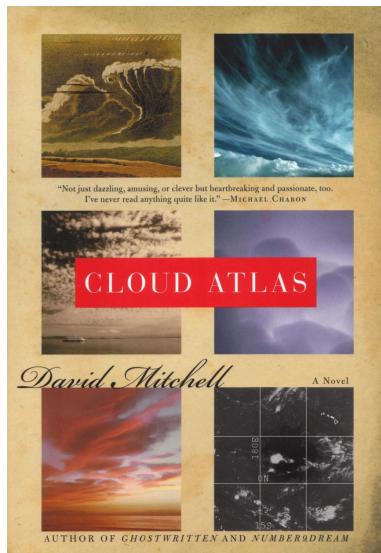


Thoughts on *Cloud Atlas*

2.4.26 - Golden Bean Cafe Belval



"Yet what is any ocean but a multitude of drops?"

I'm working on when I write these to be less book report-y and analytical and talk more about how the book made ME feel and MY unique thoughts on it instead of trying to just break down the book in a non-personal way. As an overly logical person (some would say "logic-bully") and as more of an emotional regulator (cold-hearted robot) this can be a bit hard for me so bare with me.

Now before I get into anything related in terms of the book itself content-wise I just want to say that I highly highly recommend a fan of any genre of reading (or just reading period) to read this book it's amazing and unique in structure. Second, shout out my pops for placing this book in my hands. I'm not quite sure where to start in terms of my thoughts so I'm just gonna start typing and let my thoughts come. The way the book takes the reader through time, and the rise and fall of civilization and different structures is fascinating and is a huge part of what made the book so cool. You have the individual stories, which are dense/detailed and can be enjoyed, deciphered and unpacked within themselves. But then you can zoom out and look at the book as a whole and you have a new angle and light to cast upon each story and examine the individual plots not as they stand alone but in the context of these other stories across time.

A lot of the characters in this book are morally ambiguous in a way. Which to me makes the stories even better. I took it as "no matter your past mistakes, your missteps and wrong-doings, we all have it in us to rise to the occasion and do what's right or noble when the time comes." To me, this is essentially what this book spoke about: **be the change/resistance you want to see in this predatory world.** It's obviously a bit more intricate than that I'm sure, but to me this is what the book spoke to. Hence the last line of the book being "*Yet what is any ocean but a multitude of drops?*" Ewing writes this in response to his dad critiquing him on pledging his life/efforts to the abolitionist cause. His dad tells him his efforts are futile, that he is

just a “drop in a limitless ocean,” to which Ewing counters with the quote above. I found this message extremely powerful in that it basically spurred me into action and made me sit and think, am I doing my part to fight / resist the wrong-doings/predatory nature of our world? Mitchell seems to be implying there are two “types” of people. Those like Ewing’s dad who believes that fighting back is useless (just a drop in a limitless ocean), and those like Ewing who believe people have to begin somewhere in the fight against the predatory power structures in place and that change/good can be achieved (what is an ocean but a multitude of drops). It’s a very human question, and really pulled/tugged (no diddy) at my conscience after how Mitchell feeds you these stories detailing people struggling against power structures over generations. Like I said, it lit a fire under me a bit and not in a passing, just a feeling way, but in a way that has me sitting and reflecting on how I want to live my life and how I can be more like the protagonists in this novel and make the world a less ruthless, predatory place. Nothing ever changes in this world unless individuals force the people in power’s hand. Change for the better does not just occur and these corrupt systems of power we have in place in our world do not self correct, rather they spiral in on themselves and become more corrupt, more predatory. It is only through the actions of people like Rey, Ewing, Zachry etc. that can begin to turn the tides and dismantle these structures. I also just want to add that the structure of the book and splitting up the stories the way that Mitchell did made it so much cooler to recognize shit thematically and understand that while time/technology/means changes, exploitation persists and just takes different forms. Really cool how Mitchell hints to this by referencing each story in the following one and keeping some things constant across all stories (like the comet birthmark).

All messaging and purpose aside this book was just an absolute page-turner and so entertaining. One story would get cut off and the next one would begin and I’d be like damn it I want to continue that story and would be pissed off for the first 5-10 pages of the next story until then that story sucked me in no diddy and I was completely engrossed.

Ok I’m yapping a bit so gonna discuss my thoughts kinda story by story and then tie it together at the end hopefully if I can manage that:

The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing

- I loved this story. To me this is the essential story of the book, as it starts it and then ties it all together. The setting /lawlessness of the time period (1800s out at sea) make the abuse and exploitation jarring (enslaving the indigenous, getting them addicted to tobacco for profit, the crew on the ship sexually assaulting the younger crewmates each night). To me this was so powerful though, and I think Mitchell masterfully does this to show that while the abuse / malpractice is more VISUAL in this age/generation, the same things happen across time and in the future in more “lawful” and “organized” society, just less eyes see it. Like I said earlier, this point was really driven home for me because of how the book was structured and you digest bits of the stories at a time and all the stories are woven together which calls your attention to this. I just thought that was really excellent and well done and an amazing way to point out that despite our world being more advanced and “civilized,” this is just advancement in the sense of tech / means, not in morals or

equality for everyone. Really cool/powerful to me how Mitchell was able to drive this point home. Being “Civilized” **does not mean or equal to** being morally superior in any way.

- Doctor Goose is a really fascinating character to me. He has the right outlook/cynicisms about social darwinism (displayed at the dinner visiting the missionaries), and he’s on the right track, but he represents what happens if you take the negative and cynical route with it instead of using this enlightenment for good. Let me explain I’m being vague asf. Goose goes on a rant while poisoning Ewing, talking about how all humanity does is enslave and prey on one another, it’s clear here he’s not a believer of social darwinism or that there is a “ladder” of human decency and superiority. He sees and understands that “the world is wicked” and that humanity is a mess but throws himself into the idea instead of fighting back against it. Doctor Goose is like Ewing if he took his enlightenment and went down a dark path. Kinda a cool character difference and like alteration to me.
- Like I said I think this story to me is the most important in the book (or at least the most direct in its messaging) in how it asks the reader and tells a story of is doing/fighting for good in this world worth it if you’re going against insurmountable powers?

Letters from Zedelghem

- Lol Robert Frobisher (from here on denoted as RF) is so unhinged and a sly bastard but he was a great change of pace to me in this novel. What made him such an interesting character to me was his moral ambiguity (talked about this earlier). He stole, cheated, lied, and took advantage of people all throughout his story (could be due to the fact he isn’t totally mentally stable. He’s highkey a snake but entertaining asf probably due to the fact he is super messy but he is one of the only characters that uses humour so well and I found myself laughing or snorting at his entries).
- Won’t lie I didn’t realize this until reading about the book online but the books structure mimics the structure of his composition the *Cloud Atlas Sextet* which is a pretty cool wrinkle.
- I liked this one a lot though because one: entertaining and two: you have just a mish mash of super flawed characters and RF is despicable at times but you root for him nonetheless. Eclectic one but great one.

Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery

- Absolute banger of a story and I found it so interesting / unique how this story was referenced in the following one (The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish) as Cavendish is reading her story as a book editor and comments that it’s “another cliche journalism piece” or something like that. So interesting to be reading a book and have it split up and have one piece of the book provide such direct and harsh commentary to another part of the book.
- Not as much to say on this one other than I really super enjoyed it was very entertaining. Thought that Joe Napier was the most interesting character who was the books them of “a

multitude of drops” encapsulated. Retired, isn’t required to join the fight, but joins it nonetheless to have good overcome evil even if it’s just temporarily. Although it could be argued Napier is acting more out of guilt / in repayment of Luisa’s father which would alter his character a bit. Still generates interesting dialogue though of if someone is doing the right thing but for the wrong reasons where does that leave them / how does Napier differ from Luis? Idk just thoughts I have as I write this out.

- Reminds me of the whole Boeing whistleblower shit and now that I think about it its insane how easily that blew over with no one being held accountable lol they were just blowing peoples brains out who were trying to keep the public safe. Exact parallel to what goes on in this story and reminder that just because this book is fiction does not mean the conflicts within it are not very real in the world we actually live in.
- “Bill Smokes” is a fucking sick assassin name lol Mitchell cooked coming up with that

The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish

- I want to say that while at first I found this one a bit confusing, boring, and out of place in the book it may have ended up as my second favorite. Always cool to watch old people fuck shit up and show society that Uncle still got it (insert that meme of the guy hopping over that rope on his ass saying “unc still got it.” if you’re not chronically online I sound like a madman right now).
- The story mimics the themes of the book but in a much softer / low stakes way. You have an all seeing / powerful authority in place (the Aurora house old people home). I would love to ask Mitchell why he included this story in particular. It was definitely the most whimsical (which is confirmed later as we know it gets turned into a sort of spoof/comedy film) and is light-hearted and funny.
- Funny how Cavendish refers to the people in the home as the “undead” lol. Implying they aren’t dead but they are old enough and submissive enough to their rulers that they aren’t living either. That’s a pretty cool and powerful message wrapped up in this story right there.
- Two of my favorite quotes from the Book come from this story
 - *“It is attitude, not years that condemn me to the ranks of the undead”*
 - *“In the domain of the young there dwells many an undead soul. They rush about so, their inner putrefaction is concealed for a few decades, that is all”*
- Still I story of bucking the system, just at lower stakes and consequences. Although to be fair it’s their freedom they are fighting for that old peoples home was crazy

An Orison of Sonmi-451

- Blade Runner type shit I knew I was gonna like this one as soon as I saw “fabricants.”
- The thing I respected/admired most about this storyline was how well you get thrown into the world without overexplaining what is going on. You just naturally settle in until the futuristic terms that are being used are second nature and I was fully immersed.
- Getting tired of typing tbh so im gonna end this one here I have to catch a bus lol but it was a crazy twist and a twist im still not sure I understand when they revealed how the

whole rebellion was manufactured by the state itself? Didn't totally get that part might have to go reread. Great story tho Ws in the chat

Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After

- My favorite story of the book for sure the way it's written in like the broken english with all the words cut short almost gave me an aneurysm and took a few pages to familiarize myself with but once I did it was fucking money and I never looked back. Shoutout ZAchry what an absolute DAWG and my favorite character in the book for sure. His honesty about his shortcomings, inner dialogue/though process and wrong doings was inspiring to me. Cheesy but real.
- The story echoed the same sentiment from Ewings tale of your advancement technologically and level of civilization does not speak to your true character and principles as a human being on this earth. There are beautiful souls in low places and nasty souls in high places and vice versa.
- Also loved this story because it just shows the rise and fall of civilization and how advancement is not some linear path. This is the most primitive story of the group and yet it is the most futuristic.
- Kind of similarly to the point above, this story drove him the point to me that I've mentioned above of the idea that as time advances ethics do not advance humans are stuck in the same ethical struggles across the history of time TIME IS A FLAT CIRCLE WORD 2 TRUE DETECTIVE AND RUST!!

Long story short banger book really enjoyed it. Onwards we go as I add another book to my mental library.