

'Cloud Atlas': A Fuzzy Nightmare

Based on an acclaimed novel, *Cloud Atlas* takes place over 500 years. The group of characters from the 19th century turn out to be the same characters at several points in the 20th century and then in the future. Thus, characters, who are in love in 1849 and 1973, shift bodies and fall in love in the future. So, sometimes people who are men become women and vice versa. Sometimes the love affair is homosexual. Sometimes it is interracial. And sometimes, the same character is a villain in one generation and a hero in the next.

All of this is somewhat confusing, but not as much as it could be, because the same theme keeps repeating itself in each generation. That is, escaping the control of society and convention to be free to do your own thing—whether that includes homosexuality, smoking dope, living in a commune or standing up against the forces of injustice.

Some of the stories in *Cloud Atlas* are just dull and meaningless. Some actually are interesting and could have been better developed. Almost all of them have tremendous plot holes, because they are just sketches, not complete stories and rely on the other stories to get meaning. In an attempt to help viewers follow the raggedy action, there's a comet birthmark that appears on one of the significant characters in each story.

For instance, one of the stories is about two homosexual lovers, and the comet appears on one of the man's lower back. Another comet appears on the shoulder of a woman in the future. So, this comet indicates these characters are reincarnated versions of the same transmigrating soul. Sometimes the love affair is homosexual, and sometimes it's unrequited, as in the story set in 1974 where a scientist says

he fell in love with a woman the moment he saw her (because she was the “he” who was his homosexual lover in the previous incarnation), only to get blown up in a scheme by Big Oil to destroy nuclear power.

This isn't good storytelling. Instead, it's sophomoric, pseudo-intellectual cleverness posing as storytelling. The movie does have some great action scenes and some good acting, but it also has some miserable acting and some goofy makeup that makes it look like Tom Hanks in goofy makeup. We're sorry, but Tom Hanks is Tom Hanks, even in a bald skullcap.

Sex is a recurring theme throughout the movie, even when it serves no purpose. This lewd content includes a very vivid sex scene in a future South Korea that has absolutely nothing to do with the plot since the two characters involved are just trying to escape from the one-world power which is turning women into food in a gigantic meat factory reminiscent of *Soylent Green*, which is referenced in the movie.

Cannibalism rears its ugly head again in a retrograde segment where Tom Hanks is part of a culture that's been reduced to an agrarian, primitive existence, including witchcraft. By the way, this character is rescued by one of the remnant from the future civilization that collapsed.

Christians in *Cloud Atlas* are uniformly treated poorly, mocked and treated as bad people, including a minister who argues for slavery and a doctor who's trying to poison a patient to steal his money. There are some vague, positive spiritual references in *Cloud Atlas*, but these indicate that even suicide victims, murderers and cannibals go to some better future world.

Big Oil is another villain in the future in one of the silliest plot devices in recent movie history. Of course, the crusading, willing-to-steal-to-get-her-story, biased news journalist is the hero. Some of the audience at the press screening laughed out loud.

Regrettably, the future world in *Cloud Atlas* is just reincarnation. It isn't, however, Hindu reincarnation where you can come back as a cockroach or a cow. It's a westernized, counter-culture reincarnation where you have to live your life over and over again, falling in love with the same person and trying to escape from being controlled by society. Anybody with a brain should realize that no one would want to go through the same torturous experience generation after generation, much less come back as a cow or a cockroach.

Those who see *Cloud Atlas* should be told the Good News that you don't have to be reincarnated—that, if you accept Jesus Christ, you can be truly free and go to heaven, get out of the rat race and truly be yourself, the best you that God has created. Now, that truly is good news!

Cloud Atlas is a mess. It's a self-indulgent, self-reverential pagan ode to reincarnation, transmigration of souls, selfish lustful love and ultimately escape to self-centered freedom.

The film is a cloudy, dope-induced, fuzzy philosophical nightmare. It offers no hope and a lot of tedium. Its politically correct worldview not only attacks Christianity and Christian values, it also promotes a radical liberal and libertarian, somewhat anti-capitalist definition of freedom and love. *Cloud Atlas* has a good cast and implies the sinfulness of man, but it's hard to believe the average moviegoer is going to appreciate this convoluted, depressing tale.

The freedom extolled by the stories in *Cloud Atlas* is a freedom with no direction, a freedom without any "boundaries" or "limitations," a self-centered freedom that really doesn't lead anywhere. It's the kind of hedonistic freedom that the hippie culture used to promote back in the Dark Ages, the decade that's now called "The 60s." Clearly, this "hippie-fried" definition of freedom, along with its hedonistic vision of love, is still with us today. It's a freedom and love,

however, devoid of any Christian, biblical notion of good and evil, faith and truth. The kind of freedom and love Jesus espouses is a freedom and love that doesn't delight in evil or lust, but a freedom and love that extols goodness and truth and that lives by faith.

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