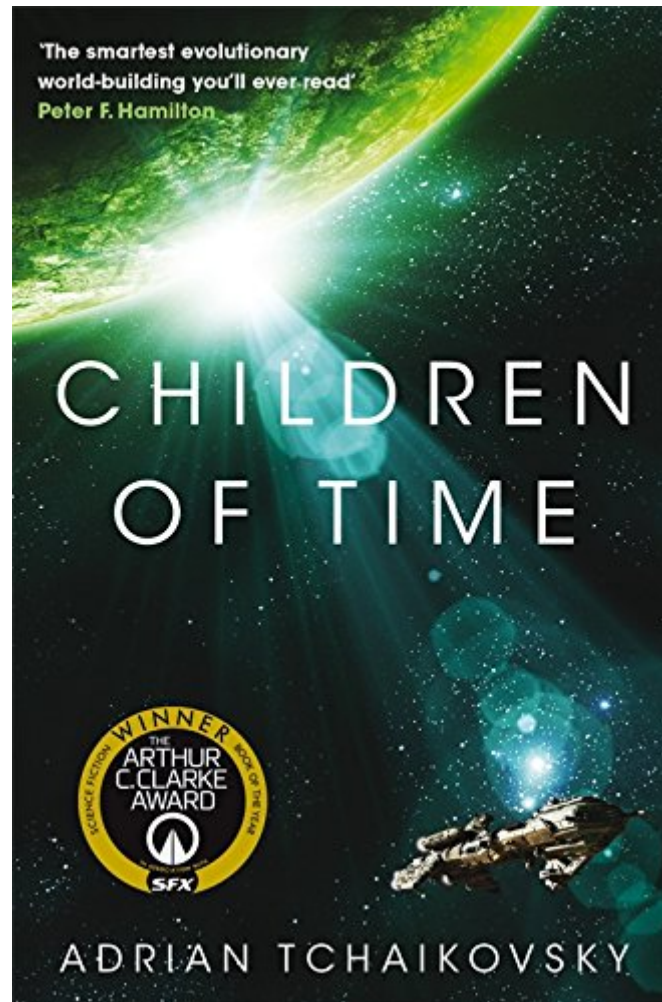


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Children Of Time



Synopsis

WINNER OF THE 30th ANNIVERSARY ARTHUR C CLARKE AWARD FOR BEST NOVEL WHO WILL INHERIT THIS NEW EARTH? The last remnants of the human race left a dying Earth, desperate to find a new home among the stars. Following in the footsteps of their ancestors, they discover the greatest treasure of the past age - a world terraformed and prepared for human life. But all is not right in this new Eden. In the long years since the planet was abandoned, the work of its architects has borne disastrous fruit. The planet is not waiting for them, pristine and unoccupied. New masters have turned it from a refuge into mankind's worst nightmare. Now two civilizations are on a collision course, both testing the boundaries of what they will do to survive. As the fate of humanity hangs in the balance, who are the true heirs of this new Earth?

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Customer Reviews

Children of Time quite simply took my breath away. I would give it 4.5 stars if I could, and that missing 0.5 stars will be explained in a moment. The story spans thousands of years and tells of the end of Humankind and the birth of a new species, a new world. There's action, intrigue, romance (a little), and the great expanse of a new world, and boy what a world. Tchaikovsky has created a

world-building scenario the likes of which I haven't seen in a long time in SF. But unlike those old-timers he's utilised modern biological vectors to power his evolutionary tale and it works wonderfully. The entertainment to be had from such a story construct is presented with daring style, and the reader is rewarded at every turn of the page. The story as a whole is nicely paced, and the writing is good. My only complaint is that sometime I felt the human characters (not all of the characters are human) acted irresponsibly, allowing situations to befall them, which they possibly might have avoided. Also, the main human protagonist reacted most of the time, true, there were circumstances forcing that, but I felt he could have been a little more proactive. The above said, it hardly distracted from, what for me, has been the highlight of the SF publications this year. **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.**

Wow. It does start off relatively slow (do we really need to read pages of exposition from the perspective of an alien?) but very quickly things get VERY real. I'm happy to say that I was completely unspoiled about the story and thus was completely surprised and engrossed when the full ambitious scope of Tchaikovsky's novel slowly revealed itself. Essentially CHILDREN OF TIME is two (very good!) science fiction books: one story is about an ark ship containing 500,000 frozen humans who are the last remnants of humanity (reminiscent of Kim Stanley Robinson's AURORA) and the other is an uplift story with incredibly realistic descriptions of an authentically alien culture (reminiscent of Vernor Vinge's A DEEPNESS IN THE SKY). Time is a key component of the story, as we follow multiple generations of the aliens as they evolve and their culture slowly develops technology. On the ship a great deal of time also passes, with the use of cold sleep allowing the audience's main characters to avoid most of the effects of time's arrow. Much of the compelling nature of the story is based around the reader's connection to the fate of humanity and the skill with which the author has presented the alien culture so that when the inevitable clash between the two factions occurs it is difficult to know who to root for! (The ending is pretty surprising, if a tad too neat.) Overall, CHILDREN OF TIME is an incredibly compelling standalone novel of hard science fiction which is an instant classic in the grand tradition of Neal Stephenson's SEVENEVES, Vinge's A DEEPNESS IN THE SKY and Isaac Asimov's THE GODS THEMSELVES.

Children of Time begins just after humanity manages to completely screw themselves over, and tells two overlapping stories, set over a period of 5,000 years. The first is about the crew of the ship Gilgamesh, and follows them through the periods when they wake up from hyper-sleep while they search for a colonisable planet for the remnants of humanity to use as a new home. The second

story follows the subjects of an Uplift project, only instead of the apes the Uplift virus was meant to work on, there are only arthropods. In this case, spiders, which become much larger and more intelligent, although Uplifted ants play a large role and intelligent shrimp are mentioned. If this sounds like a strange premise, it is, but is also very well done. The characters are fleshed out and each has their own motivations, and the world created (in both senses) is so novel and imaginative that I derived as much delight from imagining other ways it might have developed as I did reading how it did. In particular I found the evolution of an intelligent arachnid society to be completely new, and more than once I found myself wishing the human sections would hurry up and finish so I could read more about the spiders. I'm not entirely certain how satisfying I think the ending is. While it isn't a bad ending, it isn't great either. Also, some of the spiders technology is completely believable given how differently they would approach technical matters, but other parts seem to be just hand-waved through. To be fair, I couldn't explain how a computer works either, so this may just be my lack of understanding on the subject. Overall, a very enjoyable book, and I'd love another one, or even just a novella, about the shrimps or some other Uplifted arthropod species.

It has been a while since I read a book with such a creative story line. The book primarily follows two cultures over the course of millennia, until they finally collide. While I found the non-human storyline more interesting, and consequently the human storyline a bit dull by comparison for the 60%-85% range of the book, I still thoroughly enjoyed it. It is one of those prized books that both entertains me and alters my view of the world and the universe and my fellow man--just a bit--for the better. I look forward to additional work in the science fiction genre by this author.

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