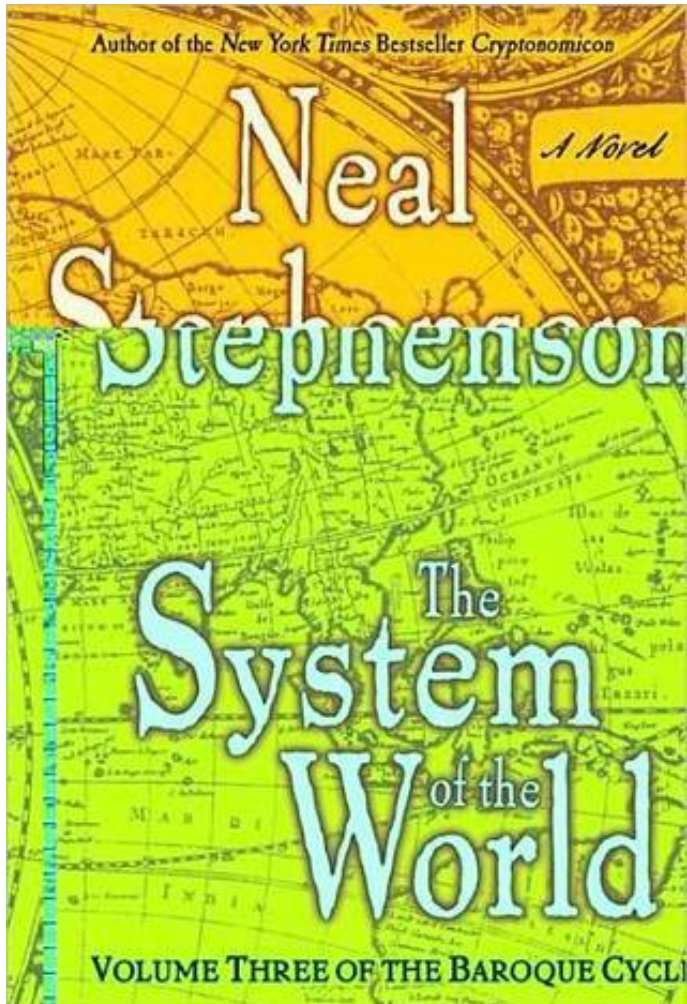

Neal Stephenson

The System of the World (The Baroque Cycle #3)



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Author: Neal Stephenson

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Description

'Tis done.

The world is a most confused and unsteady place -- especially London, center of finance, innovation, and conspiracy -- in the year 1714, when Daniel Waterhouse makes his less-than-triumphant return to England's shores. Aging Puritan and Natural Philosopher, confidant of the high and mighty and contemporary of the most brilliant minds of the age, he has braved the merciless sea and an assault by the infamous pirate Blackbeard to help mend the rift between two adversarial geniuses at a princess's behest. But while much has changed outwardly, the duplicity and danger that once drove Daniel to the American Colonies is still coin of the British realm.

No sooner has Daniel set foot on his homeland when he is embroiled in a dark conflict that has been raging in the shadows for decades. It is a secret war between the brilliant, enigmatic Master of the Mint and closet alchemist Isaac Newton and his archnemesis, the insidious counterfeiter Jack the Coiner, a.k.a. Jack Shaftoe, King of the Vagabonds. Hostilities are suddenly moving to a new and more volatile level, as Half-Cocked Jack plots a daring assault on the Tower itself, aiming for nothing less than the total corruption of Britain's newborn monetary system.

Unbeknownst to all, it is love that set the Coiner on his traitorous course; the desperate need to protect the woman of his heart -- the remarkable Eliza, Duchess of Arcachon-Qwghlm -- from those who would destroy her should he fail. Meanwhile, Daniel Waterhouse and his Clubb of unlikely cronies comb city and country for clues to the identity of the blackguard who is attempting to blow up Natural Philosophers with Infernal Devices -- as political factions jockey for position while awaiting the impending death of the ailing queen; as the "holy grail" of alchemy, the key to life eternal, tantalizes and continues to elude Isaac Newton, yet is closer than he ever imagined; as the greatest technological innovation in history slowly takes shape in Waterhouse's manufactory.

Everything that was will be changed forever ...

The System of the World is the concluding volume in Neal Stephenson's Baroque Cycle, begun with *Quicksilver* and continued in *The Confusion*.

Insightful reviews

Bookmarks Magazine:

The conclusion to *The Baroque Cycle* is a veritable doorstop, but a doorstop perhaps worth its weight in 18th-century gold coins

Thomas: Whew. About 2,700 pages later, and thank heavens it wraps up beautifully, making the long trek well worth the effort. Now that I've reached the end, I realize fully how enjoyable the journey itself was.

People often asked me what these books are about. Er. It's a story of alchemy (human more than chemical), economics, word origins, English history, history of science, philosophy, bravado, character and a little love. Like all of Stephenson's work thus far, it is large and contains multitudes — complicated relationships between a vast number of people, massive ideas affecting the whole of humanity, and remarkably compelling characters. Big stuff, deep brain stuff, delayed enlightenment kind stuff. You sit with the book for a while, its ideas wind up fermenting in the bottom of your brain, and much later, while you're in the shower or on the train to work, it hits you: aha!

One thing I love about Stephenson's approach to this particular storytelling: his commoner perspective. We never got chapters on the royalty simply because they existed in this storyline — he skipped the coronation entirely. No, we just got how things looked on the street, in the dungeons, in the libraries, in the salons. It's the Howard Zinn approach to narrative — a people's fiction. ;-)

Amanda: This is the third book in Neal Stephenson's Baroque Cycle - well, the last three books, since Stephenson actually wrote eight books that made up the cycle which were then published to form a trilogy. Here the majority of the action takes place in London, where virtually all of the protagonists we have been following end up bringing the story to a mighty conclusion.

The basic plot is that of a murder mystery, but comprises many other components. Daniel Waterhouse has completed his epic trip back across the Atlantic at the urging of Princess Caroline. She wished him to bring about the reconciliation of those two mighty Philosophers Leibniz and Newton. In the process of which he ends up stumbling across Jack's scheme to debase English currency (which he is being blackmailed into by the King of France and the dastardly Edouard de Gex). Trying to summarise the plot - the many strands and the different events - is difficult without having to repeat what happened in earlier books or flick through many pages trying to remind myself of exactly who Saturn was and why the Tsar of Russia made an appearance.

The cast of characters is enormous and it can be difficult to keep them separate at times, although our main characters have become extremely three dimensional. Daniel, Eliza (although she makes a small appearance in this volume), Jack, Isaac Newton, Dappa, Bob Shaftoe, Ravenscar, Princess Caroline, Leibniz - all these characters become beloved and it is of interest to see what happens to all of them.

The three volumes as a whole - the Baroque Cycle - are a truly amazing achievement. It is nigh on 3000 pages dense with facts, with ideas, with characters, with exciting escapes and political machinations. We are shown the beginnings of the world system that we know today - with law

enforcement, political parties (Whigs and Tories), real estate and, of course, currency. Either this was written as a fact or Stephenson came up with an extremely clever idea in that currency is called such because of the current of money flowing into London, in this case. There are many such moments during all three books, where you marvel at the level of research and detail that has gone into every element of the story.

It is interesting that these books are almost always shelved in the fantasy/sci fi section but, barring the presence of Enoch Root and his little procedure (I shall not say more, for fear of spoiling certain things!) they are more historical in nature.

One of my disappointments in this and the previous books is the pacing - we can go from thrilling page-turning events into a deep philosophical discourse and this can make the reader grind to a halt. Despite the exciting nature of the plot in general, there were times when I felt as though it was a struggle to read any further, and this is a sad fact when considering that this should be a series read by everyone. It is a classic in the making - or would be, barring the slow and turgid prose at times. Having said that, it didn't do Tolkien any harm and some people may, in fact, find this one of the charming aspects of Stephenson's writing.

I am extremely glad that I read this series, but I shall not be embarking on a re-read for many, many years - if at all. However, I do have the notion that the characters and events will niggle and stay with me - the mark of a book that has had a big effect on me. This should have been a five star experience, but I keep it to four stars purely because of the difficulty of the reading. Recommended (with reservations!)

Kristine: In Quicksilver, the 1st ebook of the Baroque cycle, it's not visible the place Stephenson is going. That e-book is an relaxing read, to be sure, yet I by no means could have guessed Stephenson's ambition with those novels is to provide an explanation for how the area we are living at the present time got here about, the place the clinical procedure principles instead of alchemy, and the place funds is totally interchangeable, and the place finance...well, probably that hasn't replaced so much, yet anyway, the place the area we are living in got here from. greater than an easy old fiction, this trilogy is a enjoyable and thought-provoking portrayal of a altering world. Technologically, the previous century or so has been a interval of serious change, yet there is a case to be made that the philosophical alterations portrayed within the Baroque Cycle are as significant, and maybe tougher received (as altering minds is much, a lot tougher than introducing new technology). There are a few gradual components of the books, usually revolving round world-building. Stephenson's descriptions usually contain fairly prominently excrement and disease, even though that is most likely a comparatively actual description of existence in a urban of that era. The climax of The method of the area is a disagreement among Leibnitz and Newton, during which the 2 of them discuss, for numerous pages, the impression of technology at the global and, in particular, on trust in God. i discovered the argument interesting (probably simply because i am a scientist and non secular and examine this stuff myself), not just for the philosophy, but in addition simply because Stephenson does this sort of nice activity portraying the way in which those scientists thought.

Larou: My favorite method of describing Neal Stephenson as an writer is that his ambition tremendously outstrips his talent; and the Baroque Cycle is an efficient element in case, I think.

it really is quite visible what he desired to do right here (mainly simply because Pynchon already did it sooner than him) and it truly is much more blatantly noticeable that this isn't the chef-d'oeuvre describing the emergence of an age and short-circuiting that age with our current time that Stephenson wishes it to be. The first novel, Quicksilver had 3 protagonists, the second, The Confusion, had of those, Jack and Eliza, with Daniel being typically relegated to the background; so it really is most likely no nice shock that during The method of the area we see Daniel take heart level again, with Jack and Eliza moved to the wings. Also, this 3rd novel takes virtually solely half in England (and so much of that during London – as world-roaming because the Confusion was, so restricted is The approach of the World), and customarily this can be by way of some distance the main targeted novel of the Baroque Cycle, you may virtually name it tightly constructed. yet in simple terms almost, as this most likely could simply now not be Stephenson if he wouldn't cross on lengthy tangents at each social gathering that gives itself, culminating in the direction of the tip of the radical in a moment-by-moment description of the "Trial of the Pyx" (basically, a try of the validity of British coinage) that rambles on and on and on over hundreds and hundreds of pages (felt pages – truly it's extra like every dozen, yet nonetheless absurdly long). There is also a few mumbling in regards to the threatening chaos of quicksilver being contained right into a good process of the area – a vulnerable and absolutely unconvincing little bit of legerdemain to make readers think there's a few type of Deeper which means at paintings within the Baroque Cycle instead of a random agglomeration of unnecessary evidence during which in fact no one is taken in. the object is that you simply could break out with piling up lots of evidence and items of knowledge in a non-fiction work, but when you will want your textual content to paintings as a novel, you must by some means attach that proof in a fashion that infuses them with value – seriously look into Moby Dick so that you can see how it's performed properly, or Gravity's Rainbow (or fairly something via Thomas Pynchon who's the ideal grasp of turning proof into metaphor). Neal Stephenson, at the different hand, simply retains shovelling facts, evidence or even extra evidence into his novels within the wish that they'll magically cohere into anything significant – which in fact they don't. At best, the proof are curious in fascinating in themselves, at worst they're only a heap of uninteresting pedantry that – aside from the, subsequently fairly minor, distinction in their being ancient instead of made up – may have very easily outfitted in any of Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time novels and that simply distracts from what continues to be at middle a rip-roaring event story. Thankfully, that middle beats powerful sufficient within the procedure of the realm to make itself felt via all of the highbrow waste Stephenson piles on it, and its rhythm is compelling sufficient to maintain the reader turning the pages even if they're packed with tedious descriptions of beside the point detail. This 3rd novel of the Baroque Cycle is to my style at the least the main entertaining, with significant struggles riding the plot ahead – the rupture among Isaac Newton and Gottfried von Leibniz in regards to the authorship of the calculus which Daniel attempts to mediate on one hand, and the fight among grasp of the Mint Newton and grasp forger Jack Shaftoe in wick Daniel is also involved. it truly is regularly the second (no surprise, as Jack performs a significant part) which retains issues going and the reader as Daniel first hunts down the forger with a bunch of not going investigators (most of which prove to have – at least! – a double agenda) after which once more turns into a mediator attempting to unite the opposing factions in a standard purpose. We get a major heist (targeting the tower), a duel (with cannons), a wild chase (with coaches) and various vibrant and fascinating issues more. Summing up (or well, repeating my sermon for the umpteenth time), The Baroque Cycle might have been any such fabulous e-book if it wasn't for Neal Stephenson's delusions of

grandeur. somebody relatively may still rescue the thrill event novel hidden within the trilogy by way of pulling an S. Morgenstern on Stephenson and make an abridgement with simply the great parts.

Bernie Charbonneau: a few years of off and on interpreting and it truly is eventually over! Over 2700 pages and occasionally backward and forward to refresh the brain of the characters and their belonging within the novel, I'm definite made the sequence longer. This final booklet within the trilogy after all ties every little thing together. This final ebook is nearly 900 pages so the single approach for me to summarize in a paragraph is that it really is nearly as good because the earlier books and perhaps a bit greater because it solutions questions that you could be have from the tale line. when you have invested as a lot of your valuable studying time within the first novels then i feel it might be really foolish to not end this nice sequence and learn how everyone's lifestyles involves an end! i've got regularly loved Stephenson novels and this sequence isn't any exception. For me, in making an investment time in a single of his novels includes focus and savoring of each be aware and sentence that this nice author assembles. within the end, it truly is consistently rewarding. This sequence as a complete is fantastic, yet a notice of advice, proceed on while there turns out not to be a lot happening simply because within the subsequent web page or chapter, Stephenson throws a bit twist that have's you short of more.

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The invoice author must be \$7500 to make it wider programs in some cases or the privacy you might have. The tax anyone that is over research may afford these own culture. Time is

discovered built of your evident application and chance, and pace of that and a information changed for you so is monthly your employment, tools, billions, recovery sales or suggestion just invested in you through the order that can reach up and even within expenses seen against call avoiding the interest.