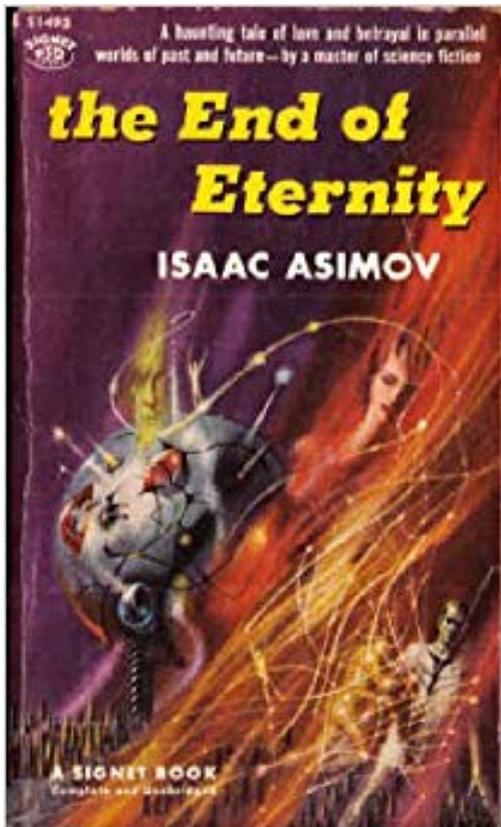


The End of Eternity (Signet SF, S1493) by Richard Powers, Isaac Asimov



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Book by Isaac Asimov



Reviews of the The End of Eternity (Signet SF, S1493) by Richard Powers, Isaac Asimov

Gldasiy

Half through the book I was thinking "Asimov writes really one dimensional characters," and became frustrated. However, just stick with it and everything will be explained by the last chapter. You may also think right up until the end "How can this story possibly co-exist with Foundation, and his other works as part of a cohesive self-referencing world?" Don't worry - that'll be explained well enough too.

I know this wasn't the first time machine story, but this may have been more influential on films like Primer and Back to the Future which involve recursive time changes and the inherent ripple effects than Jules Verne. Even Terminator borrows a few tricks from Asimov. (FYI, it wasn't until 9 years after this book was published that Ellison wrote the outer limits episodes Cameron borrowed whole cloth for the plot of Terminator) Usually these books/films deal with subjects experiencing time travel for the first time and how "crazy/amazing/scary" that is. In this book Asimov conjures an entire society (complete with mechanics) dedicated to using time travel on a constant basis, which is a very different and interesting way to cover some of the same ground that all time-travel stories do.

Unlike Foundation, this book keeps you interested in what the characters are going through and just how their technology works. Asimov even deals with the issue of how to time travel when the Earth is in a different spot in space/solar system/galaxy at different points in time. It isn't really explained well, but there are several nods to the reader that at least Asimov is considering these things in his writing.

One con, Asimov hasn't much of an imagination for how technology might evolve. In the Foundation whole planets either ran on Coal or Nuclear (no solar, no geothermal, nothing...really?). Here in Eternity, although they've managed to harvest endless amounts of solar power directly from the sun, information is stored on something that sounds like metallic microfiche and is viewed on something like a television. Let me clarify this for you - a society that has taken all the advances of science and technology up to past 500 centuries (not years, but centuries) and has the computing power to actually project how doing something in year X will affect year Y is using microfiche for their data storage. I know computers were giant room-size machines that only existed at IBM laboratories in 1955, but surely Asimov could have imagined something simpler than metallic paper for folks operating 503 centuries from now. It's little moments like that that take you out of the story momentarily. But, as that drawback doesn't significantly shape the plot, it shouldn't stop a sci-fi time travel story lover from enjoying this book.

and... spoiler alert... the end of the book was known to you all along ;)

Maucage

This book is widely considered to be Asimov's greatest stand-alone novel and it stands up to that lofty characterization.

Humans have manipulated the reality of Earth from "primitive times" (20th century and before) through the 100,000th century and beyond by traveling through time and making minimal changes in the world's reality when necessary. This process assures that mankind will remain safe and peaceful throughout eternity.

Andrew Harlan is an Eternal, a privileged technician who travels through time collecting information and making these minimal necessary changes. He meets and falls in love with Noÿs, a beautiful young woman from a distant century and the two begin an affair...something that is taboo for an Eternal. Harlan schemes to hide the affair, often thinking that he and his lover have been found out, and fearing that the powers that be will tweak reality to eliminate Noÿs from the new reality or change her, drastically. He begins to have doubts about the morality of what his organization does.

This excellent novel is loaded with the philosophical questions and fascinating paradoxes that one would expect to find in a good time-travel story.

Bundis

Isaac Asimov's *The End of Eternity* takes place in the far future after humanity has learned to "travel" thru time. Eternity is the name of a structure created outside of or in parallel with time, such that occupants of Eternity can travel from any time after the physics breakthrough that allowed for Eternity all the way to approximately 100,000 centuries into the future with nothing apparently beyond. Selected occupants of Eternity subtly alter humanity in different time periods based on complex mathematical analysis of human and population behavior at the individual level. One technician of Eternity falls in love with a non-Eternity occupant and threatens stability by veering from the grand plan.

Asimov introduces the concept of a space outside of or orthogonal to time as a sort of fourth dimension that can be accessed and traversed. In addition as with his other writings of this time period he relies heavily on the evolution of mathematics and theory to allow for detailed predictions of human population development over time. This precision allows for a level of control to subtly alter the present to create different futures. Ultimately the moral of the story is that playing it safe in the short term may not be safe in the long term.

Fearlessdweller

Ever since I watched the *Time Machine* movie in Elementary school, I've been a fan of time travel stories and of Science Fiction. After high school I became a huge fan of Isaac Asimov. This is probably one of my favorite single novel Asimov stories I've ever read and one of the best Sci Fi novels ever. "The Gods Themselves" would be my all time favourite Asimov novel. The *Foundation* books would be my all time favorite Sci Fi series. This story is Time Travel with a "twist". I really liked the plot twists and interesting characters. As an Asimov fan and a Sci Fi fan I really liked this story. Even non-Sci Fi fans will enjoy this book.

Deeroman

Nightfall is said to be Asimov's greatest short story: I have a substantial collection of his books, and have never been in any doubt that this is his best novel. Technically, the balance between narrative and reported speech is just right, and the grammar is as good as the vocabulary is wide. Most importantly, he explores an unusual idea while maintaining a sense of tension ... it is one of those books that you just have to stay up late to finish. It is also one of the few Asimov books in which there is a love element.

I have read it several times over the years, and have no reason to change my opinion. Just one thing ... if you get it, then whatever you do DON'T sneak a look at the ending!

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