



## Timepiece

*Heather Albano , Kenneth Schneyer (Foreword)*

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You only THINK you know what happened at Waterloo.

The real story involved more monsters. And a lot more time travel.

**It's 1815**, and Wellington's badly-outnumbered army stares across the field of Waterloo at Napoleon's forces. Desperate to hold until reinforcements arrive, Wellington calls upon a race of monsters created by a mad Genevese scientist 25 years before.

**It's 1815**, and a discontented young lady sitting in a rose garden receives a mysterious gift: a pocket watch that, when opened, displays scenes from all eras of history. Past...and future.

**It's 1885**, and a small band of resistance fighters are resorting to increasingly extreme methods in their efforts to overthrow a steampunk Empire whose clockwork gears are slick with its subjects blood.

Are these events connected?

**Oh, come now. That would be telling.**

"Waterloo and time travel are made for each other and Heather Albano has done a wonderful job of giving us a delightful cast of characters, tasked with stitching together the proper nineteenth century while fending off several monstrous alternatives. Propulsive adventure with historical insight." - Kim Stanley Robinson, Red Mars and 2312

## Timepiece Details

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Author : Heather Albano , Kenneth Schneyer (Foreword)

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# From Reader Review Timepiece for online ebook

## Volpot says

3.5 stars. Fairly good if unremarkable time travel story. Might read sequel.

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## Brian Foster says

In Timepiece, Ms. Albano tells of a young woman stifled by early 19th century society. When she received a watch in the mail that lets her move through time, her adventure begins.

Why to buy this book: If you like time-traveling steampunk with monsters, giant robots, and alternative history, this book is a bargain. The romantic elements and character development were, for the most part, done quite well. I also liked the hook she through in at the end (trying not to give spoilers here) that gives an interesting hint about the origin of the third protagonist.

Why not to buy the book: To begin with, I don't really like prologues all that much, and the author added to my misery by going out of her way to not describe the "monsters." I'm assuming that she wished to build up hype for when the things appear later in the story, but she mainly ended up annoying me by withholding information in a clumsy manner. When the monsters eventually entered the plot again, they did not meet the high expectations the author established in the prologue. Speaking of that prologue, she revisits the events but has the time travelers change what happens. No problem there, but the scene got repetitive. Perhaps it would have been better to start nearer the point of divergence. Like I said above, overall the character development was decent. I did, however, have one quibble. The two protagonists both have disdain for their society, which the author does a good job of showing. However, it seems like these two are the only ones in the world who find it stifling, and, given that their attitude is somewhat necessary to the plot, this makes the plot seemed contrived. If the author would have spent a little more space developing a general teenage rebellion toward society (she does this somewhat; just not quite enough), it would have smoothed out this objection. Another issue I had is that, if you're writing alternative fiction, you need to have a reason for things to go differently than what happened in real life. I'm not sure this author addressed those issues well enough. Though, perhaps, she intends to do so in the sequel(s). Finally, the writing could have been tighter. The extra words didn't bother me too much throughout most of the book, but I felt it detracted from the action scenes, leaving them feeling incorrectly paced and muddled.

Bottom Line: Putting a star category on this one is difficult for me. On one hand, I enjoyed parts of it and plan to buy the sequel. On the other, there were at least five annoyances that ranged from minor to pretty bad. For 99 cents, it's worth buying, but, based on the sheer number of problems, I had to go with 3 stars instead of four.

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## David says

It takes a certain amount of chutzpah to take the worlds of novels like Frankenstein, Pride and Prejudice, and The Time Machine and pull them all together around the Battle of Waterloo, but this book does it. Its

steampunk sensibility flows cleanly from the plot. I'm looking forward to the next book!

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## **Amy Aelleah says**

DNF - PG 92

Why?

Because I'm so bored and I've been working on this barely 300 page book for almost a month.

Also, I NEED the time travel explained. Either that, or toss so many complicated words at me that I don't realize it isn't being explained. This book does neither and some actually admits that they don't know how the time travel works or where the watches come from. And no one seems at all curious.

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## **Richard Abbott says**

Timepiece, by Heather Albano, was an experiment for me into a sort of steampunk plus time travel experience. A little to my surprise, it was set overtly in a very recognisable version of our own world, beginning on the day of the Battle of Waterloo. As the story progressed it became clear that other fictional elements had been woven into the plot, most notably from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. I suppose that I had expected something set in an invented world, or at least one in which the divergence from our own history had happened sufficiently early that there were many more differences.

As it was, I did not find the basic premise compelling. It seemed altogether too easy for Heather to inventively write her way out of problems, and I felt that difficulties raised early on were side-stepped later. Certain constraints in the time travel part were set up, but did not seem to be followed through consistently if the plot seemed to require otherwise (for example, being in two places at once at the same time, or whether or not it was possible to revisit a time already accessed). On the one hand, the world was too much like ours, but on the other, there were too many added ingredients to know where things stood.

Like several other books I have read recently, it is just the first part of a story, and it finishes rather abruptly, almost in mid-narrative. To some extent this incompleteness is signaled by clues dropped quite skilfully into the storyline. Certain relationships are suggested but then left unresolved. As reader, you begin to suspect that these clues are building into a pattern, but the characters remain ignorant of this. Perhaps they will become aware of the pattern in the next volume, which I am guessing is going to see the main characters try and resolve the problem that they were left in at the end of *Timepiece* – it's something of a 'three wishes' plot where at each stage the central couple have to try to sort out the problems that were created last time. At any rate, this device of simply halting the story mid-flow did not endear me to the book, and has not left me eager to pick up the next one: instead I felt frustrated that it was left incomplete.

The book necessarily handles some science / technology plot components as it goes along, and I had mixed feelings about these. Some felt about right for the early to mid 19th century, but others felt out of place. But then, if you're writing about a parallel universe maybe it's fair game to just swap things around? I wasn't sure, and I think on balance I prefer dealing with the actual history of our own world, and the problems faced by people in it. From conversations with others I am aware of how hard it is to create a convincing imaginary

world. In the world of Timepiece, I was never sure that I actually knew what the rules and boundaries were, and they seemed rather fluid as things moved along.

One of Heather's main interests is clearly to explore how people from one era might cope with a culture reasonably close to their own – in this case about 70 years. That is an interesting endeavour – it's almost within the protagonists' lifetimes, but with enough changes (quite apart from the time travel stuff) to make for some unexpected dissonance as well as reassuring familiarity. This worked well for a while, but it seemed that having gone into changes of costume, and some aspects of the role of women, Heather dropped back into differences more to do with social rank than cultural development. I would have enjoyed something further along the original lines.

Technically this is yet another book where kindle features have not been properly coded. The the hardware navigation works, and there is an HTML TOC, but this has not been fully integrated and you cannot 'goto' table of contents. However, the content of the book has been carefully proof-read and is nicely laid out.

Timepiece is undoubtedly imaginative, but for me it slightly failed to reach a target, resulting in my four star rating. I do prefer books about the real past of this world, but am quite happy to delve into imaginary or parallel places... so long as the ground-rules are clearly set out and maintained. Alternate history books are a fascinating look into unrealised possibilities, but I did not find this one very compelling. Having said that, I am sure that readers who click more with steampunk than I do will have a great time with Heather's book, and appreciate its particular flavour more than I did. Worth a look, if this is a genre you enjoy.

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### **Tony Peck says**

Well written with interesting characters and an author obviously enjoying playing with history. The structure of the story requires the reader to pay attention to what year and place each chapter is set in. Great steampunk effects.

Recommended.

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### **Patricia says**

This time travel, steampunk novel was a LOT of fun! Well-researched history, exciting adventures, and interesting characters make for a good story. I'm looking forward to the second book in the series.

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### **Carol Kerry-green says**

I really enjoyed this unusual time travel story. When faced with the possibility of defeat on the battlefield of Waterloo, Wellington calls on the 'Special Brigade', a squad of monsters who are barely controlled by their handlers, they sway the day for Wellington and the British, but the cost will only be counted 70 years in the future. On the same day as Waterloo, Elizabeth Barton and William Carrington, the one hemmed in by convention and her parent's ideas of what a 17 year old young lady in the early nineteenth century should be and the other a slightly older young man, wounded on the Peninsula where he lost the use of his right arm and wishing he could be at Waterloo, meet in the orchard near the boundary to their two properties, they

cannot know what will result in that meeting. Hours earlier, Elizabeth had had delivered to her an unusual watch, and it is this watch that she is examining when William comes upon her, together they investigate the seemingly impossible moving images on the inside face of one side of the watch, only to find themselves catapulted out of 1815 and into 1885, where terror reigns in the streets of London, as the Constructs built to beat back the Wellies (as the monsters used at Waterloo are now called) are used to police the inhabitants of London. Meeting with Mr Maxwell, who turns out to be a fellow timetraveller, the two young people are pulled into trying to help Maxwell prevent the rise of the monsters and the constructs.

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## **Marie J says**

I'll start by saying that I did love the story, extremely so. It was interesting to have a futuristic steampunk combined with time traveling. I did love the characters, loved Elizabeth's ingenuity, and the mystery that is Maxwell (though it's easy to figure out, really). The settings were really well rendered, the action nicely paced, and the historical aspects well integrated... So therefore why only 3 stars?

One thing about the book bugged me and that was the French. Not only having the translation written in italic can be very confusing when mixed with inner thoughts since it used the same italic but the language itself was... yeah, those were not grammatically correct sentences, some even completely missing verbs. I can understand the wish of the author to be accurate but in this aspect, it fell flat completely.

I think, in this aspect, the author would have greatly benefited from conversing with people who know the language or just scratch the idea of using French altogether. Yes, as a linguist I can get stuck on such little details.

The other part that makes me give this a much lower rating is the fact that I simply can not find the second book in the series. Yes, I know it is on Amazon (US, not my country so hello currency exchange rates) but having turned my entire library digital, I have forgone buying books made out of trees. Petty? Perhaps but we each have our stance and this is mine.

So, a great novel that ends in a bit of a cliffhanger and I can't read what happens next. Shame a bit but there are too many books to read than to pine away for the sequel.

This in no way undermines the story of this novel nor how well executed (except for the French) by the author. She crafted an amazing tale despite what seems like a somewhat negative review from me.

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## **Heather Bridson says**

Interesting book, didn't hold my attention well but I did like it. I am not sure if the future books will be on my to read list. The book was a bit boring to me. It had some good imagery, but the characters just seemed a bit flat to me. The battle scenes were engaging but it wasn't enough to make it a book I couldn't put down. In fact, I had a hard time picking it up. I love to read and I love to read books of all kinds. This one was ok, just not really good.

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## **Sue says**

This is a fun story, I'm looking forward to the sequel. Good characters and fun to see what happens when you "mess" with time. It took me longer than the other books I read because I was reading it on my Kindle and have limited time to read, most of the books I listen to while I work. The time it took me in no way reflects how I felt about the story. I enjoyed it and felt bad I didn't have the time to devote to it that it deserved.

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## **Clay Davis says**

The Battle of Waterloo was the most interesting part of the book.

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## **J.L. Dobias says**

Timepiece by Heather Albano

As I've protested before, Steampunk is not my genre. Nor am I a fan of history although I'm not entirely bereft of some grasp of historical events. So, when the book begins at Waterloo in the midst of battle I'm pretty sure I have a grasp of where we are and what the outcome should be. Although I must admit that as I often do before giving a review I paused at some point to recite aloud to Virginia a few items I enjoyed about the book with a brief synopsis of the book itself. So when I started to mention Waterloo and came stuck upon the name of the British duke, Virginia was quick to fill in the blanks with a confident: Wellington. You see it pays to be a reader of romance novels now doesn't it. Virginia's genre is Romance.

I thus felt it fell upon me to check what I could. You see the book hinges entirely on being in a world where there are monsters much like Mary Shelly's Frankenstein. These monstrosities were created, by the British, prior to this battle and are now being held in reserve. The biggest puzzle would seem to be the why, to Wellington using them. Was there a change in the original battle that made matters worse for Wellington's troops or are we to believe that Wellington's confidence in his green troops is so low that the change mostly comes from having such a thing in reserve as these monsters as enough to tempt Wellington. It's a difficult puzzle even so because it would seem that Wellington is not happy about his own decision which leads on into history by placing his name upon the whole thing by calling these creatures Wellingtons monsters. Giving them the glory for the victory and taking it away from his troops.

If I see things correctly this leads to the Steampunk nature of the story revolving around the events that follow this great battle.

But we don't get there directly since the main characters are still within this same time sphere which is what makes this primarily a time travel novel over Steampunk. Elizabeth Barton is anything but a prim an proper young lady. Perhaps she'd be best described as a tomboy despite the efforts of her parents and her aunt. Let me say her aunt is singularly cruel above and beyond the call of duty as regards molding Elizabeth into a fine young marriageable woman. At the age of seventeen Elizabeth is hardly ready to settle down with any suitor. She receives on this day in the mail a strange watch that not only has multiple dials but also a strange

movable picture. (Definitely something not of this time.)

Next is William Carrington, a former military man who was wounded seriously and has lost the function of one arm. Rather despondent that he is unable to accompany his brother in law back into battle, when Napoleon escapes from prison to begin his 100 day reign. Now unable to join the battle and feeling quite crippled and maimed he has serious doubts of his ability to make a show as a husband in his present condition. It is while getting away from everything that reminds him of his inadequacy that he takes a stroll that leads him to the same place that Elizabeth has gone to escape the mechanization's of her family in trying to match her with anything of flesh and blood and breeding that will tolerate her.

She has also gone to examine her watch more closely.

William finds her with the watch and confronts her about it. When he opens it to look at it he's mesmerized equally as much as she has been, but because he has some familiarity outside of the cloistered community that oppresses Elizabeth he has a better chance of recognizing that this is something that does not come from anywhere near or far from here. Because of the strange features within the watch there are a number of dials moved and an accidental pushing in of the stem. They both sense that something has happened. When Elizabeth takes possession of the watch and begins to fiddle with the stem William starts to caution her. Too late she presses the stem and they are thrust into immediate darkness.

And the adventure begins.

They first meet Max-an apparent fellow time traveler who will be able to fill in some gaps and give us the laws of time travel for these stories. Max helps them to find a place to lie low in this world where they are out past curfew and in danger of running afoul of the mechanical monstrosities that were created to put down the Frankenstein like monsters who rebelled against their creators. Those in charge of the mechanical wonders took the advantage after saving everyone and now have control of the empire.

The notion is that the creation of the monsters put emphasis on their saving the day in the battle at Waterloo and ensuring that the confidence level of the British foot soldier is lowered enough to change all of their history to a complete reliance upon the monsters to do battle for them. Thus the changes in history that lead to this society of steam and metal are all tightly bound with the first anachronistic event in history.

One major law of time travel seems to be that the time traveler is only allowed one attempt to change specific events in specific times and the traveler gets blocked out from those timelines once his presence in that timeline has occurred. (Explained here as not being able to be in the same place at the same time.) We get the sense that Max has already tried several things to zero in on the event that most strikingly determined the outcome, which is, to his unknown timeline, apparently history. Max mentions that his parents were time travelers and he sort of inherited the whole business from them. He possess a watch similar to the one Elizabeth has.

This is really a fascinating time travel story. We see mostly that the time travelers are quick to learn that even the most dramatic changes in some of the important or even less important events are not enough to stem the tide of time and history. Now with the three of them working on it perhaps they will have an impact, but will they be able to reconcile the consequences of the outcome of meddling.

This is a great book for history fans who aren't too particular about maintaining accuracy or overthinking the fact that there were so many things happening those days at Waterloo that it's difficult to say what would have occurred had any part gone differently. This novel has good solid world building for a Time Travel and



Steampunk novel so there is lots here for the Sci-Fi and SFF group to love.

This is also a love story that's building slow but believable with the relationship between Elizabeth and William and there's a bit of mystery about Max's over concern at getting those two back to their time line and I think it has something to do with that locket around his neck which Max guards possessively.

A fun and fascinating romp through time and altered history.

Although I don't need to say it; I will be reading the next novel soon.

J.L. Dobias

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### **Marc Mattson says**

I have to say this one came at me in unexpected ways. I was initially pulled in by unexpectedly lyrical writing, which perfectly complemented the Victorian drawing room drama that leads the story off. That said, it was initially jarring when, after the first leap forward in time, we were met by giant mechanical men (think Pacific Rim meets The Next Doctor's giant cyberman) that patrolled the streets of a fascist London, ostensibly protecting it from what is essentially a raging race of Frankenstein's monsters. It's a testament to the style and plotting that the story recovers from this stylistic change. My suggestion is to embrace the conceit and run with it. It's a lot of fun.

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### **\*Avonna says**

DNF.

I do not rate or review books I do not want to finish reading

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