BOOKS I HAVE READ: CLOUD ATLAS

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Category: Reviews



I think this is a first for me; I don't think I've ever seen a movie and then decided that I really wanted to read the book it was based on. I have to say that I wasn't disappointed byÂ Cloud Atlas; I thoroughly enjoyed the movie and thoroughly enjoyed the novel, even though I only read it a few days after seeing the film.

Then again, there are so many subtle details, plot twists and leaps across time in both the book and the film that you could never exhaust them all in one viewing or reading.

Cloud AtlasÂ consists of six separate stories all told in different genres:

- The diary of a 19 century lawyer travelling in the Pacific.
- Letters from a wayward young composer in Europe between the wars.
- The adventures of a Californian layer in the 1970s - which is told as fact, but may be fiction (within the book, that is).
- A black farce about a publisher in contemporary London.
- A philosophical sci-fi story set in a dystopian city in the future (which turns out to be in Korea).
- The story of a man living in Hawaii after the complete fall and ruin of civilisation. This is mainly told in an argot which reminded me of Riddley WalkerÂ - though it wasn't quite as obtuse.

The book works through each of these stories in turn; stopping apparently at random half way through each, until the last story is reached which is told in full. The rest of the stories are then finished in reverse order; each providing insights into the others and explaining why they stopped where they did. It sounds complicated; because it is.

Don't be put off, it's a superb book and well worth reading even if you have seen the film. I didn't particularly enjoy the philosophising about reincarnation and the way that souls are all linked through time; but this isn't overbearing and really doesn't spoil the story(ies).

Each of the six sub-plots would make a good novella on their own, but woven together, they are outstanding.

If you've not seen the movie, here is the trailer:

Now that the summer is over, it could be that you aren't planning on reading any more fiction till next year's holidays come around. In that case, you could always watchÂ Cloud AtlasÂ on DVD!