

David Mitchell

CLOUD
ATLAS



'An impeccable dance
radiant festival of prescience,



of genres . . . an elegiac,
meditation and entertainment'

The Times

Shortlisted for THE MAN BOOKER PRIZE 2004

DAVID
MITCHELL

cloud atlas

'Superbly entertaining' Daily Telegraph

'A masterful feast' Evening Standard

'Shamelessly exciting' Spectator

'Remarkable' Guardian

'Stunning' Daily Mail



Praise for *Cloud Atlas*

“[Mitchell’s] exuberant, Nabokovian delight in word play; his provocative grapplings with the great unknowables; and most of all his masterful storytelling: All coalesce to make *Cloud Atlas* an exciting, almost overwhelming masterpiece.”

—*The Washington Times*

“[Mitchell’s] language crackles with texture and bite.”

—*Time*

“Hugely entertaining ... a surfeit of narrative ingenuity.”

—*The New York Observer*

“Mitchell’s talent for riotous incident and energetic prose keep the pages turning.”

—*Entertainment Weekly*

“[Mitchell’s] most audacious work ... a wild, wonderful ride.”

—*Newsweek*

“*[Cloud Atlas]* glows with a zzy, dizzy energy, pregnant with possibility and whispering in your

ear: Listen closely to a story, any story, and you'll hear another story inside it, eager to meet the world."

—*The Village Voice*

"Exhilarating, elegant, and accomplished ... *Cloud Atlas* is a narrative about the act of narration, the ability of storytelling to shape our sense of history, civilization, and selfhood."

—*Time Out New York*

"Mitchell has a gift for creating fully realized worlds with a varied cast of characters."

—*Library Journal*

"[Like] Haruki Murakami, Mitchell mixes highbrow concerns with pulp content for maximum reading pleasure."

—*Details*

"*Cloud Atlas* is such an astounding feat that it's tempting to think there must be several David Mitchells, each of whom wrote one part of this book."

—*BookPage*

"Stunning ... Mitchell has a gift with language. [His] exploration of power and greed is riveting."

—*Rocky Mountain News*

“Audacious, sprawling, preposterously ambitious ... Next time someone suggests that The Novel is endangered, hit him with this one. *Hard.*”

—*The San Diego Union-Tribune*

“Revolutionary ... *Cloud Atlas* brilliantly puzzles out the way things might not have been.”

—*Newsday*

“Astonishing ... The way Mitchell inhabits the different voices is close to miraculous.”

—*The Sunday Times* (London)

“A remarkable book ... It knits together science fiction, political thriller and historical pastiche with musical virtuosity and linguistic exuberance.”

—*Evening Standard* (London)

“A cornucopia, an elegiac, radiant festival of prescience, meditation, and entertainment. Open up Mitchell’s head and a whole ecstatic symphony of inventiveness and ideas will y out as if from a benign and felicitous Pandora’s box.”

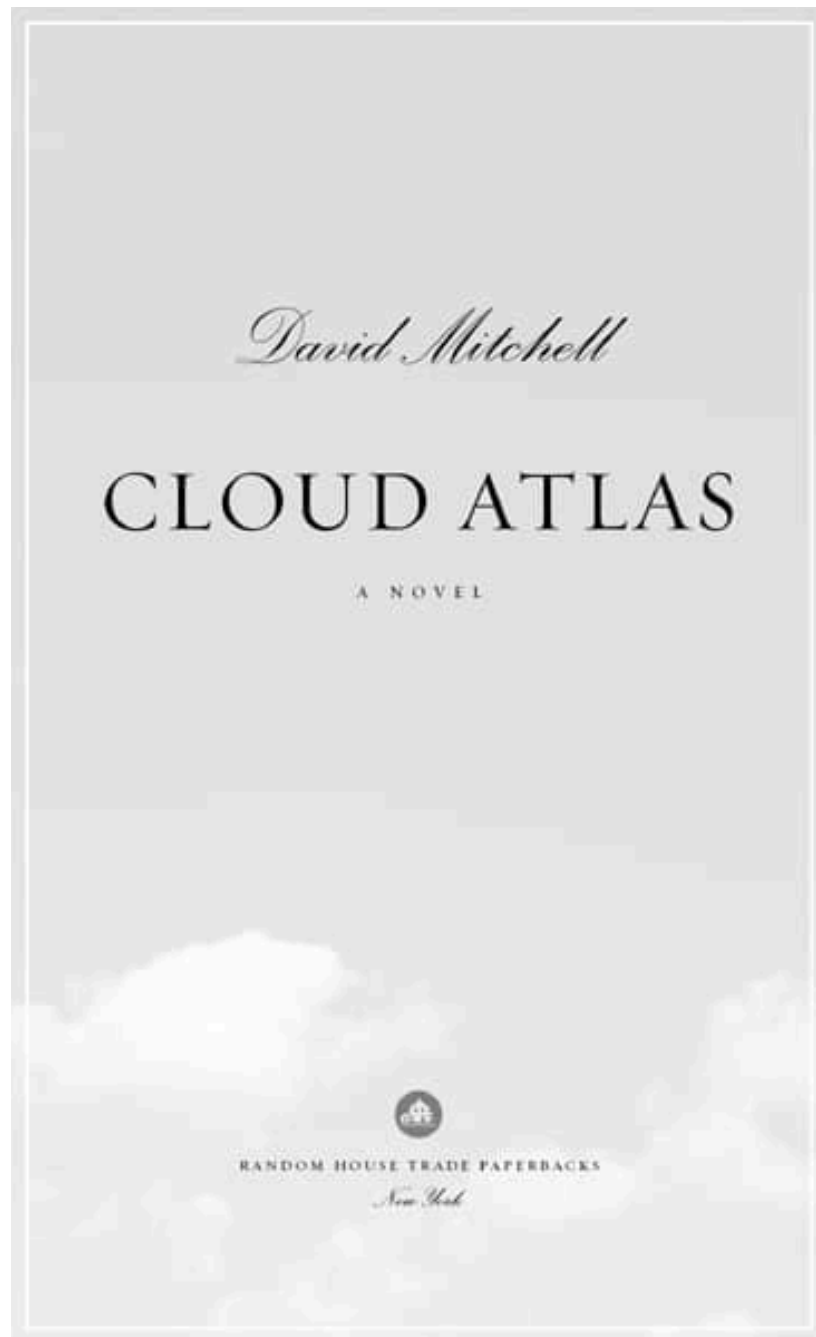
—*The Times* (London)

ALSO BY DAVID MITCHELL

Ghostwritten

number9dream

Black Swan Green



This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is entirely

coincidental.

Copyright © 2004 by David Mitchell

All rights reserved.

Published in the United States by Random House Trade Paperbacks, an imprint of The Random

House Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc., New York.

RANDOM HOUSE TRADE PAPERBACKS and colophon are trademarks of Random House, Inc.

Originally published in Great Britain by Hodder and Stoughton, a division of Hodder Headline,

London.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Mitchell, David

Cloud atlas : a novel / David Mitchell.

p. cm.

eISBN: 978-0-307-48304-1

1. Fate and fatalism—Fiction. 2. Reincarnation—Fiction. 1. Title.

PR6063.I785C58 2004

823'.92—dc22 2003069314

Random House website address: www.atrandom.com

v3.1

FOR HANA AND HER GRANDPARENTS

contents

[Cover](#)

[Other Books by this Author](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing](#)

[Letters from Zedelghem](#)

[Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery](#)

[The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish](#)

[An Orison of Sonmi~451](#)

[Sloosha's Crossin' An' Ev'rythin' After](#)

[An Orison of Sonmi~451](#)

[The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish](#)

[Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery](#)

[Letters from Zedelghem](#)

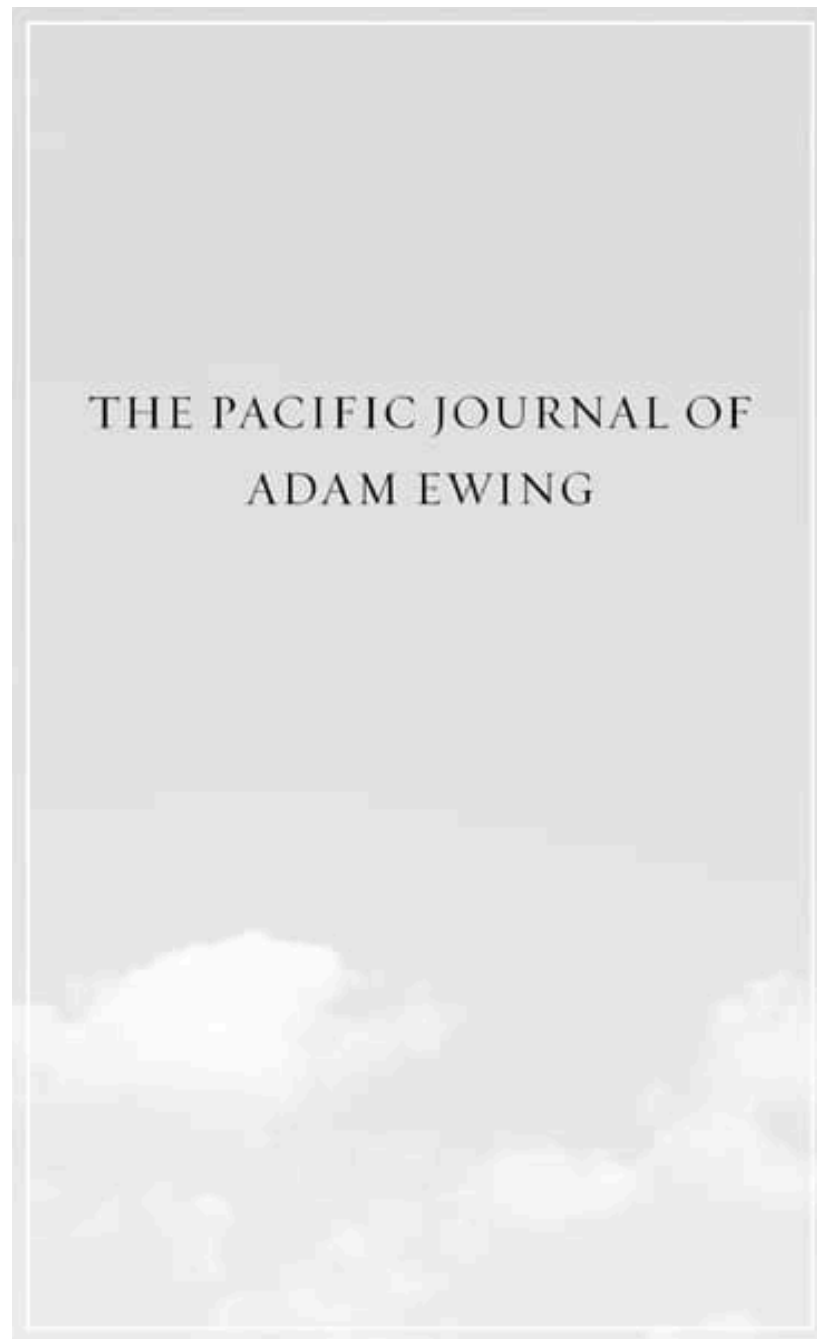
[The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing](#)

[About the Author](#)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Manuel Berri, Susan M. S. Brown, Amber Burlinson, Angeles Marín Cabello, David Ebersho , Late Junction, Rodney King, David Koerner, Sabine Lacaze, Jenny Mitchell, Jan Monte ore, Scott Moyers, David De Neef, John Pearce, Jonathan Pegg, Steve Powell, Mike Shaw, Douglas Stewart, Marnix Verplancke, Carole Welch.

The Ewing and Zachry chapters were researched with the aid of a travel scholarship from the Society of Authors. Michael King's definitive work on the Moriori, *A Land Apart*, provides a factual account of Chatham Islands history. Certain scenes in Robert Frobisher's letters owe debts of inspiration to *Delius: As I Knew Him* by Eric Fenby (Icon Books, 1966; originally G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1936). The character Vyvyan Ayrs quotes Nietzsche more freely than he admits, and the poem read by Hester Van Zandt to Margo Roker is Emerson's "Brahma."



Thursday, 7th November—

Beyond the Indian hamlet, upon a forlorn strand, I happened on a trail of recent footprints. Through rotting kelp, sea cocoa-nuts & bamboo, the tracks led me to their maker, a White man, his trowzers & Pea-jacket rolled up,

sporting a kempt beard & an outsized Beaver, shoveling & sifting the cindery sand with a teaspoon so intently that he noticed me only after I had hailed him from ten yards away. Thus it was, I made the acquaintance of Dr. Henry Goose, surgeon to the London nobility. His nationality was no surprise. If there be any eyrie so desolate, or isle so remote, that one may there resort unchallenged by an Englishman, 'tis not down on any map I ever saw.

Had the doctor misplaced anything on that dismal shore? Could I render assistance? Dr. Goose shook his head, knotted loose his 'kerchief & displayed its contents with clear pride. "Teeth, sir, are the enameled grails of the quest in hand. In days gone by this Arcadian strand was a cannibals' banqueting hall, yes, where the strong engorged themselves on the weak. The teeth, they spat out, as you or I would expel cherry stones. But these base molars, sir, shall be transmuted to gold & how? An artisan of Piccadilly who fashions denture sets for the nobility pays handsomely for human gnashers. Do you know the price a quarter pound will earn, sir?"

I confessed I did not.

"Nor shall I enlighten you, sir, for 'tis a professional secret!" He tapped his nose. "Mr. Ewing, are you acquainted with Marchioness Grace of Mayfair? No? The better for you, for she is a corpse in petticoats. Five years have passed since this harridan besmirched my name, yes, with imputations that resulted in my being blackballed from Society." Dr. Goose looked out to sea. "My peregrinations began in that dark hour."

I expressed sympathy with the doctor's plight.

"I thank you, sir, I thank you, but these ivories"—he shook his 'kerchief—"are my angels of redemption. Permit me to elucidate. The Marchioness wears dental xtures fashioned by the aforementioned doctor. Next yuletide, just as that scented She-Donkey is addressing her Ambassadors' Ball, I,

Henry Goose, yes, *I* shall arise & declare to one & all that our hostess masticates with cannibals' gnashers! Sir Hubert will challenge me, predictably, 'Furnish your evidence,' that boor shall roar, 'or grant me satisfaction!' I shall declare, 'Evidence, Sir Hubert? Why, I gathered your mother's teeth *myself* from the spittoon of the South Pacific! Here, sir, *here* are some of their fellows!' & ing these very teeth into her tortoiseshell soup tureen & that, sir, that will grant me *my* satisfaction! The twittering wits will scald the icy Marchioness in their news sheets & by next season she shall be fortunate to receive an invitation to a Poorhouse Ball!"

In haste, I bade Henry Goose a good day. I fancy he is a Bedlamite.

Friday, 8th November—

In the rude shipyard beneath my window, work progresses on the jibboom, under Mr. Sykes's directorship. Mr. Walker, Ocean Bay's sole taverner, is also its principal timber merchant & he brags of his years as a master shipbuilder in Liverpool. (I am now versed enough in Antipodese etiquette to let such unlikely truths lie.) Mr. Sykes told me an entire week is needed to render the *Prophetess* "Bristol fashion." Seven days holed up in the *Musket* seems a grim sentence, yet I recall the fangs of the banshee tempest & the mariners lost o'erboard & my present misfortune feels less acute.

I met Dr. Goose on the stairs this morning & we took breakfast together. He has lodged at the *Musket* since middle October after voyaging hither on a Brazilian merchantman, *Namorados*, from Feejee, where he practiced his arts in a mission. Now the doctor awaits a long-overdue Australian sealer, the *Nellie*, to convey him to Sydney. From the colony he will seek a position aboard a passenger ship for his native London.

My judgment of Dr. Goose was unjust & premature. One must be cynical as Diogenes to prosper in my profession, but cynicism can blind one to subtler virtues. The doctor has his eccentricities & recounts them gladly for a dram of Portuguese *pisco* (never to excess), but I vouchsafe he is the only other gentleman on this latitude east of Sydney & west of Valparaiso. I may even compose for him a letter of introduction for the Partridges in Sydney, for Dr. Goose & dear Fred are of the same cloth.

Poor weather precluding my morning outing, we yarned by the peat re & the hours sped by like minutes. I spoke at length of Tilda & Jackson & also my fears of “gold fever” in San Francisco. Our conversation then voyaged from my hometown to my recent notarial duties in New South Wales, thence to Gibbon, Malthus & Godwin via Leeches & Locomotives. Attentive conversation is an emollient I lack sorely aboard the *Prophetess* & the doctor is a veritable polymath. Moreover, he possesses a handsome army of scrimshandered chessmen whom we shall keep busy until either the *Prophetess*’s departure or the *Nellie*’s arrival.

Saturday, 9th November—

Sunrise bright as a silver dollar. Our schooner still looks a woeful picture out in the Bay. An Indian war canoe is being careened on the shore. Henry & I struck out for “Banqueter’s Beach” in holy-day mood, blithely saluting the maid who labors for Mr. Walker. The sullen miss was hanging laundry on a shrub & ignored us. She has a tinge of black blood & I fancy her mother is not far removed from the jungle breed.

As we passed below the Indian hamlet, a “humming” aroused our curiosity & we resolved to locate its source. The settlement is circumvallated by a stake fence, so decayed that one may gain ingress at a dozen places. A hairless bitch

raised her head, but she was toothless & dying & did not bark. An outer ring of *ponga* huts (fashioned from branches, earthen walls & matted ceilings) groveled in the lees of “grandee” dwellings, wooden structures with carved lintel pieces & rudimentary porches. In the hub of this village, a public ogging was under way. Henry & I were the only two Whites present, but three castes of spectating Indians were demarked. The chieftain occupied his throne, in a feathered cloak, while the tattooed gentry & their womenfolk & children stood in attendance, numbering some thirty in total. The slaves, duskier & sootier than their nut-brown masters & less than half their number, squatted in the mud. Such inbred, bovine torpor! Pockmarked & pustular with *haki-haki*, these wretches watched the punishment, making no response but that bizarre, beelike “hum.” Empathy or condemnation, we knew not what the noise signified. The whip master was a Goliath whose physique would daunt any frontier prizefighter. Lizards mighty & small were tattooed over every inch of the savage’s musculature:—his pelt would fetch a fine price, though I should not be the man assigned to relieve him of it for all the pearls of O-hawaii! The piteous prisoner, hoarfrosted with many harsh years, was bound naked to an A-frame. His body shuddered with each excoriating lash, his back was a vellum of bloody runes, but his insensible face bespoke the serenity of a martyr already in the care of the Lord.

I confess, I swooned under each fall of the lash. Then a peculiar thing occurred. The beaten savage raised his slumped head, found *my* eye & shone me a look of uncanny, amicable knowing! As if a theatrical performer saw a long-lost friend in the Royal Box and, undetected by the audience, communicated his recognition. A tattooed “blackfella” approached us &

icked his nephrite dagger to indicate that we were unwelcome. I inquired after the nature of the prisoner’s crime. Henry put his arm around me. “Come, Adam, a wise man does not step betwixt the beast & his meat.”