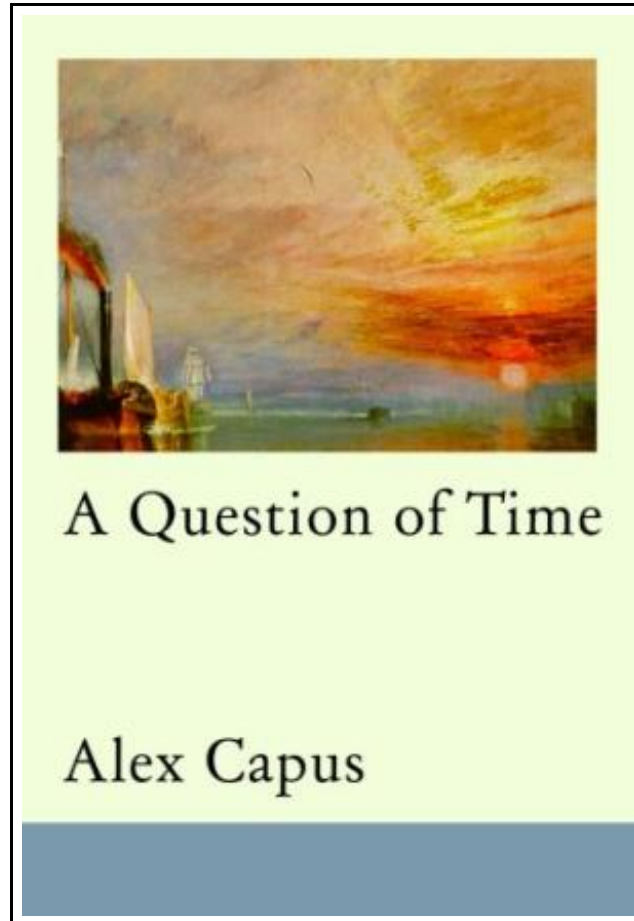


## A Matter of Time



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Haus Publishing Limited. Hardback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, A Matter of Time, Alex Capus, John Brownjohn, In November 1913, three German shipbuilders, led by master shipwright Anton Ruter, were ordered by Kaiser Wilhelm II to dismantle a steam ship, send the parts to German East Africa, and reassemble it on Lake Tanganyika. Their initial aim of getting the job done quickly and returning home to claim an excellent salary is quickly eclipsed by the enchantment of the exotic landscape, the governor's beautiful wife, and the violent machinery of colonialism. At the same time, Winston Churchill sends Commander Geoffrey Spicer-Simson to transport two dilapidated and incongruously named gun-boats, Mimi and Toutou, to the other side of the lake. When World War I breaks out the Germans and British are facing each other, and the boat-builders reluctantly find themselves fighting under the unsympathetic Captain-Lieutenant Gustav von Zimmer. The whole endeavour is a fiasco - von Zimmer and Spicer-Simson both miss their chances - but eventually the German steamer is sunk, if only because the imperial pleasure-yacht turned battleship is in an even worse state than Mimi and Toutou. In the midst of the horrors of war, however, there are moments of great humour and pathos - when the formerly antagonistic Ruter and von Zimmer scuttle their ship and make off into the bush; at the same time as the inveterate showman Spicer-Simson defies expectations and turns his back on professional glory in a gesture of humanity. War, colonialism, absurdity - Capus deals with big themes with a rich, warm humour and without a moralising undertone - he adds vibrant colour to characters and locations, and lets events speak for themselves.

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