



Time's Eye

Arthur C. Clarke , Stephen Baxter

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Sir Arthur C. Clarke is a living legend, a writer whose name has been synonymous with science fiction for more than fifty years. An indomitable believer in human and scientific potential, Clarke is a genuine visionary. If Clarke has an heir among today's science fiction writers, it is award-winning author Stephen Baxter. In each of his acclaimed novels, Baxter has demonstrated dazzling gifts of imagination and intellect, along with a rare ability to bring the most cerebral science dramatically to life. Now these two champions of humanism and scientific speculation have combined their talents in a novel sure to be one of the most talked-about of the year, a "2001" for the new millennium.

For eons, Earth has been under observation by the Firstborn, beings almost as old as the universe itself. The Firstborn are unknown to humankind until they act. In an instant, Earth is carved up and reassembled like a huge jigsaw puzzle. Suddenly the planet and every living thing on it no longer exist in a single timeline. Instead, the world becomes a patchwork of eras, from prehistory to 2037, each with its own indigenous inhabitants.

Scattered across the planet are floating silver orbs impervious to all weapons and impossible to communicate with. Are these technologically advanced devices responsible for creating and sustaining the rifts in time? Are they cameras through which inscrutable alien eyes are watching? Or are they something stranger and more terrifying still?

The answer may lie in the ancient city of Babylon, where two groups of refugees from 2037 three cosmonauts returning to Earth from the International Space Station, and three United Nations peacekeepers on a mission in Afghanistan have detected radio signals: the only such signals on the planet, apart from their own. The peacekeepers find allies in nineteenth-century British troops and in the armies of Alexander the Great. The astronauts, crash-landed in the steppes of Asia, join forces with the Mongol horde led by Genghis Khan. The two sides set out for Babylon, each determined to win the race for knowledge . . . and the power that lies within.

Yet the real power is beyond human control, perhaps even human understanding. As two great armies face off before the gates of Babylon, it watches, waiting. . . .

Time's Eye Details

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From Reader Review Time's Eye for online ebook

Jason Golomb says

I thoroughly enjoyed *Time's Eye* - it's got action, science, and solidly developed characters. It's also got an ancient history battle royale between Alexander the Great and his army vs. Genghis Khan and his Mongolian hoard.

Time's Eye is the first in Stephen Baxter and Arthur C. Clarke's *Time Odyssey* series which takes place in the same universe as Clarke's 2001 stories. Inexplicably (at least initially), Earth is sliced up and stitched back together creating a mish-mash of timeframes. This scenario creates the opportunity for Baxter and Clarke to position a Genghis-Alexander battle for control over the new Earth (dubbed "Mir" by the remnant individuals from the 21st century). The story is broad in scope, with multiple story lines intersecting, connecting and culminating in a satisfying conclusion. While the ending isn't quite a cliff-hanger, it certainly sets up book 2 nicely.

Time's Eye has the requisite amount of hard science and pseudo-scientific - and sometimes atheistic - philosophical musings. These are the elements that Baxter and Clarke fans anticipate in their works. The philosophical vignettes are tightly written, and rarely feel forced or out of context with the rest of the story. I was thankful that there wasn't too much rumination on the structure and specifics of time-travel.

The characters are solidly drawn and the authors were able to make the "real" characters like Alexander the Great, some of Alexander's cohorts, and Rudyard Kipling (who gets caught in the time shifts), believable and relatively cliché-free.

In addition to the science fiction standbys of time travel and "those-that-watch-us-from-above", the book contains solid historical fiction elements, specifically when dealing with Alexander and the Mongols. The authors take time to detail their histories, battle strategy and tactics of each set of warriors. There are also shades of Baxter's *Evolution* while writing on the early hominids that get caught up in the time shifts.

Overall, I strongly recommend this sci-fi / alternative historical fiction from two of the best in the business.

Lyn says

Dear Sir Arthur C. Clarke,

As a Poul Anderson fan, I enjoyed your collaborative novel *Time's Eye* with Stephen Baxter. Not that Anderson has a monopoly on time travel / alternate history books and ideas, but some of his strongest works are in this sub-genre. This one reminded me of Anderson's *The Dancer From Atlantis*, and it was also reminiscent of Philip Jose Farmer's *To Your Scattered Bodies Go*, with the eclectic blend of historic folks from divergent times. I also enjoyed the references to your wonderful books *Childhood's End* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. There were also mysterious elements of your award winning work *Rendezvous with Rama*.

Bravo!

You are a literary icon, a legend in your genre, one of the “Big Three” with Asimov and Heinlein. You’re a Knight and I’m just a little dude in the relative backwater of Tennessee.

But I have a question, Sir Arthur:

Who can I blame?

Was it you, great though you are, getting a little long in the tooth, maybe slipping a little, and who could blame you? You were 90 when you passed on, still working, still contributing creatively and being productive! Wow!

Bravo!

But really, who can I throw this rock at, you or Baxter? If it was him, just say, maybe just a shrug, quick nod, I’ll understand.

Who was responsible for the raging discontinuity, the loose ends, and the unfulfilled promise of a great idea?

My thought about this “collaboration” was that Baxter did all the heavy lifting and you chimed in from Sri Lanka, directing the excavation and supervised the project. Can we blame Baxter or did you the aging Jedi lead your Padawan astray?

This could have been great, might have been, perhaps should have been, but over here in the States we play a game called baseball, and when you’re calling balls and strikes you call ‘em like you see ‘em, and this was not great, it was just OK.

Still like you a lot, and I’m sure on any other project Mr. Baxter is a damn fine writer and collaborator. No hard feelings.

Love,

Lyn

Johann says

Ou comment faire se rencontrer, lors d'une bataille épique, les armées d'Alexandre et de Gensis Khan. Oeuvre posthume de C. Clarke, ce premier tome met en place éléments et personnages d'une saga en trois tomes. Le style est fluide mais beaucoup moins précis que la saga Rama ou 2001 (je crois que Clarke n'a pas eu le temps de finir, d'où la collaboration avec Baxter). ça va très vite (trop vite) mais ça lit très bien et la bataille attendue tient ses promesses. Pour l'Histoire (avec un H), cela reste un survol, suffisant mais proche parfois de stéréotypes datés, et c'est un peu préjudiciable à l'ampleur du récit). Mais j'embarque dans le tome 2 avec l'impatience de savoir ce que sont et ce que veulent les premiers-nés.

Dan says

All of a sudden the world changes. It becomes a patchwork of history, with humans and animals from all across time appearing next to each other. A helicopter crew from 2037 crash land in British Empire India where they meet Rudyard Kipling and together they all meet the army of Alexander the Great. A crew also from 2037 in the International Space Station are heading back to Earth and eventually end up meeting Genghis Khan and his Mongol tribe.

It eventually leads to a battle between the armies of Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan, with some help from the few people from the 21st Century. This is a great concept and works brilliantly, but then we are left with the last section being much weaker and giving some idea of the alien race behind it all, but without really giving it away. I was loving the book until that point and felt a bit let down.

It's a great concept and the two sci-fi greats pull it off, even if they do ruin the ending. I suppose it sets up for the next book but in doing so it limits this one. Still, largely very enjoyable.

Peter Tillman says

This is the second Clarke-Baxter collab, and it's a good one, if not quite up to "Light of Other Days". Here they reprise the hardy "bad aliens screw humanity" perennial, with noteworthy twists -- the best being a mosaic of time-slices from the past 2,000, 000 years, but it's a little heavy-handed. Worth reading: "B+" or 3.5 stars. Read circa 2004.

The reliable and amazingly well-read Paul di Filippo said, circa 2004:

"With Baxter's solid characterization and penchant for steady action, this book rollicks along enjoyably... Surprising twists and turns insure that the reader will fail to outguess the sly authors."
[no longer online]

C.S. says

So a while back I got the urge to read some really good science fiction. I grew up on sci-fi, but hadn't read any in years, not since first coming to college. I had it in my head that I would pick some new author, or at least one I wasn't already familiar with. Instead, I found myself reading the last series of books by science fiction's greatest writer, a man who is nothing if not familiar to me. I was not disappointed, though I suppose I still haven't quite accomplished what I set out to do.

What made Clarke the king of his genre was not the quality of his writing or his ability to craft an entire fictional world (like, say, the Star Wars universe), but rather his ideas, which were consistently breathtaking in scope. Keep in mind that this is the man who single-handedly created the concept of the telecommunications satellite. This man was one of the giants of 20th Century thought. Ideas were what he did best.

Among his most intriguing creations was one from the Space Odyssey books, that of the Firstborn. The Firstborn were the oldest race in the universe, born of one of its first stars, in a time when galaxies were in their infancy and the universe was a lot smaller. The Firstborn cherished intelligence above all else, but they had some very specific ideas of what sort of intelligences were acceptable. They created the monolith from 2001 and the subsequent books, and while they were the driving force behind those stories, we never really

learned much about them.

The Time Odyssey series explores their race and their motivations in a little more detail. It still centers around Earth and humanity, and still refers to the Firstborn themselves only obliquely, but there are reasons for that, I think. The series is far more action-oriented than the original, but still intriguing and still firmly grounded in the realm of hard science. It doesn't leave one with the sense of wonder that many of Clarke's earlier books do, but it's satisfying on almost every level. I just wish he'd lived long enough to write a couple more.

Patrick Gibson says

An eloquent work of speculative fiction. The book is more fantasy than Science Fiction in its jigsaw reconfiguration of time and space on Earth, but as Clarke wrote of long ago, "Any sufficiently developed technology is indistinguishable from magic." Clarke brings his deep philosophy to the forefront, and Baxter's writing is smooth, vibrant and rich as a patchwork quilt cut from velvet. The prose is aggressive and the characters sharply drawn. The opening scene with the walking apes is a nod to 2001--A Space Odyssey, and firmly places us in the heads of the pre-homo sapiens' minds and thought-language. The shifts to India under British Imperialism, the Mongol dominion of Genghis Khan, ancient Babylon and other time-spaces of human history are seamless, and a tremendous accomplishment with vivid, carefully researched reconstruction of historical place. The novel with all its science, history and philosophy, never bogs down--it pulses with vitality and tension that pulls the reader kicking and screaming (not to mention filled with awe) toward the mystery of the alien Firstborn. I have read a few reviews bitching this is a rip-off of Riverworld and/or the Rama series, but it isn't really. It stands alone as Clarke's(probably) vision of time displacement and history soup. It is not profound, but it is interesting and above all... fun. I started the second book immediately.

Debbie says

I read to be entertained and Time's Eye certainly did that! The concept that the Earth has been carved up into a jigsaw puzzle of different times was original and fascinating. The characters include Rudyard Kipling, Russian cosmonauts, British soldiers from the 1880's, and US Air and Space Force officers from 2037. And while I hate military-style sci-fi with battles, the confrontation between Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan made for great reading.

There were several things that were never explained – exactly why the Discontinuity occurred and who caused it. And what were the small golden orbs that appeared all over the planet?

Since this is a trilogy, I am hoping there are explanations in the next book. The fact that I want to read the next book says a lot about how interesting this series is.

Bradley says

What can I expect from a title like that with hard-hitting authors like this?

A little bit of the strengths of both and a few of their weaknesses, of course. Most of the characters feel like

Clarke's inventions, but some of the odder characters kinda felt like Baxter.

The real strength of this novel is the slicings of time and location, jaunting whole segments of the Earth's populace into mish-mashes quite like Riverworld.

How do the armies of Genghis Kahn and Alexander the Great sound, clashing in an epic end? Good?

WELCOME TO THIS NOVEL. :)

Astronauts, AI phones, ravening hoards, gentlemen Greek explorers (HA), and modern Afganistan warriors and, for good measure, the missing link species for humanity. The mix is quite fun and the promise is there.

Strong start, fun middle... but what happened to the end?

Oh, wait, book one. Let's see where this goes. :)

Jess Cattanach says

I don't know how it would have been possible for me not to enjoy this book: it's written by Arthur C. Clarke and Stephen Baxter, and the audiobook edition I have is narrated by one of my absolute favourite narrators, John Lee. Basically, what's not to like?

I got this book, along with about six others, when Audible had their recent "first in a series" sale. I thought I was being clever, thinking, "oh, I'll just get these cheap first books, I won't be in any rush to get the next books in the series and I'm getting a huge bargain here, ha ha Audible..." but with books like this one I really fell into their trap: I'm definitely getting the second one (and from them, because John Lee is excellent) and a lot sooner than I'd intended. Audible is victorious over my wallet once again.

I could definitely see elements of both Clarke and Baxter in this book, which was nice. It's the first in a trilogy, but it ends at an appropriate place and leaves you wanting more. The array of characters is pretty amazing, but I don't want to give away who they are. The setting is amazing, and the struggles of the characters portrayed very realistically. I really enjoyed this book, and it lived up to my expectations which were higher than my expectations for most books I start. Read it, you won't be disappointed.

Víctor Gutiérrez says

Es una gratificante novela que al ser leída por segunda ocasión se vuelve más rica de leer. En ella Arthur Clarke nos cuenta como de pronto el tiempo se ve fraccionado en la Tierra y nace una nueva Tierra con un collage de zonas geográficas cronológicamente diferentes, es decir, en alguna lugar es una año, y al cruzar un río es un año completamente distinto, aquí los pocos humanos que han sobrevivido tratan de crear un nuevo orden mundial. Por ello es que Gengis Khan y sus mongoles se enfrentan en una sangrienta batalla contra un ejercito macedonio comandado por Alejandro Magno y apoyado por ingleses del siglo XIX, así como por 3 elementos del ejército de la ONU del siglo XXI; por tomar el control de la antigua Mesopotamia. En verdad un libro muy interesante, de fácil lectura y sobre todo desconcertante.

C says

Book 1 in Time Odyssey series.

The fabric of time is pulled apart and the earth put back together in a random, helter skelter way. round, shiny orbs hang in the air like eyes, everywhere. 2037 - Bisesa, a female UN peace keeper, Casey and Cecil De Morgan are taken in their helicopter and find their way to 1885. Here Capt Grove, Josh, Rudyard Kipling are part of a British regiment in India. Their explorations of what has happened take them to Alexander the Great, 23 centuries in the past. they travel with him, humanize his lifelong friend and secretary and Afestian his right hand man in battle. They travel to Babylon. 21st century coomonauts are plucked from the sky and Collier and Sable join with Genghis Khan and the Mongols. Sable turns rogue and urge them to Babylon to fight Alexander. Collier turns this battle when GK is killed. Prehuman, Seeker and her daughter Grasper are upright apes and captured by the British. In the end, 5 years later, the large eye of Babylon returns Bisesa to her home and daughter the day after the discontinuity, but there are still eyes. Is this truly the earth she came from or something else.

Krbo says

nije mi baš sjelo.

jednostavno ne događalo se ništa, da dogodio se Diskontinuitet, golemo područje na Zemlji su ispremiješana kroz stoljeća i imaju neke čudne kugle posvuda.

dobio sam publicističku lekciju o "crvenim mundirima", životu, okrutnosti, smradi, jelu i seksu Mongola. Neko nabađanje od Alexi Velikom i o tome što makedonci jedu, nose sa sobom i koliko oni smrde.

jedan superpametni telefon koji se boji otići u stand-by pa se pita "hoće li sanjati" - eh, ajmo pogoditi odakle je ovo

onda su se neki pokefali na zadnjih 20 stranica.

sve skupa se lako čita no u iščekivanju "ajde više Clarke!" (ili Baxter, vjerojatno je on povukao lavovski dio)

nategnuta dvojka samo zato što, u nadi, o ovome mislim kao uvodnom poglavlju (malo duljem) u slijedeći nastavak.

sad mi je jasno zašto je čamila 10 godina na polici - "sjećanje na budućnost" (© Clarke)

John says

The first in a trilogy which is tangentially related to Clarke's "Space Odyssey" series, this is primarily an alternate history novel with a sci-fi underpinning. And although I'm skeptical of alternate history in general,

Clarke and Baxter have delivered the goods this time around. The fact that they were able to weave together such disparate and well-known historical figures as Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great, and Rudyard Kipling into a tapestry which never seems hokey or forced and is a testament to the formidable skills of both authors. "Time's Eye" is, in fact, so well-written that I had trouble putting it down. This novel is one of countless examples of sci-fi authors offering possible solutions to the Fermi paradox, yet it is at its heart a human story. This is perhaps why the story flows so smoothly and why -- as with so much sci-fi -- the reader is able to forgive some of the under-developed characterizations and occasionally clichéd dialogue. And while reasonably self-contained, "Time's Eye" leaves conspicuous openings for its sequels. A welcome addition to the body of both authors' work.

Stone says

Time's Eye is a book set in the future, past, far past, and even farther past. Stephen Baxter and Arthur C. Clarke have done excellently to use these 4 perspectives to weave a fantastic story.

This story really looks at theories about Time already in place and expands them into something radical. This book always keeps me guessing along with the characters in the book about what are the potential dangers in their choices, what are these "eyes" and their strange properties etc. All in all, it is an excellent science fiction book. It is like a soup filled to the brim with science with added tastes of fiction.

Kristin says

I'm usually not enthusiastic about alternate history type books - I did not finish Dies the Fire by SM Sterling, but I did greatly enjoy To Say Nothing of the Dog by Connie Willis. I won't read Blackout/All Clear however. Absolutely, totally, utterly no interest.

Time's Eye, however, pulled me in from page one. I think the initial interest was because I recently watched the History of India (PBS special) and the significance of the Khyber Pass between India, Afghanistan and Pakistan was explained from a historical perspective. And partly because I'm already fascinated with this corner of the world and some of the great accomplishments that came out of various periods of history.

What was different about Time's Eye was that it really wasn't an alternate history -- it was more a speculative look at what would happen if you took some of the greatest armies in mankind's history, caused a massive worldwide Time Discontinuity, and pitted those armies against one another. Add in a couple of modern people (but not too futuristic!) on each side just to level the playing field and put the battlefield in the ancient city of Babylon.

Yup, a historians wet dream and where I began to loose interest.

It was like the authors had this great Discontinuity idea to account for the backdrop but when story started moving into implausibility with one subplot - with our Mongolians and our female character who managed to get into the good graces of Genghis Khan - I was kicked out of the story. Given the historical parameters the author set up, it seemed too farfetched to even be remotely plausible. The author acknowledges the lack of hygiene, people getting sick from dysentery, poor eating habits (spitting gristle back into the common

stew pot) and here we have a 21st Century woman who allows herself to get banged by a aged Mongolian and then becomes one of his advisers. Right.

But it wasn't just that. There was a time span from the beginning of the Discontinuity to about 6 years toward the end of the story. Most of the electronics from the modern's helicopter that crashed continued to work despite being left in the acid rain. One characters 'smartphone' batteries lasted 6 years. The British kept a pre-human alive in simple netted cage for 6 years. Food seemed rather easy to come by. I could go on, but there were so many of these little and not so little 'hiccups' that left me shaking my head in disbelief. If I can't believe in the parameters of the story, I can't believe the story itself.

So the book started with promise and ended flat.

Jake says

It is not an accident that I am only now getting to this trilogy. Though I enjoyed *The Light of Other Days* , that collaboration felt primarily like a sexed up re-exploration of themes Arthur C. Clarke explored more poignantly in his masterpiece *Childhood's End* . Then I recently enjoyed a short story Baxter authored using Clarke's ideas. Realizing I liked Baxter's writing style on its own merits, I decided to give the Time Odyssey trilogy a go.

The mixing of different historical periods is fascinating. Mystery builds as the ensemble hypothesizes about the possible reasons why space and time have been rearranged in Rubik's Cube fashion. Also, there is a richness to this book's narrative that I grant is often lacking in Clarke's writing. However, Baxter's copious insertion of historical research periodically bogs down the story. And here I think this novel could have benefited from some of the leanness of Clarke's style.

Easily making up for the above criticism is the authors' clever exploration of how ancient cultures might view modern people and technology. I'll simply say that when Russian cosmonauts come in contact with Genghis Kahn's Mongol warriors, the latter are not universally wowed by space-age technology. In general, I enjoy Mr. Baxter's ability to take Arthur C. Clarke's decades-old scientific notions and revamp them via the best and most tantalizing research of the early 21st century. This is not a parasitic spin-off (as I feared it might be).

Lastly, I enjoyed many instances of homage to *2001 A Space Odyssey* , especially late in the book. For me, there is a sense of home in Clarke's far-reaching themes regarding time, space and mind. These themes are at once both sobering and inspiring. While *Time's Eye* seems unquestionably Baxter's work, and it is very good, his greatest accomplishment is adeptly weaving his style with the core ideas and values of Clarke's Space Odyssey series. I am looking forward to continuing on to part two of this trilogy.

Emmy says

First, let me just say that I have really enjoyed the works of Sir Arthur C. Clarke up until this point. I devoured 2001: A Space Odyssey with an abandon that I have not previously brought to a straight-up piece

of Science Fiction. So, when I came across this one at a used book store, it was really the name that got me interested, even though the premise itself seemed interesting enough.

However, I was sadly disappointed. The plot itself was a great idea, but the execution was rather piss-poor. I was alternately bored or frustrated with certain plot twists and characterizations. (view spoiler)

While I am completely unfamiliar with the works of Stephen Baxter, I was very disappointed with Clarke. Still, I'm considering reading the next book, just to see how the series ends. But, that's more out of curiosity for how the story continues, and not because I'm really invested in the characters or situation. A disappointment. Would not recommend.

Alimpic Srdjan says

Kada vidite da neko postavlja jake masivne temelje od najkvalitetnijeg materijala, očekujete od graditelja da na njih postavi monumentalno zdanje. Međutim, kada umesto velebnog zdanja na njima iznikne obična brvnara morate osetiti razocarenje.

Upravo je u tome problem sa ovim Klarkovim romanom. Počinje odlično, prvih 100 strana najavljuje epski zaplet onako sa snaznom Zil Vernovskom aromom, ali onda sledi kontinuirani pad u kvalitetu pisanja, zapleta, opisa, razrade likova, raspleta...Okolo 250-te strane već tone u dosadu i nebulozu. Mocna reka u pocetku sada je samo običan plitki potocic, a ja kao citalac ne mogu a da se ne zapitam gde su se dele sve te propustene prilike za nesto zaista izuzetno veliko epskih razmera.

Roman sam poceo da citam u jednom dahu a završio sam ga u tri. Konacni utisak - onako. Moglo je to biti mnogo mnogo bolje. Ostaje da vidim da li ce nastavak ovog prvog dela trilogije "Vremenska Oiseja" biti bolji od svog ne bas reprezentativnog predhodnika.

Konacna ocena 3 zvezdice.

Afshaan says

A very very good read. The synopsis itself is gripping. A wonderfully weaved tale where human and Earth history collide, collaborate and compete. Very original concept; at least I haven't come across something like this before.

This book has a sequel and thus by the end of this book, you are left with more questions than you started off with. Which means you have to get your hands on the second one. And that's exactly what I have done.

I heartily recommend this to all sci-fi fans.
