surinamese literature in Dutch has, in fact, been primarily studied in connection with Dutch-Antillean and Dutch-European literature. This article intends to analyze the prophecy of the 'new man' by the Dutch-Surinamese author Albert Helman (1903-1996) in *Zuid-Zuid-West* (South-Southwest, 1926) from a south-southwestern perspective, connecting it with the Latin American mainland.

While scholars have mainly focused on the epilogue of this philosophical novel with its sharp critique of Dutch colonial policy in Surinam – 'For centuries you have been thieves, some say: lawfully so. But then at least be loving thieves and not scoundrel!'¹ – the remaining part of *Zuid-Zuid-West* has received little attention. This is all the more surprising since *Zuid-Zuid-West* represents one of the earliest examples of the turn towards *mestizaje* in Latin American literature. Comparing the following passage from the conclusion of *Zuid-Zuid-West* with José Vasconce-

los's prophecy of the multiracial 'new man' in *La raza cósmica* (The Cosmic Race, 1925), one finds striking parallels:

Helman

The old race, mine as well as yours, is tired. Soon, we will be able to rest; thousands of generations have finally reached the conclusion of their duty: a new man. [...] He will no longer be part of a specific people, nor will he be from the South or from the West, he will, rather, belong to everyone, because everyone belongs to him. He will move from one country to the other, not knowing that he transgresses old frontiers. He will build bridges over oceans; he will armor himself with relentless wisdom.²

Vasconcelos

This time, the race that will come out of the forgotten Atlantis will no longer be a race of a single color or of particular features. The future race will not be a fifth or a sixth race, destined to prevail over its ancestors. What is going to emerge out there is the definitive race, the syntactical race, the integral race, made up of the genius and the blood of all peoples and, for that reason, more capable of true brotherhood and of a truly universal vision.³

Much has been written about the question whether Helman did or did not use Multatuli as a model for the epilogue of *Zuid-Zuid-West*.⁴ This article does not focus on this discussion; it rather points at a writer Helman did certainly read and who also had a strong influence on Vasconcelos: Friedrich Nietzsche.⁵

Unlike what Jos de Roo (2002) suggested, Helman's announcement of the 'new man' does not necessarily reflect a 'socialist ideal'.⁶ While it is correct that Marxist philosophers applied the notion of the 'new man' to their own ideas,⁷ their concept of the New (Soviet) Man was derived from Nietzsche.⁸ Rather than a socialist ideal, Helman's *Zuid-Zuid-West* reflects a Nietzschean ideal. Due to remarkable similarities in its metaphorical language, prophetic tone and philosophical ideas, *Zuid-Zuid-West* could even be considered an adaptation of Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 1883-85).

Helman's announcement of the 'new man' should be seen in the context of the tremendous influence Nietzsche's prophecy of the *Übermensch* had in the immediate aftermath of World War I on intellectuals all over the world, including Latin America. Helman and Vasconcelos were by no means the only Latin American intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s whose work showed Nietzschean influences. Others could be named here as well: the Uruguayan essayist José Enrique Rodó, the Peruvian philosopher José Carlos Mariátegui La Chira and the Brazilian soci-

ologist Gilberto Freyre. All these intellectuals made an eclectic, even opportunistic, use of Nietzsche in constructing a Latin American modernity.

The connection to Vasconcelos is particularly interesting because Helman not only shared a prophecy of the multiracial 'new man' with this Mexican philosopher, but both men were also deeply rooted in a Catholic intellectual environment. Nietzsche's essentially anti-Christian message represented therefore a serious moral challenge. In fact, Helman's ambivalent attitude vis-à-vis Nietzsche, expressed in *Zuid-Zuid-West* with the words 'I used to give too much importance to the names Buddha, Plato, and Nietzsche',⁹ corresponded to a greater Latin American pattern. While Nietzsche provided the philosophical basis on which Latin American intellectuals built their ideas, many of them simultaneously rejected his ideas on moral grounds.

From Blanqueamiento to Mestizaje

The birth of *mestizaje* should be seen in the context of nineteenth-century concerns among Latin America's white upper class over the large amount of black and Amerindian people who, due to their supposed racial inferiority, would forever doom the continent. During the debate on abolitionism, *blanqueamiento*, white-washing through miscegenation, had been considered by some intellectuals a potential solution to this concern. Although they had little doubts about the social, intellectual and moral inferiority of blacks and Amerindians, they assumed that through a process of miscegenation these 'primitive elements' would slowly but steadily disappear, allowing a general whitening of Latin American society. Brazilian scholar João Batista de Lacerda claimed for instance in 1912 that, thanks to continuous miscegenation, Brazil's black population would disappear in only one century. By 2012, he predicted, 80% of Brazil's population would be white, 17% Indian and 3% mulatto.¹⁰

Lacerda's enthusiasm was considered naïve outside of Latin America. Foreign scholars tended to look at positive interpretations of miscegenation with horror. Arthur de Gobineau, who worked as a French diplomat in Rio de Janeiro in 1869-70, regularly cited Brazil as a prime example of how miscegenation with blacks led to racial degeneration. During a trip to Brazil in 1865, the prominent Swiss-American biologist Louis Agassiz even warned:

Let anyone who doubts the evil of this mixture of races, and is inclined, from a mistaken philanthropy, to break down all barriers between them, come to Brazil. He cannot deny the deterioration consequent upon an amalgamation of races, more widespread here than in any other country in the world, and which is rapidly effacing the best qualities of the white man, the Negro, and the Indian, leaving a mongrel nondescript type, deficient in physical and mental energy.¹¹

Latin American scholarship had a long tradition of modelling itself on European standards and was vulnerable to such racist rhetoric. Significantly, the same scholars that embraced the principle of *blanqueamiento*, including Lacerda, also tended to recognize the superiority of the ‘Aryan race’.¹² As they carried negative stereotypes and subsequent stigmas associated with blacks and Amerindians forward, theories of *blanqueamiento* offered little reason to believe that Latin America would ever reach a level of cultural and intellectual elevation comparable to Europe.

However, Europe’s relapse into barbarism during World War I caused doubts about the superiority of European civilization. While the war intensified fears about national degeneration in Europe, it created a new determination to bring about national regeneration in Latin America. The central concept that allowed this regeneration was *mestizaje*.

The notion of *mestizaje* differed from *blanqueamiento* because it no longer looked at miscegenation from a negative or a neutral perspective, as an emergency measure to deal with a racial and/or social problem, but rather from an (excessively) positive perspective, as the basis of a higher, superior form of civilization.

José Vasconcelos’s ‘Cosmic Race’

José Vasconcelos Calderón (1882–1959) was born in Oaxaca, Mexico. He spent part of his adolescence in Piedras Negras, near the border with United States at a time when U.S. expansionist aggression against Latin America was at its high point. He attended school in Texas, where he was regularly confronted with racial discrimination. This experience deeply marked Vasconcelos, whose political and intellectual career represented a lifelong battle against feelings of Latin American inferiority vis-à-vis the mighty Anglo-Saxon neighbour. Placing himself in the tradition of Simón Bolívar, Vasconcelos strove for Latin American self-awareness. He fiercely rejected Latin American political regionalism as well as Anglo-Saxon, Protestant and positivistic influences. Unlike his Cuban counterpart José Martí, who perceived race as an old-fashioned academic issue left behind by modernity, Vasconcelos wanted Latin Americans to become more race-conscious. Contrary to the existing racial theories of his time, however, he believed that the key solution to boost Latin American self-consciousness was *mestizaje*.

Vasconcelos’s regeneration of Latin American self-pride in the form of hybrid *mestizo* cannot be understood without reference to Nietzsche. Similar to what the U.S.-American anthropologist Ruth Benedict would later do in her study of Pueblo cultures in *Patterns of Culture* (1934), Vasconcelos applied the Nietzschean notions of the Apollonian and Dionysian to his analysis of Latin American society. Using Nietzsche’s interpretation of ancient Greece in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (The Birth of Tragedy, 1872) as a model, Vasconcelos explained Latin American society as the result of antagonistic forces – orderly, calm, ‘civilized’ Apollonian and chaotic, wild, ‘primitive’ Dionysian elements – that had reached an equilibrium.

Vasconcelos equated the notion of Apollonian with European and Dionysian with Amerindian and African populations and, consequently, no longer considered the (alleged) irrationality or primitivism of African and Amerindian elements a detrimental, but rather a useful component to reach a higher race and hence a superior civilization. While it was previously assumed that African and Amerindian influence would doom Latin America, Vasconcelos's creative interpretation of Nietzsche allowed him to claim that the mixture of (Dionysian) African and Amerindian elements with (Apollonian) European elements paved the way for a superior 'new man', the *mestizo*.¹³

Borrowing Nietzsche's metaphor of man as a bridge leading to the *Übermensch*, Vasconcelos defined the mission of the European colonizers in America in *La raza cósmica* as that of a bridge towards a new type of men: 'Their mission is to serve as a bridge. [...] The civilization developed and organized in our times by the whites has set the moral and material basis for the union of all men into a fifth universal race'.¹⁴ Vasconcelos claimed that while North America's rejection of miscegenation represented yesterday, Latin America was the continent of the future, the place where 'a new race, a synthetic race that aspires to engulf and to express everything human in forms of constant improvement'¹⁵ would rise, marked by a superior morality that would overcome racial prejudices and lead to universal brotherhood.

Here we find an important difference with Nietzsche: achieving a 'universal brotherhood' is certainly not an ambition of the elitist *Übermensch*. This difference can be traced back to Vasconcelos's opposite approach to Christianity. Unlike Nietzsche, Vasconcelos considered Christianity of essential importance to the progress of humanity. He therefore mixed Nietzschean philosophy with Christian humanism in order to elaborate a specifically Latin American approach to modernity and cultural identity.¹⁶ His determination to safeguard the Catholic universal tradition based on love and fraternity prompted Vasconcelos to add a Christian-inspired aesthetic and moral element to a philosophical theory that was otherwise strongly influenced by Nietzsche.¹⁷

The third, Christian-aesthetic element, which complemented the mixture of 'Apollonian' European and 'Dionysian' Amerindian/African elements in Latin America, also provided Vasconcelos with an argument to explain why the 'cosmic race' had not been achieved in earlier times. Vasconcelos argued that during the violent conquest of the American continent, the Dionysian element had been too strong and the miscegenation too violent: 'in the manner of beasts with no limit in quantity and no aspiration for improvement'.¹⁸ The creation of a Latin American society, which began in a violent, Dionysian manner, was in later centuries improved through the reinforcement of Apollonian elements and will eventually reach its height when a third, Christian-mythical element, will achieve its full potential. Once this stage of evolution is achieved, Latin American society will progress 'beyond good and evil' and people will 'live joy grounded on love'.¹⁹

Ultimately, the universal dominance of the ‘cosmic race’ will coincide with a new, spiritual/aesthetic era in the existence of mankind.²⁰

Albert Helman’s ‘New Man’

Born in 1903 into a Creole upper-class family in the Dutch colony of Surinam, Lodewijk Lichtveld came to the Netherlands when he was twelve years old in order to become a Catholic priest. He soon became disappointed with life in the seminary of Roermond and returned to South America. In 1921 he emigrated a second time to the Netherlands and, this time, he decided to stay. He studied musicology and started to write essayistic pieces for the Catholic journal *De Gemeenschap* (The Community) using the pseudonym ‘Albert Helman’. As many others who had come from a Dutch colony to study in the Netherlands, Helman developed a strong nostalgia for his country of origin. His novels *Zuid-Zuid-West* and *De Stille Plantage* (The Silent Plantation, 1931) reflect a critical perspective on the way Surinam had been neglected and exploited by the Dutch colonizers.

While Jos de Roo (2002) was right in affirming that Helman was (with Cola Debrot) the first author in Dutch literature to propagate racial mixture, he made a mistake in labelling it as ‘multiculturalism’.²¹ Although both multiculturalism and *mestizaje* embrace diversity and oppose racism, multiculturalism celebrates diversity as a rainbow of different racial and ethnic groups that live side by side in a society characterized by tolerance, whereas *mestizaje* aims at achieving a multi-racial diversity by blurring all racial and ethnic boundaries through miscegenation. Helman’s ‘new man’, who originates out of a mixture of all existing races, points at a hybrid *mestizaje* model, not at the multicultural model that Surinam is traditionally associated with.

Zuid-Zuid-West is, in fact, characterized by an evolution in the perception of diversity, from a multicultural model at the beginning of the book to a *mestizaje* model at the end. Helman begins *Zuid-Zuid-West* with a description of Surinam as a multicultural society – ‘currently, all different people there live side-by-side’²² – and emphasizes the nation’s diversity in his description of the different population groups: Amerindians, city creoles, bush creoles, Hindustani, Chinese and Europeans. They are all characterized by a melancholic feeling of solitude. Although they live in peace, these groups do not mix: ‘The loneliness of these people living side-by-side is revealed by the fact that their groups remain totally unchanged’.²³ As such, Helman indicates that Surinam is not (yet) a society characterized by *mestizaje*. However, unlike the (then still largely) monocultural Netherlands, it is a society that has the necessary conditions to evolve in that direction.

Unlike Vasconcelos, who glorifies the Iberian colonizers and makes them the true progenitors of the ‘new man’, Helman is critical about the colonizers. It is not the Europeans, but rather those Amerindians who resisted colonization by fleeing into the jungle who are described in a Nietzschean sense as ‘higher men’,

characterized by strength, perseverance, courage and defiance. Helman, himself of Amerindian descent, combines in this way two Latin American strategies to develop a postcolonial identity, that of nineteenth-century *indianismo*, where (fictitious) Amerindians are used as an alternative model to European positivism, and *mestizaje*. This combination of *indianismo* and *mestizaje* corresponded to the strategy that was used in the same period by members of the Brazilian 'modernismo' movement, such as Oswald de Andrade in his *Manifesto da poesia Pau-Brasil* (Manifesto of Brazil Wood Poetry, 1924) and Mário de Andrade in his novel *Macunaíma* (1928).

The fact that Helman relied on a Nietzschean model is blatantly obvious in his characterization of the Amerindian community in chapters 33 and 34 of *Zuid-Zuid-West* as a balance between Dionysian and Apollonian elements. Helman's description in chapter 33 of a rite of passage, with its combination of dance, music and 'the glow of the godly rhythm',²⁴ has a clearly Dionysian character. The feast is followed in the next chapter by a day dedicated to the other Nietzschean component that is necessary to achieve a harmonious society: Apollonian order and reason. In chapter 34, the Amerindians are described as a rational community: 'The elderly are mild for the recklessness of the young hunters; the youngsters listen respectfully to the words of the elder, and their passion subsides next to the campfire'.²⁵

Helman's prophet of the 'new man' arises from that community of 'higher men'. He characterizes this prophet as follows: 'One day, every man has to leave his solitude and belong to the community; this is the most painful moment, the saddest in his life. He resigns of himself, and offers this to the new man.'²⁶ Helman's use of the notion of solitude has been explained by Arion (1977) from a Marxist, psychoanalytic, existentialist, colonialist and autobiographical perspective. However, the notion also corresponds to Nietzsche's introduction of Zarathustra as a man who, after enjoying ten years of complete isolation, realizes that time has come to abandon his solitude and to join the people with his prophecy of the *Übermensch*: 'When Zarathustra was thirty years old he left his home and went into the mountains. Here he enjoyed his spirit and his solitude and for ten years he did not tire of it. But at last his heart transformed. [...] I must go down as the human beings say, to whom I want to descend'.²⁷

In his first speech to the people, Nietzsche's Zarathustra tries to convince the audience that mankind should not be satisfied with an existence as men, but should instead have the ambition to go beyond itself and to build a bridge towards the *Übermensch*. If mankind should fail to realize such progression, Zarathustra warns with the spectre of decadence, of a world inhabited by 'the last man', incapable of besieging his smallness: 'It is time that mankind set themselves a goal. It is time that mankind plant the seed of their highest hope. Beware! The time of the most contemptible human is coming, the one who can no longer have contempt for himself. Behold! I show you the last human being'.²⁸

Similarly, Helman's prophet of the 'new man' is introduced as the 'last man' of a dying tribe, whose awareness of decadence leads to an appeal for change: 'A dying people is great in wisdom, it focuses on the deepest things, because it knows that soon its destiny will be fulfilled, and the last man – oh, am I the last one of my people? – has to provide the answer to the question: why his tribe has lived and why it has passed on suffering from child to child?'²⁹ The answer to this existentialist question is provided by the tribe's wisest man in the form of a Dionysian feast as a way to prepare the prophet for his task. As happens in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, the final announcement of the 'new man' occurs in nautical terms. Helman's chapter entitled 'Ship Ahoy!' corresponds to Zarathustra's appeal to search for the 'new man' with these words: 'the undiscovered land in the furthest sea! For that land I command your sails to seek and seek!'³⁰

Upon arriving in the old world, Helman's prophet finds, just like Zarathustra does, a society that is completely unprepared for 'new man'. The old world is described as a society characterized by weakness: 'Here, one only finds weakening, decadence.'³¹ This recalls Nietzsche's contempt for weakness and his appeal for resistance from 'human beings who know how to be silent, lonely, determined, satisfied, and steadfast'.³² Similarly, Helman's protagonist searches for the answer to the question: 'How can one find the courage to resist all this as a real man?'³³

The answer comes through the smell of a tropical flower that brings back memories of Surinam, a nation where people of all races live and where the best conditions exist for the birth of the multiracial 'new man'. Like in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* where 'Everything goes, everything comes back; the wheel of being rolls eternally,'³⁴ Helman's announcement of the 'new man' is connected to the concept of the eternal return: 'And soon the moon will return, the same moon [...] And tomorrow the sun will come back, the same sun'.³⁵ Like Zarathustra, Helman's protagonist proclaims a combination of courage and solitude as a way to reach insight on the future of mankind, and both do so by choosing the desert as a metaphor. While Zarathustra speaks of the transformation from camel into lion and from lion into child, each representing a new stage in the progress of humanity, Helman's protagonist also uses the desert, animals and the child as metaphors in the pronouncement of the 'new man':

Nietzsche

But in the loneliest desert the second metamorphosis occurs. [...] Three metamorphoses of the spirit I named for you: how the spirit became a camel, and the camel a lion, and finally the lion a child.³⁶

Helman

He will live in [...] solitude [...] and grow [...] in the desert: to be strong and poor, and to have a loud voice; he will be brave among the animals. [...] We fulfill our painful duty: the child.³⁷

Nietzsche's 'new man' in the shape of the *Übermensch* remains an abstract notion. Like Vasconcelos, however, Helman concretizes the concept of the 'new man' in the shape of the multiracial man, who has a global identity that incorporates elements of all races: 'He will no longer be part of a specific people, nor will he be from the South or from the West, he will, rather, belong to everyone, because everyone belongs to him'.³⁸

Disappointment over the *Mestizaje*-Concept

Later in life, both Helman and Vasconcelos expressed doubts whether the *mestizo* did, in fact, form the basis for a superior society. Deeply disappointed with the social and political reality in Mexico and other Latin American countries, Vasconcelos began to question his own theory in the late 1930s. Cynically, he referred to *mestizos* as the 'comic' instead of 'cosmic' race and, in the introduction to his book *El desastre* (The Disaster, 1938), he admitted that by then, his 'own declaration of faith in mixed races seemed ironic to [him]self'.³⁹ In 1939, Vasconcelos even replaced his effusive praise of miscegenation with ideas similar to the white supremacist and anti-Semitic ideology of Nazism.⁴⁰

Although Helman would eventually move to the extreme left rather than the extreme right, he also became disillusioned with the *mestizaje* concept. In an entry in his journal on 27 September 1946, he expressed his disappointment with 'all that Creole weakness and idle talk' and admitted that his glorification of the *mestizo* as a 'higher man' had been naïve: 'Now I see so more clearly than in the past that racial mixture also leads to human monstrosity'.⁴¹ While Helman abandoned *mestizaje*, he continued to work with the *indianismo* model and, in the 1980s, he made an attempt to explain the drama of colonization from a Native American perspective in the novels *De foltering van Eldorado* (The Torture of Eldorado, 1983) and *Hoofden van de Oayapok!* (Heads of the Oayapok!, 1984).

Helman's *mestizaje* concept, as elaborated in *Zuid-Zuid-West*, became completely forgotten. This was different in the case of Vasconcelos who, despite his own disappointment over the concept, became celebrated as the 'father' of *mestizaje*. In the aftermath of World War II, UNESCO even considered *mestizaje* a model to combat policies of racial segregation all over the world. Vasconcelos's essay *La raza cósmica* had a decisive influence on Octavio Paz's magnum opus *El laberinto de la soledad* (The Labyrinth of Solitude, 1950) and other major works in Latin American literature, sociology and philosophy. In the United States, Vasconcelos's le-

gacy survives in the Hispanic advocacy group *La Raza*, which was named after his essay.

However, Vasconcelos's legacy did not remain without controversy. In the 1960s, the growing concern for minority rights and diversity that grew out of the Civil Rights movement in the United States provoked critical questions about Vasconcelos's theory. As it continued to affirm the superiority of the Iberian model of civilisation, *mestizaje* corresponded to the existing power structure on the Latin American continent since the sixteenth century and, as such, it was criticized as the perfect model to legitimise the power structure dominated by the traditional elites. Considering the fact that white people continued to be vastly over-represented in positions of political power and economic influence in Latin America, the hybrid *mestizaje* model of a colour-blind society came to be seen by as a sleep-inducing fairy tale rather than a combative model of revolutionary change.

Nietzsche and Helman's Catholicism

Helman's announcement of the 'new man' according to a Nietzschean model occurred in a profoundly Christian context, as it does in Vasconcelos's *La raza cósmica*. Accordingly, the parallels with Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* are complemented by parallels with the Bible. One example of such a biblical parallel is the reference to Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, where the Christian is announced as the 'new man':

Helman

Every human being is either crucified or the cross himself [...] But even more correct: together, two people form the salvation of a new man. [...] No longer a foreigner, but a son in an immeasurable house.⁴²

St Paul

For to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross. [...] Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.⁴³

A difficult question is whether Helman used these biblical references as a Christian smokescreen in order to circumvent Catholic censorship or rather, as in the case of Vasconcelos, as a strategy to lessen the Nietzschean influence on his concept of the 'new man'. Due to its strong Christian character, one might at first be inclined to overlook the Nietzschean elements in *Zuid-Zuid-West* and assume that it is just another deeply Christian book in the tradition of the Catholic writers' asso-

ciation De Gemeenschap. It cannot be denied, however, that Helman's references to Christianity in *Zuid-Zuid-West* are somewhat ambivalent.

This ambivalence is particularly noticeable when it comes to colonization. Helman is well aware of the fact that the introduction of Christianity in Latin America went hand in hand with its colonization. While, on the one hand, he presents Christianity as a reconciling force of forgiveness – 'But in the middle of the Andes [...] stands Christ, the king of Peace, high, lonely and untouchable, the sign of our blood-brotherhood, of our forgiveness'⁴⁴ – he provocatively opts for an Amerindian tribe with 'heretic' traditions as the nucleus from which the prophecy of the 'new man' originates. Moreover, the Christianization of these Amerindians is not described as their salvation, but rather as the decisive step to their extinction: 'Slowly they have all become Christians. [...] [T]hey all went to live at the branch of the river, and left the savanna far behind. [...] [T]he tribe died out soon later, and only its name remained.'⁴⁵

It is hard to imagine how a book with such a clear anti-colonial message could at the same time be an uncomplicated form of Christian propaganda. *Zuid-Zuid-West* should therefore rather be seen as a transitional work that, similarly to the short story 'Mijn aap schreit' ('My Monkey Weeps', 1928), reflects Helman's increasingly difficult intellectual relationship to the Catholic Church in the late 1920s.⁴⁶

Helman's use of a Nietzschean model in *Zuid-Zuid-West* corresponds to the beginning of his essay 'Korte aantekeningen over literatuur' ('Short Notes on Literature', 1928) about Pierre Kemp's *Carmina Matrimonialia*, where Nietzsche is also quoted and then followed by the remarkable reference: 'You should not worry about the fact that this was written by Nietzsche and not by one of the church fathers'.⁴⁷ How Catholic is an author who equates the fiercest anti-Christian philosopher in Western history as a source of intellectual inspiration with the church fathers? Is this not a sign that Helman had by then already crossed a border and that there was no return to the unproblematic Catholic worldview of his youth? Although Nietzsche is certainly not the main reason why Helman eventually abandoned the Catholic Church, his strong interest in the work of the German philosopher at a time when he moved away from Christianity might have contributed more to this decision than scholars have traditionally assumed.

It is therefore perhaps no coincidence that when Helman, as a member of the Dutch resistance during the German occupation in World War II, was forced to invent a series of pseudonyms for his clandestine publications he decided to call himself 'Friedrich Nietzsche'. He did so in a work with the same title as the one he used in *Zuid-Zuid-West* as a model for his prophecy of the 'new man': *Aldus sprak Zarathustra* (1944).

Notes

1. 'Sinds eeuwen zijt gij dieven, men zegt: geoorloofd. Maar weest dan minstens liefdevolle dieven en geen schurken.' A. Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1964), p. 112. All translations are by the author.
2. 'Zo vermoed is het oude ras, het uwe en het mijne. Straks kunnen wij rusten; duizend generaties die eindelijk kwamen aan het einde van hun plicht: één nieuwe mens. [...] Daarom zal deze geen volk meer kennen, geen zuid noch west, maar toebehoren aan allen, daar alles hem toebehoort. Van het ene land naar het andere zal hij gaan, niet wetend, dat hij oude grenzen overschreed. Over oceanen zal hij bruggen bouwen; met een onbuigzame wijsheid zal hij zich inpantseren.' Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 107.
3. J. Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race/La raza cósmica*, trans. by D.T. Jaén (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 20.
4. See M. van Kempen, *Kijk vreesloos in de spiegel. Albert Helman 1903-1996* (Haarlem: In de Knipscheer, 1998), pp. 41-50.
5. For a more detailed analysis of Nietzsche's influence on Vasconcelos, see D. Cortez, *Nietzsche y Dionisio en Latinoamérica: Discursos de identidad, mito y modernidad* (Saarbrücken: Südwestdeutscher Verlag für Hochschulschriften, 2009), pp. 121-46. Nietzsche's influence on Helman has never been analysed in detail, nor have the parallels between Helman and Vasconcelos been observed.
6. J. de Roo, 'Hollandse hovaardij. Moderne Surinaamse schrijvers over Nederland', in *Europa buitengaats. Koloniale en postkoloniale literaturen in Europese talen*, ed. by Th. D'Haen (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2002), p. 201.
7. See, for instance, the prediction by Leon Trotsky in *Literature and Revolution* (1924) that socialism will create the 'superman' and 'the man of the future'. L. Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, ed. by William Keach (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2005), p. 207.
8. See B.G. Rosenthal, *New Myth, New World: From Nietzsche to Stalinism* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), p. 189.
9. '[...] te veel waarde hechtte ik nog aan de namen van Boeddha, Plato en Nietzsche [...]', *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 65.
10. See Th. E. Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 67.
11. L. Agassiz, *A Journey in Brazil* (Chur: Plata Publishing, 1975), p. 293.
12. Skidmore, *Black into White*, p. 65.
13. It would go beyond the scope of this article to analyze whether Vasconcelos interpreted Nietzsche in an adequate form. It should be said, however, that the strong focus on how Nazism appropriated Nietzsche's ideas on race obscured other interpretations. Based on Schank (2000), one could claim that Nietzsche's work does allow a positive interpretation of miscegenation (pp. 434-7). In *Morgenröte* (Daybreak, 1881), Nietzsche described multiracial people by repeating the stereotypes one could find in the racial theories of his time – 'Crossed races always mean at the same time crossed cultures, crossed moralities; they are usually more evil, crueller, more restless' – yet he argued that, out of this disharmonious mixture, a new 'purified' race can develop, which ends up being superior: 'In the end, however, if the process of purification is successful, all that energy formerly expended in the struggle of the dissonant qualities with one an-

other will stand at the command of the total organism: which is why races that have become pure have always also become stronger and more beautiful' (p. 274). Nietzsche's reference to purity should, thus, not be misunderstood as a desire to prevent (racial) mixture. Rather, he warns that the positive effects of racial mixture are not automatically present. Mixtures first cause disharmony, which needs to be overcome by 'countless adaptations, absorptions and secretions' (p. 274). Only after a long process of successful re-harmonization, which he calls 'purification', can a superior race or culture originate from mixture. See G. Schank, *Rasse und Züchtigung bei Nietzsche* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and F. Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

14. Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, p. 9.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
16. In his work *Estética* (1936), Vasconcelos further elaborated his aesthetic theory based on Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, with the intention to complement the passionate Dionysian and the rational Apollonian with a third, Christian-based, mystic element: 'Fue el Origen de la Tragedia de Nietzsche el libro que me sugirió añadir una a sus dos categorías estéticas y determinar lo apolíneo, lo dionisiaco y lo místico.' J. Vasconcelos, *Estética* (Mexico City: Ediciones Botas, 1945), p. 294.
17. Cortez, *Nietzsche y Dionisos en Latinoamérica*, pp. 123-4.
18. Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race*, p. 31.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
20. Vasconcelos's belief in the power of aesthetics to improve humanity reflected itself in his policy as Mexican Minister of education (1921-4) when he implemented his famous programme to popularize art by covering the walls of public buildings with murals. See D.J. Jaén (ed.), *José Vasconcelos: The Cosmic Race/La raza cósmica* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. xxiii.
21. De Roo, 'Hollandse hovaardij', p. 201.
22. '[...] thans leven daar alle volkeren bij elkaar'. Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 19.
23. 'Hoe eenzaam al deze mensen naar elkander leven, blijkt uit het feit, dat ieder geheel zichzelf blijft.' Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 23.
24. '[...] de roes van het goddelijke ritme'. Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 89.
25. 'Mild zijn de ouderen voor de overmoed der jonge jagers; met eerbied luisteren de knapen naar de woorden der ouderen, en hun drift weet te zwijgen bij het kampvuur.' Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 92.
26. 'Éénmaal moet elke mens uit zijn eenzaamheid treden en toebehoren aan de gemeenschap; dit is het pijnlijkste, het droevigste ogenblik van zijn leven. Hij doet afstand van geheel zichzelf, en schenkt dit de nieuwe mens.' Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 107.
27. F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, ed. by R. Pippin, trans. by A. Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 3.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
29. 'Groot is de wijsheid van een stervend volk, het bezint zich op de diepste dingen, want het weet zijn taak weldra volbracht, en de laatste man – o schrik, ben ik die laatste van

- mijn volk? – moet antwoord geven op de vraag: waarom zijn stam geleefd heeft en waarvoor het leed gedragen is van kind tot kind.’ Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 88.
30. Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p. 163.
 31. ‘Het is alleen maar verzwakking, verpietering.’ Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 101.
 32. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 160-1.
 33. ‘Hoe kan een mens zich tegen dit alles vermennen?’ Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 105. This image of the ‘strong man’ corresponds to Helman’s conclusion of *Mijn aap schreit* (1928) in the shape of the lonely hunter. See F.M. Arion, *Albert Helman, de eenzame jager* (Paramaribo: Cahier van het Instituut voor de Opleiding van Leraren, 1977), p. 28.
 34. Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, p. 175.
 35. ‘En straks komt de maan, dezelfde maan [...] En morgen komt de zon, dezelfde zon [...]’ Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 105.
 36. Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, pp. 16-7.
 37. ‘Hij zal leven in de eenzaamheid van twee mensen en groeien als Johannes in de woestijn: sterk zal zijn arm zijn, en luid zijn stem; hij zal moedig zijn tussen de dieren. [...] Wij doen onze pijnlijke plicht: het kind’. Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, pp. 106-7.
 38. ‘[...] deze zal geen volk meer kennen, geen zuid noch west, maar toebehoren aan allen, daar alles hem toebehoort’. Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 107.
 39. Jaén, *José Vasconcelos*, p. xvii.
 40. See M.G. Millar, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race: The Cult of Mestizaje in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), p. 44.
 41. ‘[...] zoveel creoolse slapte en fraseologie’ and ‘[...] meer dan vroeger zie ik, hoeveel menselijke wanproductie met de gemengdbloedigheid samengaat’. A. Helman, *Journal*, entry for 27 September 1946. Helman’s *Journal* has not been published; it can be found in the archives of the Nederlands Letterkundig Museum en Documentatiecentrum in The Hague, box nr. 1292.
 42. ‘Iedere mens is ofwel gekruisigde ofwel het kruis [...] Maar juist nog: twee mensen zijn samen de verlossing van een nieuwe mens [...] Niet langer een vreemdeling, maar een zoon in een onmetelijk huis’. Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, pp. 106-7.
 43. *Ephesians II*, 15-16 and 19.
 44. ‘Maar midden in de Andes [...] staat de Christus, koning van Vrede, hoog, eenzaam en onaantastbaar, het teken van onze bloed-broederschap, van onze vergeving.’ Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, p. 15.
 45. ‘Langzamerhand zijn allen christen geworden [...] ze gaan nu voorgoed wonen aan de arm der rivier, ver van de savanna [...] het stierf uit in korte tijd, en slechts zijn naam bleef over.’ Helman, *Zuid-Zuid-West*, pp. 92-4.
 46. See M. van Kempen, ‘Caliban met welgevulde boekentas. Albert Helman als indiaan in de diaspora?’, *Armada* 4. 16 (1999), pp. 51-2. ‘Het kan u onverschillig wezen, dat niet een der kerkvaders dit schreef, maar Nietzsche.’ A. Helman, ‘Korte aantekeningen over literatuur’, *De Gemeenschap* 4 (1928), p. 374.
 47. ‘Het kan u onverschillig wezen, dat niet een der kerkvaders dit schreef, maar Nietzsche.’ A. Helman, ‘Korte aantekeningen over literatuur’, *De Gemeenschap* 4 (1928), p. 374.

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