

Darwin was deeply puzzled. Beyond the rocks of the Cambrian, full of trilobites and other animal fossils, there seemed to be a thundering silence. Where were the ancestors of these animals? Were there long gaps in these ancient rocks? Was the story of the oldest life erased forever?

Martin Brasier gives a vivid, compelling, personal account of the quest for Precambrian life. In an exhilarating journey that takes us to Siberia and Outer Mongolia, he shows what we have learned of the extraordinary creatures of the Precambrian, and the questions that remain.

'The "Cambrian Explosion" is the greatest of evolutionary enigmas, and it has been the subject of intensive research in recent years. Martin Brasier's engaging book leads to a plausible conclusion. It is rare to find an acknowledged expert willing and capable of presenting his subject so vividly for a broad audience.'

Anthony Hallam, author of Catastrophes and Lesser Calamities

'A Nabokovian example of great literature, Brasier's account of delving into Deep Time "informs, enchants and tells a story". This authentic, author-illustrated, and broad-minded narrative stands out, in stark contrast to many incomprehensible and sloppily produced "new" science books. The pre-Cambrian world *was* different: a world of toxic, sulphurous, and metal-laden waters in which both microbial and easily visible weird fossils were superbly preserved. The Cambrian "circus of worms" and other animals with teeth and jaws chewed to death the evidence of their glorious precedents, in this co-evolutionary tale of organism and environment. Brasier's solution to Darwin's dilemma is a joy to read.'

Lynn Margulis, author of Microcosmos

'a personal and engaging book about the search for Precambrian life and the Cambrian Explosion. Martin Brasier has been a part of many of the key events in the story, and he presents a vivid account of this important theme.'

Mike Benton, author of When Life Nearly Died

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