


The Service of Clouds

Delia Falconer

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It is 1907 in the Blue Mountains of Australia, one of the world's most dramatic landscapes. Eureka Jones, a young pharmacist's assistant, slowly begins to fall in love with Harry Kitchings, a distant stranger who has arrived to photograph clouds. This beautifully told historical love story, a bestseller in Australia, will appeal to readers of Oscar & Lucinda and The Shipping News.

The Service of Clouds Details

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Author : Delia Falconer

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From Reader Review The Service of Clouds for online ebook

Velvetink says

There are not too many novels that I want to re-read and not too many novels that I have chanced upon about photographers. This one I have read time and again. I am besotted with Harry's photographic quest; the misty Blue Mountains; it's hidden history of being the place for the cure of TB, the madness of the air filled with eucalyptus fumes, and the sad faded romance. Harry climbs through the mountain trails with his tripod and camera ~ some I have climbed others now I will never get to, but I feel like I am there with him, and feel his obsessions with the mists and clouds and his darkroom printing."

The year the Hydro Majestic Hotel failed as a hydropathic institute Harry Kitchings fell in love with the air and stayed. Les Curtain began to feel the dusk in his lungs. It was a romantic year. Men carried thermometers and dreamed of women struck by lightning. Postmen hauled packets filled with love and human hair. Women carried notebooks and pressed storms in them like flowers. You could feel our love rising from the mountaintops. At least that is how Harry Kitchings might tell it.

What were we in love with?

It is 1907 and the Blue Mountains are filled with the grand dreams of elsewhere. Eureka Jones, a young pharmacist's assistant with historical eyes, falls in love with Harry Kitchings, a man who takes pictures of clouds and succumbs to the 'madness of photography'. Their love turns the mountains sapphire blue.

Set in a vast landscape haunted by sadness and the stories of romance which drift across it, The Service of Clouds combines the lushness of Marquez and the tenderness of Ondaatje to explore passion, illness, and the secret desires men and women bring to mountains.

It has to be 4 stars for me, but I imagine not everyone will like it. I've just remembered to add it to my read list after seeing this review of her new book "Sydney" the other day.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/...>

Alexandra says

a struggle to finish

Span Streatfeild says

Poetic historical fiction filled to the brim with lament, overflowing with micro stories that tug at the heart strings. Beautiful.

Claire Noonan says

Plenty of atmosphere that entices one to dream of traipsing around the Blue Mountains. I loved the contrast between the two major relationships depicted- the ethereal 'up in the clouds' nature of one contrasted with the earthy passion of the other.

Lisa says

Beautifully written, some lovely descriptions and imagery but...I got a bit bored near the end. I was sad to see how Eureka's love life unfolded although maybe doing the photography was what she always needed to do anyway.

Kali Napier says

Some books are difficult to describe, they have to be experienced. The Service of Clouds is one of these. Set in the Edwardian era in Katoomba, amid a time of developments in medicine and technology, and the burgeoning tourism industry, as well as war, this story is mostly told through the "historical eyes" of Eureka Jones, whose love of photographer Harry Kitchings is recalled and composed in arrangements of memories - moments of the past caught on glass slides. Harry captures landscapes, studies the clouds, and is a body made of air and moisture. Eureka learns to see bodies as repositories of light, as she seeks a place in the world for her own body. The motifs and metaphors of light, electricity, exposure, bodies, and clouds, shift and swirl, arranged by Eureka in 1926, describing an era as though appearing in half-tones, shadows and bright light, within a developing fluid. It is hard to speak of this book without drawing on the same language of narrative.

I didn't always know what was going on in the story, as Falconer's prose is deliberately dreamy, creating a sense of hyperaesthesia about the landscape and Eureka's heartaches and sorrows.

Olwyn Conrau says

It took me a long time to read this book, not because it's bad, but it's so dense and beautiful that it deserved my full attention. Of interest, as soon as I opened it up again, I didn't need to revisit chapters I'd already read. My own grandfather had been a photographer during the early part of the 20th century so I was intrigued by Harry Kitchings. The research is spot on. Overall, it's a meandering kind of reflective love story, superbly written and structured.

SarahLeeNotCake says

Another re-read

I adore falling into this book, it's poetry, it's sad, it's painfully beautiful I adore it.

It's as close to floating in a cloud of words and emotion as a book can get

I loved this book and have been searching for it for years. I don't know if it was because I was in the blue mountains when I read it (that probably influenced my love) or if there was just something about it - but this book has stayed in the back of my mind for years. So happy to find it again.

Lindsey says

I am not sure how to express how perfect my reading of this book was at this particular point in time. I was holidaying in the Blue Mountains three years ago when I saw *The Service of Clouds* on the bookshelf of the cottage I was staying in. It intrigued me but I was reading another book at the time which I couldn't put down (the Millenium trilogy actually!). Three years later, I'm staying at the same cottage again and decided I must read it this time.

The Service of Clouds is a love letter to the Blue Mountains. The author has obviously done a huge amount of research into the area as it was in the early 20th century. I was amazed and impressed when walking down Main St, Katoomba and I saw in a shop window some historical photos from around that time. They "matched" Falconer's scenes so perfectly, so kudos to her for that feat.

I love it when a book's characters feel real, and Eureka definitely does exist, at least to me. Being set in a real (and familiar, to me) place means that the whole thing felt so true - even with the elements of magical realism that Falconer flirted with. If there's any part of Australia that can be equally both earthy and mystical, surely it's the Blue Mountains!

I am not sure if I would've enjoyed this book quite so much if I hadn't read it fireside while holidaying in Blackheath... And I can imagine that for a lot of other readers it might seem too quirky, too flowery, and with a rather bitter and pointless narrative. But I found it strong and enduring, funny and romantic, with just enough occasional bawdiness to cut through the many many references to silver and clouds and mists and spirits.

Renee says

I might try to read this again but the first 50 pages were painful and I could not muster up the energy to turn another page. Maybe another day I will pick it up again but for now...i am calling it and putting it away.

Susan Austin says

I rarely give up on a book but I just got too annoyed with this one after about halfway. Some interesting characters and some lovely writing but I think she totally overdoes the magical realism thing to the point where every second sentence is unbelievable and annoying. I love Isabel Allende's magical realism but there must be a real knack to employing it and a fine line between being adding a charming element to a story and drowning it in unreality. It was also too slow to keep my attention. Too many other books waiting for my time I'm afraid!

Marcia says

I didn't finish this book. I just couldn't get into it.

Emily says

The author writes like she's painting, and there are some really beautiful images throughout the book, but it almost seemed as though the characters and movement of the novel were just a prop for her to create these visuals. The story is set over years and years, but feels like it could have been weeks with how much actually happens and how much we learn about the characters (in fact I have read books set over the course of 24 hours in which I felt more of a connection to the people and events). I got to the end somewhat frustrated with the lack of substance, but also not really caring, because I had never been made to care about the characters, only the landscape they were placed in (which, to be fair, did come across beautifully!)

Amy (Lost in a Good Book) says

From about one chapter in I knew I was not going to like this book. It was flowery, over the top and fluffy language that was too descriptive and was far too unnecessary. It had as much impact on me as the TV Guide because all I can remember is something about photography and the Blue Mountains. Yet another example of an award winning book praised by everyone that failed in my eyes. Apparently if you liked The Shipping News (which I did not) then you will love this book. Take from that what you will.

Megalong Books says

Beautifully written and evocative novel set in katoomba.
- Kathie
