



The End of Eternity

Isaac Asimov

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Andrew Harlan is an Eternal, a man whose job it is to range through past and present Centuries, monitoring and, where necessary, altering Time's myriad cause-and-effect relationships. But when Harlan meets and falls for a non-Eternal woman, he seeks to use the awesome powers and techniques of the Eternals to twist time for his own purposes, so that he and his love can survive together.

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The End of Eternity Details

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From Reader Review The End of Eternity for online ebook

°°°.°..°°._. ????? Ροζουλ? Εωσφ?ρος ._.°°.° .°°° ★.·.·.·.★ ?????? ???????
??????? Ταμετο?ρο Αμ says

ΤΕΛΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΙΩΝΙΟΤΗΤΑΣ ΑΡΧΗ ΤΟΥ ΑΠΕΙΡΟΥ.

Μυθιστορηματικ? γαλαξιακ? παραδοξολογ?α του "χρ?νου" που σε συγκλον?ζει.

Η επιτομ? της επιστημονικ?ς εξωφρενικ?ς ?μπνευσης,
η αιωνι?τητα με τις απαρα?τητες αλλαγ?ς πραγματικ?τητας,
οι "Αι?νιοι",που πρ?τουν με εγωιστικ? τεχνητ? νοημοσ?νη και αλλ?ζουν την ιστορ?α του
γαλαξ?α με απρ?σμενες συν?πειες.

Το καλ?τερο βιβλ?ο επιστημονικ?ς φαντασ?ας που ?χω διαβ?σει ως τ?ρα!!

Ποτ? δεν ?μουν οπαδ?ς της τετρ?γωνης λογικ?ς,των μαθηματικ?ν,της χρονικ?ς μηχανικ?ς και των
εξισ?σεων μηχανικο? πεδ?ου που οδηγο?ν σε τοποχρονικ?ς συγκιν?σεις....(μ?νο που τα γρ?φω
πληγ?νω τα αισθ?ματα μου).

Παρ?λα αυτ?,ο τερ?στιος Ισα?κ Ασ?μωφ ε?χε θε?κ? επ?δραση στο αναγνωστικ? μου πεδ?ο.
Με συγκλ?νισε με τις τ?σο ελκυστικ? αληθοφανε?ς επιστημονικ?ς ιδ?ες. Με γο?τευσε.

Σαν να μου χ?ρισε για κ?ποια βρ?δια που κ?ναμε παρ?α μια εξελιγμ?νη τεχνητ? νοημοσ?νη για να
καταφ?ρω να παρακολουθ?σω την αρχιτεκτονικ? του αφ?γηση για το τ?λος της αιωνι?τητας.

Με ξεν?γησε απο αι?να σε αι?να ανεβοκατεβα?νοντας εκατομμ?ρια χρ?νια μπρος-π?σω με
απ?στευτη εγκεφαλικ? δ?μηση καταν?ησης και γυρ?σματα πλοκ?ς και φαντασ?ας.
Γν?ρισα οικε?ους και αληθινο?ς χαρακτ?ρες ηρ?ων με π?θη και λ?θη παρ? την επιστημονικ? τους
κατ?ρτιση.
Εμαθα για τον προγραμματισμ? ?νωχρονικ?ν και κατωχρονικ?ν εγκλημ?των με μικρομον?δες
υπολογισμο? απο τον Κομπιο?ταπλεξ της Αιωνι?τητας.

Και σαν ?να ?νειρο που κρατ?ει παραπ?νω απο ?τι χρει?ζεται,π?ρασα με αρκετ? φρ?κη και
δυσπιστ?α σε αναλυση συναισθηματικ?ς δομ?ς,δρ?ση,αντ?δραση,
παρατ?ρηση,σκ?ψη και συγκ?νηση,απο τον Πρωτ?γονο ?νθρωπο του 21ου αι?να στους αν?τερους
ανθρ?πους του ανωχρ?νου των Κρυμμ?νων Αι?νων.

Μη φανταστε?τε πως στους Κρυμμ?νους Αι?νες ζουν α?ρατα
υπ?ρπλ?σματα.

Οι ?νθρωποι που ελ?γχουν το περιβ?λλον τους δεν εξελ?σσονται.
Στους Κρυμμ?νους Αι?νες (δεν ξ?ρω ποιοι ειναι, κρ?βονται καλ?)
ζουν κανονικο? ?νθρωποι,HOMO SAPIENS.

Και κ?πως ?τσι,με απλ? τετρ?γωνη μαθηματικ? λογικ?,(ανατρ?χιασα).
ο μεταν?στης με τις φάβορ?τες και τον κοκκ?λινο σκελετ? γ?νεται χωρ?ς Δε?τερη σκ?ψη, η Πρ?τη
μου Αγ?πη και Παντοτιν? στην κατηγορ?α ΕΦ.
Κ?πως ?τσι,σαν την αρχ? του απε?ρου....

Καλ? αν?γνωση!!
?πειρους ασπασμο?ς!!

Grazia says

"Peccato che il presente non possa durare, neppure nell'Eternità"

Beh, non avrei mai detto, di trovare divertente la lettura di un romanzo di fantà in cui la navicella la fa da padrone... Le navicelle in questo caso son cronoscafi, macchine capaci di andare avanti e indietro nel tempo, nei secoli dei secoli.

Un mondo in cui esiste l'eternità, e c'è una casta, gli Eterni appunto, tutta declinata al maschile, di figure preposte alla tutela di essa. Casta quasi sacerdotale, completamente dedicata al presidio del perdurare dei secoli.

Ci sono i tecnici, i calcolatori umani e i manutentori, uomini sottratti alla vita normale, opportunamente istruiti per scegliere i mutamenti minimi necessari per la tutela dell'umanità. Che con uno sguardo teoricamente super partes progettano vite, deviano i corsi di esse, manipolano destini, decidono di sacrificare pochi per il 'bene' di molti.

Togliendo di fatto la possibilità di scelta, pilotando l'umanità intera come massa di burattini. Operando selezioni di realtà possibili in teoria a tutela della conservazione della specie, in pratica azzerando il libero arbitrio e la possibilità di miglioramento tramite l'errore e il suo riconoscimento.

"Noi estirpiamo l'insolito"

Ma senza l'insolito come può esserci evoluzione?

E cosa può far sì che l'uomo si riappropri della propria libertà rinunciando ad una eternità che di fatto è solo *"una fogna di psicosi sempre più dense e torbide,... un abisso pulsante di motivazioni anormali,.. una massa di vite disperate, strappate brutalmente alla vera esistenza, smarrite in un gorgo di follia"*?

Questa è la storia di Harlan, tecnico brillante, che un giorno incrocia sulla sua strada una donna, la bellissima Noys.

Ah l'amore, per esso si può anche arrivare a rinunciare alla vita eterna!

Bradley says

I just had to do a little retro SF catch-up, grabbing those old classics by big-name SF authors that I haven't yet had the pleasure to read, and this one kept cropping up as one of the best of the best by Asimov.

You know, OTHER than Foundation and the Robot novels. Of which, a few are sub-par. We'll ignore all of these for now and focus on this standalone.

About time travel in a kettle, kinda like Wells' time machine, only let's make a society of men, only men, living outside of time a-la Time Lords and have our MC be a pre-Doctor kind of character who's ACTUALLY willing to fall in love with a girl and is willing to DESTROY this little bubble of Eternity for her sake.

You know, because a society of nothing but men will obviously think with nothing more than the spout of their kettles.

And don't get me started on this 50's assumption that only men can do the work, but because even Asimov recognized all that and turned her into a femme fatale and made the girls more badass than the boys. So we learn. LATER. :) So let's move on from there.

This is basically Doctor Who on steroids and less buddy-buddy unique eras and a hardcore dive into escaping a whole society of time travelers who meddle with the past to erase the really bad stuff, fixing whole timelines on massive scales over vast time periods... ALL FOR THE SAKE OF TIPPING HIS TEAKETTLE.

Oh, and he decides it's okay to destroy all the Time Lords. Ahem. Sorry. Eternals.

What could have been a relatively average and not bad at all novel right HERE is then given the full Asimov twist and he turns it into a full adventure with deeper and deeper intrigue, reversals, surprises, reveals, and mystery. Not bad, Asimov. And then he even goes for the short-story twist at the end and makes us re-evaluate EVERYTHING that has happened before in a new light.

NOT BAD AT ALL.

So if you can get over the naming conventions and the cardboard cutout characters and the whole psychosexual mess, I can ABSOLUTELY PROMISE YOU that there's a very fine and fun novel in here. :) Worthy of anything we've got today and somewhat more ambitious, even with the length, than most of the same.

I'm very glad to have read this. :)

Nanu says

Es genial, Asimov no deja un cabo suelto. Hasta las cosas que no me terminaban de cerrar tuvieron su explicación.

La lectura es muy adictiva. ¡Si les gustan las historias de viajes en el tiempo, tienen que leerlo!

Nandakishore Varma says

This is a unique one for Asimov, and not connected to his usual fictional universe. Ironically, this is his first book I tried to read, *in Malayalam translation*, no less! But either the translation was bad, or the story was untranslatable, or I was too young for it... I dropped it after a few pages. I am glad I did, because I could read the original afresh.

This story is about a group called Eternals who travel outside of linear time, stepping in when required within the time-stream to make things "better for humanity". Well, it all ends up rather like America making the world safe for democracy.

I don't remember much other than the main character almost meeting himself as he enters the time-stream from different points. For some reason, this is considered a disaster. I don't know why. If I get chance, I would like to go forward and meet my older self, just to know how I made out.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Final review, first posted on Fantasy Literature:

Re-reading a favorite book from your teenage years is always a risky endeavor. I've been dismayed by how often my youthful memories are tarnished by a re-read, and I end up wondering if my taste as a young adult was all in my mouth.

But I couldn't resist trying *The End of Eternity* (1955) by Isaac Asimov again, partly because I remembered liking it so well as a teenager, but my memories of it were so extremely hazy (for the longest time, until a Google search saved me, I couldn't even remember the title of the book, it was just "that really cool Asimov time-traveling book" in my head). So I bought a used copy, got a few chuckles out of the 1970s sci-fi cover and how short novels used to be (192 pages here), and settled down to read.

Andrew Harlan is one of the so-called Eternals, men (almost invariably men) who have been pulled into kind of a bubble called "Eternity" that exists outside of normal time. Eternity, and a time-traveling machine called the "Kettle" that acts as a type of elevator through the years of the Earth's existence, give them the ability to easily travel backwards and forwards in time. Eternals can change the past, present and future, which they frequently do when they think that society is taking a turn that leads to an undesirable outcome. Strangely, however, the Kettle is inexplicably blocked from stopping anywhere during the 70,000th to the 150,000th centuries, and afterwards lies only emptiness: Earth and its inhabitants are gone.

Love and marriage aren't permitted for Eternals, other than brief sexual liaisons that are required to go through authorized channels. But Andrew, despite his best efforts to avoid it, manages to fall into a relationship, and then love, with a woman, Nöyes Lambert, who has been temporarily brought into Eternity. Soon he finds himself in the middle of not only his own small personal rebellion, but also a series of events that may affect Eternity and change the entire history of the Earth.

I'm vastly relieved to report that *The End of Eternity* has held up quite well over the decades. It's certainly dated, and for a while I thought I was going to have some fairly serious issues with the secondary role of women in this novel, but that all actually resolved itself quite well in the end (though to explain why would spoil the tale).

The End of Eternity has the retro charm of 1950s science fiction, but with more depth than most sci-fi novels from that age. It has its weaknesses: Asimov's scientific theory and technology for time travel are a little wild and woolly, female characters are non-existent other than Nöyes, and all of the characters except (to some extent) Andrew and Nöyes are strictly one-dimensional. If you can roll with it, however, it's a fun and

interesting ride, with a few twists and turns that definitely make the story memorable.

Initial review: I've been asking myself for ages, what was that time travel story of Isaac Asimov's that I loved when I was a teenager? and the question suddenly became more urgent after an interesting discussion I was having with some GR friends about time travel novels we've liked (see the thread to Joe Valdez's review of *The Time Traveler's Wife*). And it occurred to me to Google "Isaac Asimov time travel," duh, and there it was.

So the four stars here are based purely on my love for this book ages ago, and unfortunately I've found that my teenage taste in books is not always a reliable indicator of literary quality, so don't blame me if you read this and think it's a dud. I'd like to read it again, but I just checked and my local library doesn't have it on their shelves (maybe ILL? Will have to see sometime) so it'll probably be a while before I re-read this. But Uncle Isaac was a big reason for my teenage love for science fiction, which has lasted for my entire life. Just for that, he gets as many stars as I care to dish out. No apologies.

Roberto says

Da qui all'eternità

Dunque, vediamo.

Supponiamo di poter prevedere (o sapere) in anticipo un dato evento che può causare un danno all'umanità (ok, il termine umanità è generico e molto anni sessanta, ma consentitemelo).

Supponiamo anche di essere così bravi e dotati di tecnologia così raffinata da poter determinare quale piccola variazione possiamo fare in anticipo (e con quanto anticipo) per evitare che quel dato evento accada. *Figo*, diremmo.

Ok, è probabile che quella "piccola variazione" possa lasciare sul campo qualche morto teorico (più che morto dovremmo dire qualcuno che sarebbe dovuto nascere ma che a causa della nostra variazione non è mai nato). Ma poco male, cosa non si fa per l'Umanità.

Ecco, dicevo: *figo*.

La complicazione inizia quando cominciamo a capire che queste previsioni e queste piccole variazioni qualcuno le dovrebbe fare. Qualcuno esperto. Qualcuno che sapesse valutare bene gli impatti di queste "piccole variazioni" di cui parlavo.

Perché complicazione? Perché chi avesse la capacità di fare queste cose avrebbe più "potere" degli altri individui. Perché inevitabilmente questo potere dividerebbe il mondo in esseri controllori e controllati. Perché lo sviluppo del mondo si basa, come insegna Darwin, sugli errori evolutivi, sugli errori, che queste piccole variazioni eviterebbero. Perché questo controllo e questa omogeneizzazione della vita sarebbe basata sulla moderazione e la sicurezza, che vedrebbe prevalere la mediocrità. In altre parole l'ottenimento dell'Eternità si pagherebbe in termini di autonomia e sviluppo degli individui.

Un po' meno figo, direi.

Questo romanzo di Asimov analizza, con una scrittura tersa, fredda e distaccata, i limiti di questa ipotesi di Eternità. E lo fa in modo semplice e fruibile anche a chi non è esattamente appassionato di fantascienza, visto che inserisce discorsi filosofici in una storia a strati, leggibili separatamente o nel loro insieme. C'è una storia di amore, ci sono le tensioni sociali (che si possono leggere anche contestualizzandole nella nostra epoca), ci sono le lotte di potere nelle classi dominanti, c'è la ricerca scientifica.

Il risultato è un libro fruibile, scorrevole, divertente, insolito, attuale, che fa pure riflettere. Cosa volere di più?

sologdin says

Nutshell: antisocial nerd, responsible for historical amendments to spacetime continuum, dicks it up for everyone in order to lose virginity.

Eternity is an interdimensional NGO, set up in the 27th century (32), initially to carry on intertemporal trade (43), which trade was promoted as its primary purpose. Its true primary task is to "prevent catastrophe from striking mankind" and "to breed out of Reality any factors that might lead to such knowledge" of its biotemporal management of human history (43-44).

We see that the main component of biotemporal management is actually wealth management for each century: "The Sociologists had an equation for the phenomenon" of uneven wealth distribution (45). Biotemporal managers allowed aristocracies to form, so long as they "did not entirely forget their responsibilities while enjoying their privileges" (46). Analogues to marxism here to the extent that the managers viewed the aristocracy as a ruling entity, "a class, not as individuals" (38). Generally, the point is to protect the species from destroying itself in nuclear war, but there's talk in the NGO of abolishing space travel, which always turns out to be a disaster.

Some odd gender politics: no women in the NGO, for the bizarre reason that removing females from the spacetime continuum actually has a more deleterious effect than removing males (something to do with the birthrate). Plenty of commentary, express and implied, on freedom & determinism. Strikes me that determinism is the default position when the premise of the story is that changes initiated by the managers at one point alter later effects. That said, some characters believe in "temporal inertia" (169), and that effects from changes return to a hypothetical baseline after a number of centuries, rather than creating further diremptions.

Anyway, lotsa paradoxes, including the central paradox of the novel (or, rather, of the Setting, rather than the Story): how is it that changes to history do not effect the NGO when the NGO interacts with and draws from history?

Nifty link toward the end to the Robot/Empire/Foundation setting: safe to say that the denouement is the condition of possibility for that narrative.

Recommended for those who stumble upon temporal field theory without being aware of its mathematical justification, persons for whom human appetites carry a quivery repulsion, and readers who associate the mushroom cloud with the system by which private capital was invested in business.

Amy says

This is somehow my first Asimov book. At first, I was underwhelmed. However, as the book went forward, I found that there was much more depth to the writing than originally met the eye and that the shallow characters were shallow with a purpose.

Asimov sets up a group of scientist who are outside of time called the Eternals. While everyone on earth thinks that their main job is to facilitate commerce between various centuries, their true function is to manipulate history to make it play out more favorably. Thus, the Eternals have become gods without the people of the world knowing it. They've become puppeteers to a population that doesn't know to fight back, thus leaving the Eternals seemingly untouchable. It makes for an interesting polytheocracy where the people aren't even aware that their scientist have turned themselves into gods.

It seems that only the brightest, most analytical, most unquestioning, most inexperienced in life, and most naive need apply for the job of Eternal. Recruiters would need to find someone who lived their entire life with those qualities to hopefully ensure that they'd not eventually change into someone who would call for a revolution in Eternity because they could no longer agree with the level of control and puppetmastery that the Eternals wield. With such a combination of personality traits, Our Hero falls in love with the first scantily clad woman that throws herself his way. And, in so doing, he puts the very existence of Eternity in peril because he's willing to do whatever it takes to keep her. And upon this small rebellion, our story turns.

An interesting mystery is that the Eternals are shielded from being able to visit the future beyond a certain point. Apparently, future humans don't want the daliance of the Eternals in their affairs. Asimov makes the point that species evolve to adapt to their environment. However, since humans are able to adapt their environments to suit them, he postulates that humans have and will continue to evolve at much slower rates than beings that are unable to modify their environments. So we guess that future humans aren't that much different genetically from present-day humans. One wonders. My next read is Hominids (a book I've been wanting for ages which I received as a birthday gift) which imagines a parallel universe where Neanderthals did not die out or intermix with homo sapiens and eventually became more technologically advanced than we have during the same time period. I have a strong intrigue concerning the what-ifs of our evolutionary might-have-beens or our evolutionary future. I think fiction like this appeals to me simply because I only have one life to live and will never see our evolutionary future thousands or millions of years from now beyond an author's imagination. I'd love to see a far distant future as imagined by Asimov.

I'll certainly read Asimov again. The content of the story was merely okay, but the questions that he created for me while I was reading have left me wanting more.

Mümin says

Kitap bir noktadan sonra o denli sürükleyiciydi ki, yüz sayfas?n? karanl?kta, otobüsün küçük televizyonunun ?????yla okudum. Muazzam bir hayal gücü.

Manny says

If you haven't read Asimov's SF classic, it's one of those time-travel stories where you can change the past.

The people with the time machines are a shadowy, infinitely powerful organisation called the Eternals. They flit around in time, changing things "for the good of humanity". Except that, as I'm sure you already guessed, it isn't quite clear after a while that humanity is benefiting from all this attention. The agents who are responsible for making the changes are called Technicians, and they pride themselves on always finding the very simplest way to effect the change. They don't start a war if it's enough just to assassinate one key person; they don't assassinate him if it's enough just to organise a traffic accident so that he misses a meeting; and they don't organise the traffic accident if it's enough just to put his address book in a different pocket, so that he makes the critical phone call twenty minutes too late. In a word, they're minimalists.

I was talking about this book the other day with an American friend who'd also read it. If the premise of the story really were true, we wondered what evidence you could find to suggest that Eternals had been at work. We couldn't help thinking that the 2000 Butterfly Ballot was suspicious. Not least the name - perhaps some Technician had been unable to resist the joke, and planted a larger clue than he really was supposed to?

After posting this review and that for *The Naked Sun*, I did some more googling on the background to *Eternity*. Among other things, I discovered that Asimov claimed he got the original idea when he saw an ad in an early 30s newspaper, showing a picture that looked rather like a mushroom cloud. Well, he thought to himself, no one in 1930 knew what a mushroom cloud looked like. Maybe it's a message from a stranded time-traveller? And, from that beginning, he constructed the rest of the novel.

I liked it, but I was dubious about the reliability of the method. Time travel probably won't be invented very soon - it sounds like extremely advanced technology. If you really did want to send a message into the distant future, you'd want something far more permanent and noticeable than an obscure ad. Something, in fact, that would have a decent chance of surviving for thousands of years, in unchanged form, and which would be as prominent as possible. The ideal thing would be an immortal work of art.

And then it struck me: in a different thread, we'd been talking about Shakespeare's mysterious Sonnet XVIII. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I submit to your august consideration the hypothesis that this is a message from a time-traveller who crashed their machine in the early 17th century. To start off with, the poem explicitly says that its central purpose is to be remembered for ever. It's so beautiful, and every word is so perfectly chosen, that it has a decent chance of surviving unchanged for thousands of years - maybe, even until people get around to inventing time travel?

If you want to turn this into a short story, please credit me somewhere :)

Maria Dobos says

Cartea asta mi-a adus aminte de ce îmi place Asimov atât de mult, pentru mine e una dintre cele mai strălucite opere ale sale.

Zeci de secole în viitor: evoluția umanității este corectată de *Eternitate*, o organizație care există în afara Timpului și poate modela realitatea prin implementarea unor măsuri atent analizate în momente strategice ale istoriei. Călătorind înainte și înapoi pe axa temporală, *Eternii* aleg variantele de viitor care oferă cea mai mare siguranță socială și economică, încercând astfel să asigure perpetuarea confortabilă a speciei umane.

eserin hiçbir yeri o Vakıf'a umulmadık bağılantıdaki etkisini geçemez.

Sonsuzluk insanlığın en büyük hayali. Asimov da bunun üzerinden ustalıkla yakıtan, ustalıkla i?i bir kültür esere imza attı. Okuyunuz.

David says

I've always felt that Isaac Asimov writes brilliant science fiction with boring characters. I love a good time travel story, mostly to see what this author's take on the usual time travel paradoxes will be. Anyone who writes about agents changing history has to explain how they deal with things like the Grandfather Paradox, meeting earlier or later versions of yourself, and so on. There are a handful of well-known ways to deal with these issues (alternate timelines, a deterministic universe, special laws of temporal physics, etc.) and Asimov is rather inventive in using several of them at once.

Although *The End of Eternity* is brilliant in its construction of a civilization of time travelers and all the history and technology that goes into their society and the way they meddle with time, his protagonists are basically a bunch of whiny geeks who've never kissed a girl and act like highly-educated chimpanzees fighting for the highest branch in the treehouse. Asimov's vision of a civilization that spans millions of years and thousands of realities doesn't include a single one where women become scientists and engineers and might join the Eternals' boys' club. The entire plot hinges on not one but two high-ranking Eternals who decide they are willing to throw all of reality into danger for the chance to get laid. I know Asimov was a nerd and he wrote this in the 1950s, but he still could have done better. It's like the idea of women as anything but sex objects to be coveted or to seduce men off the path of Righteous Scientific Objectivity just never occurred to him. So naturally when a girl shows up (the only female character in the entire book), she must spell T-R-O-U-B-L-E, and in this case, the end of Eternity.

I enjoyed the story, but Asimov has never been my favorite among the Grand Old Masters of science fiction; there is something just a little too cold and calculating in all of his stories. For the ideas and the plot twists, this is a fun book with a great premise, but don't expect Asimov to wow you with his nuanced grasp of human relationships. His characters are wire dummies to hang a story on.
