

Coalescent

By Stephen Baxter

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Stephen Baxter possesses one of the most brilliant minds in modern science fiction. His vivid storytelling skills have earned him comparison to the giants of the past: Clarke, Asimov, Stapledon. Like his great predecessors, Baxter thinks on a cosmic scale, spinning cutting-edge scientific speculation into pure, page-turning gold. Now Baxter is back with a breathtaking adventure that begins during the catastrophic collapse of Roman Britain and stretches forward into an unimaginably distant, war-torn future, where the fate of humanity lies waiting at the center of the galaxy. . . .

Destiny's Children

COALESCENT

George Poole isn't sure whether his life has reached a turning point or a dead end. At forty-five, he is divorced and childless, with a career that is going nowhere fast. Then, when his father dies suddenly, George stumbles onto a family secret: a sister he never knew existed. A twin named Rosa, raised in Rome by an enigmatic cult. Hoping to find the answers to the missing pieces of his life, George sets out for the ancient city.

Once in Rome, he learns from Rosa the enthralling story of their distant ancestor, Regina, an iron-willed genius determined to preserve her family as the empire disintegrates around her. It was Regina who founded the cult, which has mysteriously survived and prospered below the streets of Rome for almost two millennia. The Order, says Rosa, is her real family— and, even if he doesn't realize it yet, it is George's family, too. When she takes him into the vast underground city that is the Order's secret home, he feels a strong sense of belonging, yet there is something oddly disturbing about the women he meets. They are all so young and so very much alike.

Now, joined by his boyhood friend Peter McLachlan, who arrives in Rome with a dark secret of his own, George uncovers evidence suggesting that the women of the Order have embarked on a divergent evolutionary path. But they are not just a new kind of human. They are a better kind, genetically superior, equipped with all the tools necessary to render homo sapiens as extinct as the Neanderthals. And, chillingly, George and Peter soon have reason to fear that this colony is preparing to leave its overcrowded underground nest. . . .

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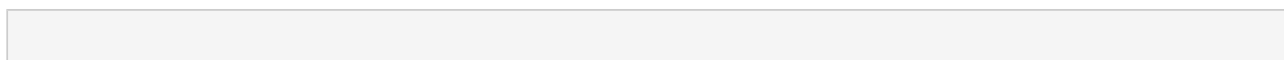
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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Known for his hard SF, Baxter (the *Manifold* trilogy) explores social and historical issues as well as human evolution in the first of his *Destiny's Children* trilogy, with mixed results. In the present, George Poole discovers that he has a twin sister who belongs to a mysterious, ancient quasi-religious order in Rome; in crumbling post-Roman Britain, Regina, founder of the order, longs to recapture the days of her girlhood, when she lived a life of stability and privilege. In alternating chapters, George and Regina each make their way to Rome. George meets his sister and begins to learn something of the order that took her in; Regina—complex, bitter, obsessive—crafts the order that lasts to George's day. Regina digs under the streets of Rome into catacombs for secure living space. George, distantly related to Regina, feels the familial pull of the women still living in the warrens underground, but when he befriends a young, pregnant member of the order, he realizes that they have evolved into a new life form, a coalescent one comprising drones working within a decentralized social order. Regina's carefully researched world never quite comes to life—Baxter tells rather than shows—and the feminist implications of a coalescent life form that exploits and alters femininity are not addressed. Still, Baxter provokes thought by plausibly creating specific circumstances that result in evolution. For now, it's unclear whether a coalescent structure is good or bad, though presumably later books will provide some resolution.

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From [Booklist](#)

Baxter connects the lives of George Poole in the present and Regina at the end of the Roman empire. George's father has just died, and the picture of a girl, Rosa, comes to light in his effects. Rosa is the mysterious twin George never knew, and he becomes consumed with the desire to find her. Regina's part of the story begins in Britain at the end of Roman rule and takes her through the western empire's collapse to Rome itself. Back to the near-past: George's sister, it develops, had been sent to the Order of Mary, Queen of Virgins, which has existed, hive-like, in Rome since the time of Regina, one of its founders. George is Regina's descendant, and the order being rather a family affair, George arrives at many uncomfortable realizations as he learns more about it. Opening with an artificial anomaly discovered in the Kuiper Belt beyond Neptune and ending with disturbing extrapolation of humanity's future, *Coalescent* is a fabric of many slowly developed plot threads woven into a tight tapestry. *Regina Schroeder*
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Review

PRAISE FOR STEPHEN BAXTER

Evolution

“GRIPPING . . . THE PERFECT SCIENTIFIC ROMANCE OF OUR TIME . . . The miracle of *Evolution* is that it makes the triumph of life, which is its story, sound like the real story.”

—*The Washington Post Book World*

“*EVOLUTION* IS A WORK OF OUTRAGEOUS AMBITION. . . . What is astonishing is how successfully he brings to life a wide range of facts and conjectures, and how entertaining as well as informative this book—an episodic novel with evolution as its protagonist—manages to be.”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

Manifold: Time

“A STAGGERING NOVEL! If you ever thought you understood time, you’ll be quickly disillusioned when you read *Manifold: Time*.”

–SIR ARTHUR C. CLARKE

Manifold: Space

“BREATHTAKING IN ITS ORIGINALITY AND SCOPE . . . [AN] IMPRESSIVE PARADE OF WONDERS.”

–*The Washington Post*

Manifold: Origin

“UTTERLY ENGROSSING . . . A book that challenges and provokes . . . *Origin* leads you to ask questions about sentience and existence.”

–*SFX* magazine

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Willene Choate:

Information is provisions for people to get better life, information presently can get by anyone in everywhere. The information can be a information or any news even a concern. What people must be consider while those information which is inside former life are hard to be find than now is taking seriously which one works to believe or which one the particular resource are convinced. If you have the unstable resource then you obtain it as your main information you will have huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen in you if you take Coalescent as your daily resource information.

Cody Smith:

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William McDowell:

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