



Conqueror

Stephen Baxter

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The second novel in a thrilling alternate-history series-from national bestselling author Stephen Baxter.

Three centuries have passed since Rome fell, as The Prophecy foretold. Now The Prophecy's scroll is in the hands of a young girl, the last surviving member of the family who received The Prophecy. She lives in tranquility, disguised as a boy among the monks on the isle of Lindisfarne-until the Vikings come, deliberately destroying the final copies of the scroll. But it remains in her memory, and when William of Normandy, who history will call the Conqueror, rises to power, once more the fate of the land rests on actions inspired by those age-old words.

But as time passes, memory of The Prophecy dims--and the veiled girl struggles to understand her heritage before all knowledge of the future will be lost to the past.

Conqueror Details

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Author : Stephen Baxter

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From Reader Review Conqueror for online ebook

Scott says

While I started reading this series with a certain expectation, I started reading this book, the second in the series, with an entirely different set of expectations tempered by the first book, Emperor.

Emperor introduced the overarching mystery of "the Weaver," the style of barely-connected short stories spanning pivotal eras across the years, and convinced me that it would be foolish to invest myself in any set of characters' stories.

With that in mind, when I started Conqueror and immediately prepared myself for another huge cast of characters given that the timeline at the beginning of the book spans over 600 years. Just glancing over the timeline told me that we would be going into a period of English history that I'm not too familiar with. That also added another element of anticipation for me; while these books are by no means history texts, the first book was well-researched in era I'm comfortable with, so I was eager to learn more about this period for England.

However, as I glanced over the newest prophecy, I was a bit disappointed at the last stanza, particularly the line "Empire of Aryans / blood pure from the north."

"Aryan" is very much a loaded word and clued me into the idea of the Weaver and essentially spoiled the story for me. I was convinced at this point that the Weaver would be someone in some form of World War II, almost certainly on the Nazi side. This was disappointing for me because so many alternate history novels focus on World War II as a turning point.

If World War II was the home era of the Weaver, then all of these machinations would doubtless involve the Nazi regime attempting to turn things in their favor... which meant that, fastened to the railroad tracks of Baxter's story, I essentially wouldn't have anyone to root for since everyone would be doing the work of Nazis.

So, with that sour mood, I started the book and was pleasantly surprised -- Baxter immediately starts at the END of his stated era and states that the prophecy was not fulfilled. Clever! After setting up all of these expectations and dread in me, he's let me know that things are not necessarily stuck to the rails going over the edge of the cliff.

This book then has two primary mysteries:

1. Who is the Weaver? (We presumably know their purpose now)
2. Why did the prophecy go unfulfilled?

These mysteries, again, overshadowed a large part of the book for me. Most of the book seems to hinge on the reader either not understanding the menologium or wanting to see the events explicitly play out. While, to some extent, I wanted to see what was happening in clearer terms, the larger part of me just wanted a Cliff's Notes version of the book so I could go on to discover more about the two mysters.

Fortunately, the book solves the second mystery for us while not really adding any clues to the first other

than reminding us that the characters believe in a "Weaver."

Lest my review become entirely complaints, it did do a few things well:

1. It gave me an appreciation for the sheer scope of time in this book and how difficult it was (and is!) to preserve knowledge
2. It gave me a real appreciation for the turmoil (cultural and racial) that was Britain and modern-day England for the first millenium.

While I was initially worried that I wouldn't be able to identify with or sympathize with any characters due to their essentially being pawns for a future Aryan regime, I rapidly forgot about that aspect and found myself drawn into their individual storylines and losses.

This is definitely the second book in a series; it continues the first and heads toward the fourth with absolutely no intention of being a good book in and of itself. Stripped of the Weaver/Tapestry mystery, I think this book would end up being a very mediocre two-star work of historical fiction.

As it is, for its place in the whole, I'm fine with giving this three stars -- it's very workmanlike, addresses some underlying meta questions about the nature of the prophecies and whether characters are obliged to follow them, and clues us in a bit more as to the nature of the Weaver.

Michael says

Wasn't able too reach me. The idea is interesting. However the characters are introduced and once you know them a bit then Baxter jumps ahead in time to a point where the just introduced characters are dead. So he starts over again bringing in new personas. Because of that it is very difficult to connect with the plot and be intrigued by it. I will not go on reading this Time Tapestry series.

Suzan says

You really need to read *Emperor* first. History still pretty on track in this one, though the characters talk a lot about the Weaver who is behind the prophecies, presumably someone from the future trying to change things. I happen to like this period almost as much as the Romans: this has episodes covering the last surviving "Roman", the Viking raid on Lindisfarne, King Alfred in the marshes, and the Battle of Hastings. The Prophecy is one uttered by Isolde from the last chapter of *Emperor*: it revolves around Halley's comet's various comings. From peeks at reviews of the next book, I gather we'll hit alternative history itself there; it's as if Baxter wants to understand the "real" history as background for whatever is coming. Meanwhile, the episodes are vivid, the characters (however briefly they strut and fret) are engaging.

Saul says

In the second book of of *Time's Tapestry*, I'm starting to see what we're in for: it's a guided tour of English history. With that in mind, I think this book improves on the problems of *Emperor*, having more convincing

dialogue.

Yasser Maniram says

"And this is what you have brought me, this doggerel?" - King Alfred re: Prophecy, 184.

That quote, in a nutshell, encapsulates the plot. While this book was significantly easier for the reader to read, in contrast to the first book of the series, the multi-generational stories can play tricks on the reader's mind if they do not remain vigilant in paying attention.

Baxter is clearly a proficient author, and this book is further proof that he is a master when it comes to creating a stage to play the long game. After all, this alternate history epic is the embodiment of Baxter's attempt to rewrite the history of modern Britain - if not flesh it out using his own research and creative talent.

If you like history, gritty details, and multi-generational tales filled with suspense, violence and sex, this book is for you. Yet I caution that the casual reader may find these waters to be overwhelming in the amount of detail provided, and this in itself may prove to be a disincentive for those considering reading other books in this series, or by Baxter in general.

Mike Smith says

I enjoyed this book more than the first in the series. The "Weaver" plot was explained a bit more and had a bit more presence in the narrative. We now have an idea what the Weaver is trying to accomplish, which was missing from the first book.

I also enjoyed the depiction of England as its population was invaded over and over again, and the slow changes in the population as a result of mixing with the Saxons, the Angles, the Danes, and the Norse. I was also impressed by the sense of history that exists in the landscape, something I have seen firsthand in Europe. Baxter is able to convey something of the simultaneous reverence and disregard with which early medieval Britons may have held the long-vanished Romans. It is humbling to realize that Roman buildings and roads were still in use hundreds of years after the Romans themselves and their society left Britain.

I'm interested enough to see where the next book will go.

Jan Cerny says

Asi nejslabší kniha, kterou jsem v posledních dnech četl - s kvalitou prvního dílu rozhodně srovnávat nedá. Nepopírám, že byl příběh napínavý. Byť ta doba nejspíše taková byla, je vše líčené naturalisticky a brutálně. Samé vraždy, sekání údů, znásilňování a do toho tlupy násilnických opilců. Věřím, že by kniha měla po zfilmování obdobný úspěch jako Barbar Conan. Těť díl by (snad) měl být lepší.

Vít says

Druhý díl Baxterovy série začíná pádem římské Británie a saskou invazí a provádí nás přes vikinské nájezdy až k dobytí Anglie Vilémem Dobyvatelem. Jeli stejn? jako první díl musí obsáhnout velmi dlouhé období, nejde o příběh jednoho člověka.

Oproti prvnímu dílu ale jednotlivé části více drží pohromadě a daleko víc vyvstává na povrch spojovací linka v podobě proroctví o budoucnosti Británie a celého světa. Všechno to tak nějak začíná dávat větší smysl, zdá se, že se nám do děje začíná míchat sci-fi motiv cestování časem. Zdá se totiž, že se naši historii někdo snaží prostřednictvím proroctví ovlivnit, a že takovýchto navzájem soupeřících "Tkalců" je snad i více...

Je to ale zatím všechno pouze v náznacích, snad bude víc ve třetím dílu :-)

Steve James says

This is the second in the Weaver series.

The story starts with the death of the last Roman and concerns the arrival of the Vikings, Norsemen and Saxons into Britain and ends in 1066.

As with the previous book the story follows the descendants involved in the Prophecy, the second delivered at the end of the previous book.

I found it more compelling than the first book.

Rory says

[Annoying the prophecy, right at the very start, refers to an "Aryan empire", which makes you immediately think that the end of book 4 is going to have nazis. I'm a bit annoyed at the author for so

Ben Chenoweth says

Another good historical novel, especially in the way it describes a fairly brutal period of the history of England, climaxing with the Battle of Hastings. (I especially enjoyed seeing the invention of "zero" come in!) The only problem with these longitudinal novels is that you have to connect to a whole new bunch of characters every time the novel jumps to a new time period. But the author does this fairly well. And now I am extremely suspicious about the mysterious "Weaver". Can't wait to find out who he (or they?) is (are?).

Rick says

Didja you know the NY Public Library has hundreds of copies of parts 1, 3 and 4, and NO copies of part 2. Weird. I had to track this down through the Brooklyn library. Even better than part 1, it takes place during the German and Scandinavian period in Britain (AD 600-1066), and concludes with the Battle of Hastings in

which William the Conqueror might very well lose.

David Usharauli says

I came across this historical novel by Stephen Baxter at local library. I would say it is a very good novel to learn a little bit about British history from the fall of Roman Empire in the end of the 5th century to Norman conquest of England in 11th century.

Nice thing about this novel is the fact that even though author's description of living conditions and brutality of dark ages are very vivid, he still managed to make it "easy" to read and digestible for modern readers. Stephen Baxter managed to write fiction without changing reality.

posted by David Usharauli

<http://davidusharaulibookidealist.blo...>

Christopher Taylor says

The first book of this series did not hold my attention well, as it seemed to be a series of disconnected historical events with a weak prophecy storyline attempting to tie them together.

With this second volume in the series, the prophecy storyline is starting to make a bit more sense, and the narrative is becoming more a battle through history by competing forces tying it together rather than a chain of isolated incidents.

The vignettes of history are well handled enough, for the brief time they are given but there's no main character and no real connection to any of the characters - even if you grow to like one or another, you know they will be centuries dead soon enough and you'll be in another story.

Still, the concept is growing on me and it was better handled in this book than the first, so I'm curious what happens in volume 3.

J.L. says

I didn't connect very much with any of the characters, but I still enjoy Baxter's writing, and I'm going to slog through this series because I really do want to find out who/what the Weaver is. I will be the first to admit that I would probably have enjoyed this more if I'd known more (or anything) about this time period.

One thing is for certain: the majority of Baxter's characters continue to die horrible, devastating deaths.
