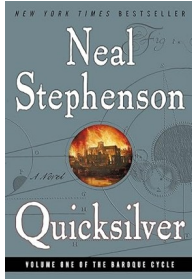




Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



Quicksilver
By Neal Stephenson
Discussed May 2006

Background

Quicksilver is the first of eight "novels" of the "Baroque Cycle," published in hardcover and trade paperback in three volumes and in mass market paperback in eight volumes. The main character in *Quicksilver* is Daniel Waterhouse. The main character in the second volume, *King of the Vagabonds*, is Jack Shaftoe. Waterhouse returns in book three, and the characters generally alternate in subsequent volumes. Both Waterhouse and Shaftoe are ancestors of major characters in Stephenson's previous work, *Cryptonomicon*, which takes place in various parts of the twentieth century. One character, Enoch Root, turns up in both works, as does the *Cryptonomicon* itself.

Discussion Questions

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. This book is the first part of a hardcover volume that is, in turn, the first part of a trilogy. Do you feel that you got a "satisfying chunk"? Do you wish to continue?
3. How effective was the device of alternating between Daniel Waterhouse in old age and in youth?
4. How did you feel about the lengthy descriptions? Were they interesting or did they just slow things down (or both)?
5. Is the Baroque Cycle too long or about the right length? (You don't get any other options.)
6. This book is generally shelved in bookstores as SF/Fantasy. Is this book SF or fantasy?
7. Even if the answer to the previous question is no, are there any reasons why it may be appropriate to shelve it in SF/Fantasy?
8. What is it Stephenson is trying to say about society in the 17th and 21st centuries?
9. Did you learn any factoids that you are glad to know (e.g. the invention of the second hand on clocks)?
10. It is thought likely that Isaac Newton was gay. How does his characterization fit in with this theory?
11. Any other gay content?