



Cloud Atlas: Adaptation and the Primacy of Science Fiction

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Cloud Atlas: Adaptation and the primacy of science fiction

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This paper will discuss how the film adaptation of David Mitchell's novel *Cloud Atlas* took a number of very interesting choices which ultimately leave the film as a significantly different experience from the book. The clearly segmented stories of the novel are told concurrently in the film, and the themes of rebirth and recurrences are underlined by the choice of utilizing the same cast of actors in different roles in the different eras of the plot.

The analysis will be based on a thorough formal analysis of the composition of the film version of *Cloud Atlas*, ascertaining the patterns behind the unusual construction of the narrative and how this relates to the composition of the source material.

It will be discussed how this is not without filmic precedents, where stories from different time periods are juxtaposed and edited together. The composition of *Cloud Atlas* will be compared to such films as *Intolerance* (1916), *Leaves Out of the Book of Satan* (1922) and *The Fountain* (2006).

Special attention will be given to how *Cloud Atlas* the film breaks from these predecessors as well as the novel in the emphasis on the science fiction genre and fiction time periods. In this way, *Cloud Atlas* can also be placed in a tradition of newer science fiction films with unusual narrative approaches. The film adaptation is thus not a place with rigid borders between genres and time periods, but a far more complexly structured work in which, in the words of co-director Lana Wachowski exists a "utopia" of intermixing genres (quoted in Hemon 2012) which tells a story "suggest[ing] a wider breadth of humanity" (Lana Wachowski quoted in Robinson 2012) but stretches this preoccupation beyond a focus on the present and into a fictional future which mixes both the utopian and the dystopian.

Biography

Christoffer Bagger holds a Master's Degree in film and media studies, and is employed as a research assistant at the department of Media, Cognition and Communication at the University of Copenhagen. His research interests particular include film form, and innovations in the recent science fiction cinema.