Across Realtime

Vernor Vinge

Across Realtime

Vernor Vinge

Across Realtime Vernor Vinge
"The intricately plotted progress of characters from near to farfuture... on an Earth which, like an abandon playground, has long ago been left behind by an evolving humanity... human-scale action within a vast canvas."
-- The Excyclopedia of Science Fiction.

Encompassing time-travel, powerful mystery and the future history of humanity to its last handful of survivors, Across Realtime spans millions of years and is an utterly engrossing SF classic.

"You can hardly turn the pages fast enough. As sheer entertainment, it's a winner"
-- Locus

Across Realtime Details

Date : Published December 1st 1994 by Not Avail (first published January 1st 1986)
ISBN : 9781857981476
Author : Vernor Vinge
Format : Unknown Binding 532 pages
Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Time Travel

Download and Read Free Online Across Realtime Vernor Vinge

From Reader Review Across Realtime for online ebook

Patrick Scheele says

These two books, collected in one, are, if you ask me, the best Vinge has written. They're much better than his later, over-hyped (but still not bad) Fire Upon the Deep.

...

Well, that settles it. I set out to write a positive review to prove that I can do it, but I can't. All I can do is nitpick these books to death and explain how I would have written an even better story. So... never mind me and just go read the book.

Neal Asher says

Ah, it's Mr Singularity himself with tales of pre then post singularity worlds 'bobbles' can isolate and freeze in time their contents. It's dated a bit now what with these two written in 1984 and 1986 and a world war in 1997 but enjoyable none-the-less. There's also something very believable about the abilities of the future humans and, frankly, all the characters are engaging and you regret knowing no more about them when the story ends.

Note, don't make the mistake of buying this if you already have either Peace War or Marooned in Realtime because those are the two tales here. I'd also recommend, if you haven't read them yet A Fire Upon the Deep and A Deepness in the Sky.

M. J. says

It looks like I read this in record time, but really I had some technical problems trying to enter it--first, I entered the wrong book, because I made a stab at remembering the title when I didn't have the book in front of me, then it wouldn't let me delete the other and add this one. So here I am, on the night I finished reading it, finally managing to get the system to accept that I started.

This is another "second time through" book. It actually might be third time through, I'm not quite sure, but my son had commented on reading something by Asimov and on having thoroughly enjoyed Bradbury's Illustrated Man, and I went digging for my copy of Fahrenheit 451 (I, too, enjoyed Illustrated Man, along with Martian Chronicles and S is for Space, when I was a bit younger than he is now, but I think Fahrenheit 451 is the necessary Bradbury book; I even referenced it in a recent article http://www.examiner.com/article/freed... on free speech), and I didn't find it but handed him several books I thought he might enjoy, and then took this one back because I thought I would enjoy it again.

It is a strange book, because it is in one sense all one story, set in the same world, and in another sense three different stories. All three were previously published separately. It begins with a novel, "The Peace War", and then there is a longish short story set in the world left behind by that war years later, "The Ungoverned", and then another novel, "Marooned in Realtime", in which one of the heroes of the first novel joins the hero

of the short story thousands of years in the future. Despite the temporal discontinuity and the significant differences between the stories, it feels like it's all part of one work.

The first presupposes that the best theoretical mathematician of the end of the twentieth century had figured out how to create what appeared to be a force sphere, what became known as a "bobble", and his bosses built a machine to do it and proceeded to conquer the world by containing all national military forces in such bobbles, and thereafter severely restricting all technology outside its own use. An uprising of "tinkers", led by said mathematician, ultimately defeated them, as the bobble is discovered to be something different from what even he thought and he determines how to make better ones with portable equipment to use against them. Even so, it is because of a decision made by a double agent that the world survives, and the psychological drama of it is at least as compelling as the fighting and gadgetry.

That gadgetry includes early mind/machine interface devices, mostly used for pinball-like games. The mathematician, who is obviously getting old, finds a young boy, Wili Wachendon, bright enough to be his apprentice, who takes to these devices like an extension of his own mind. With the downfall of the organization that called itself "The Peace", they begin trying to build a new world.

The short story happens within that new world, when the Republic of New Mexico decides to annex territory in the free lands to the north, and already famous detective Wil W. Brierson, named for that young mathematician, is sent in response to a distress call from a private security firm. Thanks to the way the free people defend their own property, the New Mexico army is repelled, and Brierson becomes even more of a hero than he was.

He also gets bobbled, in a later investigation not covered in the stories, and finds himself fifty thousand years in the future, where the ragtag remains of humanity are being gathered in the hope that they can rebuild a viable society. One of the heroes of the first story also arrives, apparently having traveled through deep space in search of answers as to what happened to humanity while she was away, although at least one person believes she is not human--and at nine thousand years old (she looks much younger, thanks to the advanced medical technology of our near future) she is one of the few people who must be trusted when it becomes apparent that someone is trying to destroy the colony. One of its key leaders is murdered, and Brierson's expertise comes into play to solve the mystery. In the end, the stories are connected in surprising ways, and humanity has a real chance to survive, but it is touch and go for a while.

Vinge believes in the "singularity", a concept which I think he created, and somewhere between the second and third stories it apparently has occurred. As a result, all of humanity left earth, perhaps left this dimension entirely, although where they went and how is one of the mysteries Vinge (wisely) does not answer. On the other hand, I found his dismissal of religion annoying. One of the characters was expecting the Second Coming of Christ, bobbled himself and his followers forward to the time he thought it would happen, and then discovering the earth completely depopulated concluded that he had miscalculated, that it had already come--but that God would be merciful and come back for him and any of the stragglers who repented and turned to Him. I have mixed feelings about that conceptually, but the character is portrayed as an annoying nutcase, which I find offensive. He is, however, a minor player in the story, and there are other nutcases each with his own obsession--so consistently among the later departing people that Brierson suspects some kind of monomania is necessary for anyone to push forward through centuries of life into the future. On the concept itself, there certainly is good evidence for the convergence of technologies in a way that will make humanity very different at the end of this century (more so than the previous century), but the notion that we will cease to be corporeal creatures with a preference for planetary habitats is not so credible. I don't know where Vinge expects people to go, but I think he's mistaken on that.

On the other hand, it makes for a fun story overall, and I'll admit that although I remembered much of the book, I did not remember whodunit, or why, for the most part. It's worth reading.

Jon Mountjoy says

This appears to be two books in one. The first book was fantastic, and is why I like this author. I love the idea of bobbling, its consequences and the stark history of the Authority. This first book gets 5 stars.

The second book should not have been included - it gets 2 stars. I was disappointed almost all the way through. And come on. The first time the Singularity was described I though "surely the rest of humanity would have been left a sign/path." It's too unbelievable. Ironically the author apologizes for this in the afterword, but even that doesn't save it.

My advice: read the first half.

Zachary Waxman says

This is a collection of two novels (The Peace War and Marooned in Realtime) that are set within the same universe, although loosely connected with some continuing characters, but the second novel set 50 million years in the future. Missing is the interlude piece, the Ungoverned, which would complete this "trilogy". Typical Vinge themes appear through out: interesting settings, ubiquitous computing, eerily close technological predictions and a discussion of the technological singularity.

The Peace War is a tale about a repressed group of citizens taking over and conquering an authoritative government. What is unique about the story, is the setting. Like other Vinge novels, your are thrown into a familiar, but recognizable environment, but with little back story. For instance, characters travel by horse and cart, but play a game on modern day tablets. Here, after the development of bobbles (what is eventually discovered to be stasis bobbles), allows an self declared authoritative government to cease all technological development. This leads to a decimation of mankind (it's mentioned that Australia's population is now only 10K) and an end to all forms of local or national government. While the ruling authority has somewhat advanced technology, they haven't been able to develop anything new. However, the civilians are generally left alone to develop new technologies, as long as they can't be weaponized, but they simply don't have the power to create anything overly important. This all leads to an arms race and somewhat predictable confrontation.

Marooned in Real Time, is a detective story set 50 million years in this universes future. The main character, a detective, is maliciously left in stasis and along with a few others, finds that humanity is gone. During a intended period of stasis, the group moves forward in time in order to rescue some additional survivors once their stasis bobble pops. During this period of stasis one character is left behind and ultimately dies. The story becomes about answering three questions: (1)Who is the survivor that bobbled the main character (2)who committed the murder, left a character out in real time (3)what happened to the human race. Two of these are answered, with a little twist. The other is left to speculation. This novel also explains, through discussions of the characters, Vinge's concept of the singularity.

Over all a "goodread". It's enjoyable to go back and re-read Vinge on occasion to see what technological

predictions he made in his works are not true or close to becoming reality.

John Dalton says

Apparently some editions of this work contain three stories - mine only contains the two novels "The Peace War" and "Marooned in Realtime".[return][return]Both stories are centered around the idea of a technology which can created isolated spherical regions of space/time, called "bobbles". A bobble appears as a mirrored sphere enclosing the region of space around which it was created. It has the same mass as its contents, can be moved around like any other object in space, and is absolutely indestructible.[return][return]The first story takes place about 50 years after the discovery of bobbles, describing how they were used in a surprise attack by a group determined to end all warfare. The result is a tyrannical "peace" with heavy restrictions on the development and use of many kinds of technology. Naturally, groups opposed to this kind of "peace" fight to overthrow the Peace Authority.[return][return]Restrictions on technology have backfired on the oppressors, as their own technology has been held back while underground development in a resistance movement has leapfrogged them in several key areas. The breakthrough comes when the resistance is able to develop their own technology to manipulate bobbles, and an interesting confrontation results as old military tactics are thrown out the window.[return][return]The second story takes place on a post-singularity earth. The events of the singularity itself are a mystery to all - the human race appears to have just disappeared, and the only survivors are those who were inside bobbles at the time. Bobbles effectively provide a form of one-way time travel, and so eventually over millennia groups of survivors band together until the last 300 or so humans are in one place preparing to form a colony to restart the human race.[return][return]The colonists are divided into the "low-tech" and "hi-tech". The hi-tech colonists are those who have access to technology from just prior to the singularity, and the difference is so substantial that they're basically all trans-human entities heavily augmented by their technology. When one of the key hi-tech colonists is murdered through a subtle but malicious corruption of their systems, it becomes a race to find the murderer before the human race dwindles into extinction.[return][return]I enjoyed the first of these stories much more than the second, though both were good reading. This is a prime example of the kind of science fiction which takes a single simple idea and follows it through in a series of mind-bending "what-ifs". The means by which bobbles might be created is never discussed, and is unimportant to the story. The question of what it might mean if they *could* be created is the important one, and the two stories here do a very good job at exploring the possibilities.

Jeannine says

This compilation includes The Peace War, and Marooned in Realtime, as well as a short story set in the same "world." All were quite interesting, though Marooned in Realtime bogged down a bit in the middle. A well thought out "what if" novel.

AJ Slater says

This is two related SciFi novels published together. The first, _The_Peace_War_ is a fairly standard Heinlenesque smart-boy-makes-good nerd fantasy. Nothing revelatory.

The second, _Marooned_In_Realtime_ is a fantastic look at what can happen in a world with one way

(forward) time travel. This is why I picked up Vinge again, for creative, giant scale sci fi. People can travel to the stars in stasis, but they burn megayears of realtime doing so. Ecologists can jump ahead half a megayear at a time and watch evolution. But there's no way to get back. You end up hanging out with whoever is out of stasis in your eon. The mystery of an individual murder drives the plot along along with the greater mystery of why human civilization on earth disappeared abruptly. Good sci fi and good exploration of Vinge's theme of the results of exponential technological progress.

I picked this up because I enjoyed his other Novel _A_Fire_Upon_the_Deep_ and his historically important (to the genre) short story _True_Names_.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

I remembered loving this, but I didn't remember the book well enough to review it without a reread. A lot did come back once into the stories though, and I fell right back in love with it. This has so much that made me love the genre. Especially Big Ideas, playing with very large scales of space and time and loads of imagination--but without the drawbacks I often find in Golden Age Science Fiction. I love the big three of Asimov, Heinlein and Clarke, goodness knows I do, but so often their women didn't read as real to me, and though this is going to sound nauseatingly politically correct, too often they imagined a future that was just too white for my tastes--when they weren't presenting racial stereotypes that were cringe-worthy (Clarke less so than the others, and the others got better over the decades--their hey day after all was the forties and fifties.) The point is, I don't have to make allowances for these 1980s books in either respect.

That doesn't mean the politically correct crowd would necessarily love this book. The book is a cult classic among libertarians for good reason, but it's not libertarian porn like say L. Neil Smith's novels. If any of the three connected stories read that way, it's the shortish novella bridge story, "The Ungoverned." It was a self-styled "anarcho-capitalist" who first pointed me to that story and to Vinge. But if you can look beyond that, what you find is a overall story that transcends that, with yes, some of the individualism and faith in freedom of Robert Heinlein, with some of the visionary apotheosis of Arthur C. Clarke. And I liked and cared about the characters. Della Lu and Wil Brierson may not be as complex or vivid as classic characters, but they work for me. And while the style won't be mistaken for literary, it does it's job. I liked the first short novel, *The Peace War* more than *Marooned in Realtime*, which I found a bit depressing, at least at first. But satisfying reads? Yup.

Ric says

have read all vv books i am aware of. so i guess that makes me a vinge-e.

Christian J says

Vernor Vinge is an author I often overlook, but I am always thrilled with when I finish reading. This was no exception. Compares favorably to Lucifer's Hammer.

The Fizza says

I would like to start this review with a comment on the edition I purchased which, at the time, was out-of-print.

Across Realtime is a collection of all the Vinge stories set in this same world/reality. It is supposed to reprint two novels (The Peace War and Marooned in Realtime) as well as one novella ("The Ungoverned"). Unfortunately my edition only had The Peace War and Marooned in Realtime.

Of those stories the ladder, Marooned in Realtime, is the more compelling. Set 50 million years after the first, a murder investigation is at the heart of this multi-mystery tale that will decide the fate of humanity.

In the former story though, which has the excellent title 'The Peace War', we follow an intrepid group of clever post-apocalyptic mathematicians, and their friends, as they fight to overturn the world wide dictatorship of The Peace Authority in 2047.

The Authority had come to power 50 years earlier using an
invention called a "bobble" on the armies and governments of the world.

Bobbles are impenetrable spheres of force, perfectly reflective and frictionless, which encloses whatever is within it in a fixed instant of time until the bobble bursts.

As always the with Vinge's words I was carried feet first into this vibrantly populated America of interesting and clever characters as they are motivated by love, hate and the occasional lump of guilt into organizing a rebellion in a world where peace is in enforced by a onetime think-tank who's discovery of "bobbling" allowed them to win global domination.

A world where the outlawing and control of "big" technology has left "little" tech to be refined by groups of Tinkerers and forward thinking minds.

Now jumping 50 megayears ahead we see what the last enclaves of humanity are like. Marooned in Realtime follows users of the "bobble" who have dropped out again and again (bobbled themselves to travel into the future) until one day they awake to an empty world. Humanity just gone, without a trace.

Together the survivors have once again decided to live in Realtime in hopes of revitalize the human race. But even here human's are just that... human.

And one detective, the last detective, kidnapped from his own time while on a case and thrust into a future where his whole family's offspring had long ago turned to dust must now try to save this new world order by discovering the identity of a murderer before this band of time refugees tenuous alliance splinters into nothing.

But can he discover who marooned one of the group leaders in Realtime, while the rest 'bobbled-up for the winter', before this last chance for humanity is lost?

Marooned in Realtime won the Prometheus Award in 1987 and was also nominated for the Hugo Award for Best Novel that same year. And while The Peace War was not as gripping it was a great way to get your feet wet in this word of Vinge's.

So while I did like the 2nd story more the read of the whole book was great and I would recommend this book to anyone who was interested in time travel stories, mysteries and adventure.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in October 2001.

Although presented in this edition as a single entity, Across Realtime is really two novels, as it was originally published: The Peace War and Marooned in Realtime.

Te concept which fuels the plot of the two novels is is an impenetrable sphere of force, perfectly reflective and frictionless, which encloses whatever is within it in a fixed instant of time until the bobble bursts. Not much is said about the physics of these objects, which are basically unexplained plot devices in a traditional science fiction manner. My feeling is that they are impossible, since quantum tunnelling would allow particles to pass through the skin, and this would force a thermodynamic connection between the inside and outside, making time pass.

In the first novel, which has the excellent title The Peace War, the bobbles have been used by the Peace Authority to set up a world wide dictatorship (just bobble any opposition). The plot is about the fight to overturn them, led by the man who invented the bobble and a young boy, his genius apprentice.

The second novel, Marooned in Realtime, is set millions of years later. It is a more successful story than The Peace War, which takes quite a long time to get going. It is a murder investigation, and it has three mysteries at its heart. Wil Brierson is a policeman from the late twenty first century, who was effectively murdered - separated from his family and friends by being bobbled for thousands of years by a fugitive suspect. This crime was punished by the courts by bobbling the perpetrator for the same length of time, and placing this bobble and an account of the crime next to that of the victim so that he could prepare his own vengeance after his release.

This wouldn't be much of a mystery except for the central fact of the novel. The long term bobbled have found themselves in a world with no humans, and a variety of untestable theories are put forward for the disappearance - alien invasion, the second coming, a universal transcendence to some higher level of being. Marta and Yelen, among the last survivors to leave civilisation (and therefore among the most technologically advanced), decide that the only hope for human survival is for all the remaining people to band together, and as part of this they rescue Wil's assailant and give him a new identity.

The third investigation, which is the principal one in terms of the crime plot, is into murder committed with an opposite method to the attack on Wil. To gather as many recruits as possible, Marta's growing community bobbles itself through thousands of years until other bobbles break; but now an enemy hacks her computer system so that she is left outside the bobble, alone on the planet until the end of her natural lifespan away from medical technology.

Wil's investigation into this makes the novel a fascinating mystery, with an interesting background among the animals evolved since the disappearance. Marooned in Realtime is easily the better of the two stories, and The Peace War is really more like an explanation of its background than something similar to it in stature. Both, however, are of interest; Marooned in Realtime is one of the best pieces of eighties science fiction.

Mike Gogulski says

Vinge's deep-time singularity saga remains as fresh and exciting as it was nearly 30 years ago. There are few works in Science Fiction I would label as timeless classics, but this collection is surely one of them.

Greg says

OMG Libertarians love to talk about libertarianism.