



The Time Traveler's Almanac

Ann VanderMeer (Editor) , Jeff VanderMeer (Editor)

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The Time Traveler's Almanac is the largest and most definitive collection of time travel stories ever assembled. Gathered into one volume by intrepid chrononauts and world-renowned anthologists Ann and Jeff VanderMeer, this book compiles more than a century's worth of literary travels into the past and the future that will serve to reacquaint readers with beloved classics of the time travel genre and introduce them to thrilling contemporary innovations.

This marvelous volume includes nearly seventy journeys through time from authors such as Douglas Adams, Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, William Gibson, Ursula K. Le Guin, George R. R. Martin, Michael Moorcock, H. G. Wells, and Connie Willis, as well as helpful non-fiction articles original to this volume (such as Charles Yu's "Top Ten Tips For Time Travelers").

In fact, this book is like a time machine of its very own, covering millions of years of Earth's history from the age of the dinosaurs through to strange and fascinating futures, spanning the ages from the beginning of time to its very end. *The Time Traveler's Almanac* is the ultimate anthology for the time traveler in *your* life.

The Time Traveler's Almanac Details

Date : Published March 18th 2014 by Tor Books (first published November 7th 2013)

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Author : Ann VanderMeer (Editor) , Jeff VanderMeer (Editor)

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Download and Read Free Online The Time Traveler's Almanac Ann VanderMeer (Editor) , Jeff VanderMeer (Editor)

From Reader Review The Time Traveler's Almanac for online ebook

Philton says

The biggest and best collection of short stories about time travel ever. While not every single one of them was a winner, there were enough good ones, and some downright excellent ones, to make this a worthy read. There is even a playlist of songs recorded over the years about time travel in the middle of the book. Some day I will find the time to listen to all of them.

Pustulio says

Aún con sus altos y bajos las historias logran tener un libro bien macizo.

Si les gusta la ciencia ficción es una cosas beshisima.

El tratado acerca de la música y los viajes en el tiempo me pareció PRECIOSO.

John Herbert says

OK..you're not going to believe this.

It was only my second outing but I skipped down to the basement and flipped the relevant gears into action, sending the Time Machine, with myself on board, back in time just a couple of years.

The Vandermeers were discussing the possible topics for their next anthology, when I landed right smack bang in the middle of their dining table, cutlery and food flying everywhere.

Of course it had the desired effect that I was seeking: it totally disrupted their current thoughts and ideas, and THE TIME TRAVELLER'S ALMANAC never saw the light of day.

I returned to 2014 and breathed a great sigh of relief.

That abomination of 65 time travel tales, 943 pages of DESPERATELY SEEKING A SOLITARY DECENT STORY, would never be put together.

OK I'm going over the top...there were perhaps two or three average stories. But out of 65 that's a pretty poor return!

As an ardent Time Travel story follower I was so looking forward to this lovely large hardbacked edition of my favourite genre.

What a disappointment!

Not one of these stories even remotely touches the quality and class of Stephen King's 11.22.63 or Jack Finney's Time And Again. Compared to these two (admittedly full blown novels) this poor collection of

unsatisfactory sad sacks leaves you frustrated and a feeling of being somewhat cheated. Pardon the pun, but this lot should have been TIMED OUT many moons ago.

OK you ask....if I truly went back in time and prevented this publication, how comes that beautiful great hardback is still available to buy right now?

My answer is a little weak I'm afraid.

I'm still working on building my Time Machine

Timothy Ward says

I'm doing a group read with a few time travel fans. One story each Thursday, starting September 3. Hop in any time: <http://www.timothycward.com/the-time-...> or follow using #TimeTravelThursday

Sept. 3 – Richard Matheson/ Death Ship (review)

4/5 stars for a terrifying hook that only gets better in the last lines.

Sept. 10 - Geoffrey A. Landis/ Ripples in the Dirac Sea (review)

4/5 stars for a great use of time travel to illustrate the energy and importance of every breath we get.

Sept. 24 – Ursula K. Le Guin/ Another Story or A Fisherman of the Inland Sea

3/5 for info dump start that took way too long before a part that was really touching. Review

Oct. 1 – Alice Sola Kim/ Hwang's Billion Brilliant Daughters – 71

4/5 for creative heartbreaking effects of sleep time travel as it goes out of control. Review

Oct. 15 – Michael Moorcock/ Pale Roses – 81

Oct. 22 – William Gibson/ The Gernsback Continuum – 107

Oct. 29 – C.J. Cherryh/ The Threads of Time – 115

Nov. 5 – Michael Swanwick/ Triceratops – 120

Nov. 12 Steve Bein/ The Most Important Thing in the World"

5/5 - ...This was a quick, fun read which used time travel in a way I haven't seen before. It also examined two different marriages and how deception can catch up with you, leaving the reader with sympathy for their lives and a desire to right our own before we make the same mistake. (Full Review

Robin Bonne says

Wow, this books was heavy. The stories are crammed in with tiny text, and I thought it might squish me

while I was reading it.

There are a wide variety of stories relating to Time Travel in their own ways. I picked it up because it contained a couple short stories that a friend recommended I read.

DJ says

Reviews coming **every Thursday** as part of The Time Traveler's Almanac group read and will be posted first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

Follow along with **#TimeTravelThursday**

Death Ship by Richard Matheson - 3.5/5 Rating

Great start to the anthology! (My Review)

Ripples in A Dirac Sea by Geoffrey A. Landis - 4/5 Rating

This is how you science a time-travel story! (My Review)

Needle in A Timestack by Robert Silverberg - 3/5 Rating

The butterfly effect! (My Review)

Another Story or A Fisherman of the Inland Sea by Ursula K. Le Guin - 1.5/5 Rating

Ugh... (My Review)

Hwangs' Billion Brilliant Daughter by Alice Sola Kim - 3/5 Rating

Intriguing idea for time-travel (MyReview)

How the Future Got Better by Eric Schaller - 4/5 Rating

The Seinfeld of short stories (My Review)

Pale Roses by Michael Moorcock - 4/5 Rating

Extremely strange, yet, fascinating; stretched my imagination (My Review)

The Gernsback Continuum by William Gibson - 2.5/5 Rating

Don't judge a story by its opening paragraph (My Review)

The Threads of Time by C.J. Cherryh - 3.5/5 Rating

Here's a paradox: straight-forward and confusing (My Review)

Triceratops Summer by Michael Swanwick - 3.5/5 Rating

Why did the triceratops cross the road? (My Review)

The Most Important Thing in the World by Steve Bein - 4/5 Rating

The cause and effect of time (My Review)

Himself in Anachron by Cordwainer Smith - 3/5

Slightly confusing (My Review)

The Time Machine by H.G. Wells - 4/5

I would absolutely go check out the novel (My Review)

Young Zaphod Plays it Safe by Douglas Adams - 3.5/5

Review coming **12/03** and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

Time Travel in Theory and Practice by Stan Love

Review coming **12/10** and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

The Final Days by David Langford - 3/5

Review coming **1/28** and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

Fire Watch by Connie Willis - 3.5/5

Review coming **02/04** and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

Noble Mold by Kage Baker - 4/5

Review coming **02/11** and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

Under Seige by George R.R. Martin - 3.5/5

Review coming and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

Where of When by Steven Utley - 3/5

Review coming and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

Time Gypsy by Ellen Klages - 4/5

Review coming and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

On the Watchtower at Plataea by Garry Kilworth - 4/5

Review coming and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

Alexi and Graham Bell by Rosalyn Love - 3.5/5

Review coming **03/27** and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

A Night of the Barbary Coast by Kage Baker - 3/5

Review coming **03/24** and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

This Tragic Glass by Elizabeth Bear

Review coming **03/31** and will post first at MyLifeMyBooksMyEscape

Katlyn says

As with all anthologies featuring multiple authors, the quality of this book was highly variable. There were some stories I couldn't get into in the slightest and others that I adored. All in all though, it seemed to be a nice collection involving a variety of authors, writing styles, and time periods. I may look into some of the authors a bit more, I have meant to try more short stories by Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury in particular. I honestly haven't read much sci-fi, so my list of favourites may seem odd to some seasoned fans, but the following stories stuck out to me:

Favourite stories:

The Most Important Thing in the World by Steve Bein

A Sound of Thunder by Ray Bradbury

Vintage Season by C. L. Moore and Henry Kuttner

Forty, Counting Down by Harry Turtledove

Time Gypsy by Ellen Klages

Yesterday Was Monday by Theodore Sturgeon

Lost Continent by Greg Egan

Come-From-Aways by Tony Pi

The Waitabits by Eric Frank Russell

Twenty-One, Counting Up by Harry Turtledove

Message in a Bottle by Nalo Hopkinson

Red Letter Day by Kristine Kathryn Rusch

3.5/5 Sept. 2017

Fred Hughes says

It was really hit and miss on the stories that grabbed my attention. However that is true of all anthologies as they are the results of a single persons' interpretation of what is good. Still a reasonable value for the price

Diana says

collection of short stories on this theme of time travel. Some are very clever and interesting; others, less so. Also, since the stories come from various time periods, some feel modern, others are quite dated.

Jeff Deck says

Stories:

Death Ship (Matheson) -- 3 stars -- two for the story, one for the fact that it is Richard Matheson

Ripples in the Dirac Sea (Landis) -- 5 stars -- Wow, this was great.

Needle in a Timestack(Silverberg) -- 3 stars -- Anticlimactic. Started off cool.

Another Story (Le Guin)-- 1 star -- Too complicated and boring. I enjoy other Le Guin but could not get into this.

Hwang's Billion Brilliant Daughters (Sola Kim) -- 4 stars -- Not sure exactly about the "whys" of this one, but it was still pretty great.

Mark says

As we approach the end of the year, we get another behemoth collection from the Vandermeers and Head of

Zeus. After 2011's *The Weird*, which deservedly won awards, and last year's *Zombies!* in 2013 we get *The Time Traveller's Almanac*. (Or at least we do here in the UK: US readers will have to travel a little further in time until March 2014 for their copies.)

There are many collections of time travel stories out there. This one is claimed to be the biggest, and, as I'm sure many reviews will say, this is a huge book. 800+ pages of fairly small print, with over sixty authors and over one hundred stories. There's certainly a range here.

This size is both a blessing and a curse. As a result of its size I found that it's a book that has to be dipped into in stages, rather than try and read in one go. To help – and as the subtitle above will tell you- there is an overall connecting theme, which I liked – that this is a book brought to us from time-travellers in the future, from 2150. To further help the reader gain a grasp of this nebulous 'timey-wimey' concept (to paraphrase *Doctor Who*), the book is divided into broad sections – Experiments, Reactionaries and Revolutionaries, Mazes and Traps, and Communiques.

The first section, Experiments, features stories in which people are experimenting with time travel or are subjects of experimentation, Reactionaries and Revolutionaries is stories where people try to protect the past, Mazes and Traps are tales where time paradoxes are prevalent, and Communiques are stories about people trying to get a message to someone/somewhen out of their own time, either in the past or the future.

There are also non-fictional interludes along the way summarising key points of travel: Top Ten Tips for Time Travellers, Time Travel in Theory and Practice, Fashion for Time Travellers, Music for Time Travellers. (Some may be pleased to note that David Bowie is not mentioned in any of those.)

It is difficult to summarise such a tome, and it would perhaps be wrong of me to try. However, like the previous Vandermeer collection, I found old personal favourites (Ray Bradbury, HG Wells, Asimov, Kuttner and Moore, Connie Willis) as well as ones totally new to me (Vandana Singh, Dean Francis Alfar, Rosaleen Love, Karen Haber, Rjurik Davidson). I found stories from authors I liked, but hadn't read (George RR Martin, Kristine Kathryn Rusch, Adrian Tchaikovsky, Kim Newman, Eric Frank Russell) and stories I know others will like but left me cold (Ursula K leGuin, Adam Roberts). There are some old ones (Edward Page Mitchell's *The Clock that went Backward*, 1881, regarded here as one of the earliest time-travel tales, Max Beerbohn's *Enoch Soames*, 1916, EF Benson's *In the Tube* 1923), and some relatively new ones (John Chu's *Thirty Seconds from Now*, 2011, Adrian Tchaikovsky's *The Mouse Ran Down*, 2012). There were some that I forgot nearly as soon as I had finished reading them, even some I disliked. But that is the nature of such an eclectic assemblage: if you don't like one, there'll be another along in a minute that you probably will.

With such an enormous collection, there are bound to be gaps and lapses – or, as the book's Preface put it, 'wormholes and rifts', although any book claiming to be 'The Ultimate' something is just asking for trouble. I was surprised not to find some of the 'old timer' tales here, even if just to show how far such tales have developed.

Such matters usually lead to that great debate over what has been included and what's not: why has Mike Moorcock's *Pale Rose* been included rather than the much more famous short story *Behold the Man*? (The Vandermeers do actually explain that one themselves in their introduction to Mike's story.) Why is there an extract from HG Wells' short novel, *The Time Machine*, rather than his earlier short story, *The Chronic Argonauts* (which inspired him to write *The Time Machine*)? Why no Poul Anderson (*Time Patrol*), no H Beam Piper (*Paratime* stories), no Jack Finney (*Time and Time Again*) or L. Sprague de Camp (*Lest Darkness Fall*)?*

This highlights an issue with this and other such collections, as to whether as an editor you try and cover the range and show the evolution of such tales by giving stories that are (ironically) endemic of their time, or go for what you see as 'the best', bearing in mind that such statements are qualitative anyway. Here the Vandermeers seem to have gone for the latter, even when some may be disappointed by the choices made, and other authors have the privilege of being included more than once – Kage Baker twice, Gene Wolfe twice (though this one has good reason, being connected tales), for example, although the quality of the stories is more good than bad. Such discussions are the basis of many an Internet forum/social media site.

One minor quibble, but the sort of thing I pick up on quickly, and others may be put off by it – I was a little dismayed to find that the first thing read in the Vandermeer's Preface was a quote, with the person's name spelt wrong – Stephen Hawking, not Hawkings! – which made me worry that the rest of the book would be as sloppy – it's easy to mess up in a book of this size. Thankfully, after that things calmed down a little.

Such points may make you feel that this collection is a disappointment. It's really not, but its choices may not be to everyone's taste. There's enough here to generate debate, a big enough range to give the reader an idea of just how big the topic is, and enough relative quality to offset the dingbats. This is how any collection should be.

For me, if I'm brutally honest, I liked this book, more than *Zombies!* (which was itself very good), although it must be said not as much as *The Weird*. It is, for all my quibbles, a very good collection and I would go so far as to say that it is an essential read. As an accumulation of time travel tales, it is hard to beat. Recommended.

*(These are the first I thought of. I'm sure that there will be others that can be mentioned.)

Laurel says

This is a fantastic collection of mostly time travel stories. There were a few I couldn't figure out why they were included. But on the whole, some excellent stuff.

My favourite stories were: *The Time Machine* (an extract of) by HG Wells; *A Sound of Thunder* by Ray Bradbury; *Fire Watch* by Connie Willis; *Under Siege* by G.R.R. Martin; *The Waitabits* by Eric Frank Russell; and the final story in the Almanac, *Palimpsest* by Charles Stross, was an absolute corker. I loved it.

Death Ship by Richard Matheson 3/5

A very interesting short story. I loved the reference to *The Flying Dutchman*. I do query the notion that this is actually time travel, however.

Ripples in the Dirac Sea by Geoffrey A. Landis 4/5

An entertaining and thought-provoking short.

Needle in a Timestack by Robert Silverberg 3/5

An entertaining story about some of the complications that can arise from time travel.

Another Story or Fisherman of the Inland Sea by Ursula K. Le Guin 2/5

I knew going in that Le Guin's writing would probably not be my cup of tea, and I was correct. The science aspect of the story was excellent, but the cultural stuff could have been left out. It felt gratuitous and, quite

frankly, dragged.

Hwang's Billion Brilliant Daughters by Alice Sola Kim 2/5

While I got the fact that Hwang time travelled every time he slept, the rest of this story confused me. How was it he had so many daughters, for starters? Some serious explaining was left out.

How the Future got Better by Eric Schaller. 3/5

Initially this story annoyed me, and felt pointless, but as I think about it more, I wonder if the effect of the story is to make one ask a lot of questions, and for that reason I give it a 3/5 rating.

Pale Roses by Michael Moorcock 3/5

An interesting character study in a futuristic setting.

The Gernsback Continuum by William Gibson 3/5

An interesting enough read, but I didn't get any sense of time travel - alternate realities, perhaps - and very art deco.

The Threads of Time by C.J. Cherryh 3/5

What happens if your means of time travel no longer exists?

Triceratops Summer by Michael Swanwick 3/5

A bit difficult to follow every now and then, but on the whole an enjoyable read about what happens when time travel goes wrong.

Triceratops Summer by Michael Swanwick 3/5

An amusing account of what people may do if there's a wobble in the time continuum.

The Most Important Thing in the World by Steve Bein 4/5

A clever take on "time travel", with some issues attached. BIG issues!

Himself in Anachron by Cordwainer Smith 3/5

Great visual imagery, but some concepts were difficult to follow. Interesting.

The Time Machine by HG Wells 5/5

An extract from the novel, this detailed the Traveller's first trip through time. One of the most amazing descriptions of time travel and subjective experience of it (imagined, of course).

Young Zaphod Plays it Safe by Douglas Adams 4/5

Wacky and entertaining. Minimal time travel element.

A Sound of Thunder by Ray Bradbury 5/5

Classic time travel, beautifully written.

Vintage Season by Henry Kuttner & C.L. Moore 4/5

Time travel viewed from the outside; a lesson that time travellers do not know how cold and distant they can appear to the locals when they view the locals (inhabitants of the past) as entertainment.

Thirty Seconds from Now by John Chu 4/5

A precog views his future.

Forty, Counting Down by Harry Turtledove 4/5

A failed marriage drives Justin to travel back to the past and fix things. What happens isn't what he expected going in.

The Final Days by David Langford 4/5

A politician is imbued with confidence because he believes that the "eyes of the future" are all watching him.

Fire Watch by Connie Willis 5/5

The diary of a student historian who learns that lives are always important, even those of the past, while working on the Fire Watch above St Paul's during the London Blitz.

Noble Mold by Kage Baker 4/5

Two immortals with very different attitudes towards people from the past seek a grape vine.

Under Siege by G.R.R. Martin 5/5

A mutant from the future timerides into the past to attempt to change the course of history.

Where or When by Steven Utley 4/5

Three time travellers land up in the Virginia in the first week of May 1864 instead of in the Crystal Palace, London, 1851.

Time Gypsy by Ellen Klages 4/5

A physicist researching another physicist who was researching time travel at the time of her death has an opportunity to travel back in time to meet her idol.

On the Watchtower at Plataea by Garry Kilworth 4/5

A very interesting story. Time vortices, opposing time travellers and an engaging view of the siege of Plataea by the Spartans.

Alexia and Graham Bell by Rosaleen Love 2/5

The invention of telephones makes life go faster. But not in the way you think.

A Night on the Barbary Coast by Kage Baker 3/5

A fun outing with two time travellers on the trail of lichen.

This Tragic Glass by Elizabeth Bear 3/5

A future researcher seeks to determine the gender of Christopher Marlowe.

The Gulf of the Years by Georges-Olivier Châteaureynaud 3/5

A beautiful story about a man called Manoir who travels back in time to save a boy.

Enoch Soames: A Memory of the Eighteen-Nineties by Max Beerbohm 2/5

A study on desire for fame and recognition, and bargains with the Devil.

The Clock that went Backwards by Edward Page Mitchell 4/5

When great-aunt Gertrude falls dead after winding up her backwards-timing clock, two cousins inherit it. An early time travel story that packs plenty. I enjoyed this one a lot.

Yesterday was Monday by Theodore Sturgeon 4/5

A delightful story about "little people" and what happens when we humans sleep.

Is There Anybody There? by Kim Newman 2/5

What happens when a seance is interrupted by an internet user who taps into the Ouija board? This was a good story, but not one I liked personally.

Fish Night by Joe Lansdale 4/5

There's a special night, Fish Night, when two worlds collide. A gorgeous story.

The Lost Pilgrim by Gene Wolfe 2/5

A Mayflower passenger gets sidetracked. A story influenced by Greek mythology, with lions, giants, warriors and kings.

Palindromic by Peter Crowther 3/5

A screwy time-travel story with elements going both ways.

Augusta Prima by Karin Tidbeck 3/5

A weird, casually violent story of a place where time doesn't exist. Until someone finds a clock that ticks.

Life Trap by Barrington J. Bayley 4/5

An investigation into what happens beyond death. Interesting read.

Lost Continent by Greg Egan 4/5

A time travel perspective on the plight of illegal immigrants fleeing conflicts back home.

The Mouse Ran Down by Adrian Tchaikovsky 4/5

Some time after the end of time, human refugees from the end of time hide out in time fragments, shifting from fragment to fragment in a bid to survive. But there's a catch. They're losing fragments, as an enemy is shutting them down one by one.

The Great Clock by Langdon Jones 4/5

A visceral, gritty story of the man who maintains the great clock.

Traveller's Rest by David I. Masson 4/5

A fascinating, very well-crafted story, reminiscent in some ways of The Forever War, with clever plot devices to signify places where time moves more quickly and places where it moves at a more leisurely pace.

Delhi by Vananda Singh 3/5 stars

A man in Delhi can see different times overlaid on his present. Can he influence those times?

Come-From-Aways by Tony Piln 4/5 stars

A Welsh man time-jumps off the Newfoundland coast. A peaceful, fun story.

Terminós by Dean Francis Alfar 4/5

Mr. Henares trades in time. What do his clients experience when they purchase moments in time?

The Weed of Time by Norman Spinrad 4/5

Whatever you do, do not consume Temp. The stuff is dangerous! Very well written, conveying a very difficult concept with alacrity.

The Waitabits by Eric Frank Russell 5/5

A hilarious story of what happens when you meet with people/creatures/beings who simply run on a different time-speed to yours. I loved this story.

What If by Isaac Asimov 3/5

Illustrates the pitfalls of playing the "What if?" game, using the construct of alternate reality.

As Time Goes By by Tanith Lee 4/5

Messing around with temporal paradoxes on a time-neutral space station orbiting a white hole.

At Dorado by Geoffrey A Landis 4/5

A poignant look at life on a space station orbiting the wormhole Dorado.

3 RMS, Good View by Karen Haber 4/5

What do you do if you decide to live in the past and have to sign a non-interference contract... and then a child gets killed because you did nothing?

Twenty-One, Counting Up by Harry Turtledove 4/5

In this partner story to "Forty, Counting Down", one sees the events as they happen in the first story (with a few added elements) from the younger Justin Kloster's point of view.

Loob by Bob Lehman 3/5

A young man's life is severely impacted by the temporal paradoxes created by the town's so-called idiot.

The House that made the Sixteen Loops of Time by Tamsyn Muir 4/5

An entertaining story of a house that has issues. Severe issues.

Against the Lafayette Escadrille by Gene Wolfe 3/5

An interesting story of a replica builder and his Fokker triplane.

Swing Time by Carrie Vaughn 4/5

Time travel with dancing. And some danger.

The Mask of the Rex by Richard Bowes 3/5

An intriguing story about people taken out of their time to, so far as I could figure out, protect time portals to different places on Earth.

Message in a Bottle by Nalo Hopkinson 4/5

Can you imagine travelling back into the past to search for a specific sea shell that gets lost? A consideration of the observation that all creatures are artists.

The Time Telephone by Adam Roberts 3/5

A strange story with a very clever plot device.

Red Letter Day by Kristine Kathryn Rusch 4/5

A very interesting twist on the time travel concept, and an exploration into the consequences of foreknowledge of the future. Very well written, and very much a current topic.

Domine by Rjurik Davidson 4/5

This story had a distinctly “The Forever War” feel to it, but from the other side of the coin, so to speak. Fascinating, really, and somewhat disturbing too.

In the Tube by EF Benson 3/5

Pretty much a narration of supernatural events is my assessment – some events of which had not occurred at the time they were witnessed by Carling. So he saw a foreshadow of them, basically. Or precogged them.

Bad Timing by Molly Brown 4/5

When Alan Strong learns that he has travelled back in time to meet Cecily Walker because he falls in love with her picture, he does just that, then attempts to go back in time with hilarious consequences.

If Ever I Should Leave You by Pamela Sargent 4/5

A gentle story of timeless love and the loss that follows death.

Palimpsest by Charles Stross 5/5

An explosive cocktail of some of the themes I love best from sci-fi: deep time, time travel and the time travel paradox.

Mjhancock says

(Given the book's massive length, I was very tempted to do some sort of labored joke about how reading it was like time travelling into the distant future. I've (mostly) spared you from that; you're welcome.) The Time Traveller's Almanac is an anthology of science-fiction stories about time travel. And really, the first thing that will strike you about the book is how vast an anthology it is, with 71 different short stories--maybe 70, depending on how you count Harry Turtledove's two part contribution. It's divided into four sections--"experiments", in which the individuals are experimenting with time travel; "reactions and revolutionaries," in which tourists want the "truth" behind time, and others want to change what happens; "mazes and traps" where the paradox of time travel, and its punishing aspect, become the main event; and "communiques," in which people are trying to get a message to a different time line. To be honest, I didn't really notice the shifts when I was reading through, but I appreciate that the divisions were there. The editors--Ann and Jeff VanderMeer--clearly put some effort into making sure there was gender and minority representation on the list, and as someone who occasionally struggles to find sci-fi outside of the white guy norm, this was appreciated. While some stories are a little roughly written, the variety outweighs almost all negativity. Going through all seventy stories would be a massive effort; for brevity's sake, I'll name two or three from each section that impressed me.

In Experiments, Ursula Le Guin's "Another Story or a Fisherman of the Inland Sea" has time travel take a back seat to the more interesting part of the story, the wonderful sci-fi world Le Guin has sketched out in O, a world where four parent mating couples are the norm, and the society that grows out of such a world; it's a story about deciding what's really the most important thing in your life. And Alice Sola Kim's "Hwang's Billion Brilliant Daughters" is a wonderfully chaotic story about an ordinary man made immortal time traveller and utterly unable to cope with it. In "Reactionaries and Revolutionaries," John Chu's "Thirty Seconds From Now" looks at how relationships don't get any easier when you're constantly seeing multiple possible timelines at every moment--including the ones where your lover is moments away from leaving you. Kage Baker has two stories, "Noble Mold" and "A Night on the Barbary Coast," both featuring Joseph and Mendoza, father and daughter time travelers working for a mysterious, possibly corrupt, Company; if this is typical of Baker's work, I really do have to seek it out. And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Elizabeth

Bear's "This Tragic Glass" which has a premise immediately appealing to any English major: in the future, time travel is perfected and common enough to the point where an English department professor can put in for a grant to bring Christopher Marlowe out of time just before his death in order to prove an aspect of her research. In "Mazes and Traps," Gene Wolfe's "The Lost Pilgrim" features a man who goes back to do a mission regarding the Argos, but instead is swept up into the great company; Wolfe does a great job conveying the wondrous, alien part of this culture. Greg Egan's "Lost Continent" depicts time traveler refugees attempting to make a new life for themselves despite the future people being very ambiguous about their presence; it's a very on the nose indictment of the modern refugee systems. Vadana Singh's "Dehli" features a protagonist who's slightly unstuck in time, constantly seeing glimpses of Dehli's future and past. The story's main question is less time paradox and more about where individual meaning comes from, when so much of the future is set in stone. Finally, Communiques has some of my favorite premises, if not stories: Krsitine Kathryn Rusch's "Red Letter Day" explores the social implications of students receiving a letter from their fifty-year old selves--and what it means when that letter doesn't arrive. I love how it uses knowledge of the future as a sort of placeholder to explore that terrifying moment in high school, where you're just about to graduate, and it seems already like half the class's future is laid out. Pamela Sargent's "If Ever I Should Leave You" looks at a woman whose lover, knowing he had a terminal disease, spent his last six months darting around time, so that they'd be able to meet again after his death. The big question, then, is how the woman rations the time left with the love of her life. And finally, in the book's last story, longer than the others, Charles Stross' Palimpsest does a combination of a very personal story and a very high concept one--the high concept is that an agency uses time travel for terraforming on a scale of billion years, shepherding the Earth out of the solar system before the sun dies out. The personal level is how you construct a life when you are both immortal and yet your existence may be overwritten at any time.

What I appreciated the most about this book is the variety of perspectives it offered. And more than anything, it demonstrates how much time travel stories--for all that they're purportedly about far futures or different pasts--are reflections of the society they're written in, whether that's 19th century Britain, the cold war state of the sixties, and the (comparably) greater social freedoms of today, allowing a few queer time travel stories into the mix. It's introduced me to a lot of new authors I want to get into.

On the other hand, though--it's an anthology about time travel stories, and not a single one is about going back in time to kill Hitler. What's up with that? (Connie Willis' Fire Watch comes close, but still doesn't quite do it.)

Marjolein says

Death Ship (Richard Matheson) **

Ripples in the Dirac Sea (Geoffrey A. Landis) **

Needle in a Timestack (Robert Silverberg) ****

Another Story or A Fisherman of the Inland Sea [Hainish] (Ursula K. Le Guin) ****

Hwang's Billion Brilliant Daughters (Alice Sola Kim) *

How the Future Got Better (Eric Schaller) ***

Pale Roses [Tales from the End of Time] (Michael Moorcock) ****

The Gernsback Continuum (William Gibson) ***

The Threads of Time (C. J. Cherryh) **

Triceratops Summer (Michael Swanwick) ***

The Most Important Thing in the World (Steve Bein) ****

Himself in Anachron [The Instrumentality of Mankind] (Cordwainer Smith) ***

The Time Machine (excerpt) [H. G. Wells' Time Machine Universe] (H. G. Wells) **
Young Zaphod Plays It Safe [Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy] (Douglas Adams) **
A Sound of Thunder (Ray Bradbury) ***
Vintage Season (Henry Kuttner and C. L. Moore) *****
Thirty Seconds from Now (John Chu) *****
Forty, Counting Down [Justin Kloster] (Harry Turtledove) *****
The Final Days (David Langford) *****
Fire Watch [Time Travel] (Connie Willis) **
Noble Mold [The Company Short Fiction] (Kage Baker) *****
Under Siege (George R. R. Martin) ***
Where or When (Steven Utley) ***
Time Gypsy (Ellen Klages) **
On the Watchtower at Plataea (Garry Kilworth) **
Alexia and Graham Bell (Rosaleen Love) ***
A Night on the Barbary Coast [The Company Short Fiction] (Kage Baker) **
This Tragic Glass (Elizabeth Bear) **
The Gulf of the Years (Georges-Olivier Châteaureynaud) **
Enoch Soames: A Memory of the Eighteen-Nineties (Max Beerbohm) *****
The Clock That Went Backward (Edward Page Mitchell) *
Yesterday Was Monday (Theodore Sturgeon) **
Is There Anybody There? (Kim Newman) *****
Fish Night (Joe R. Lansdale) *
The Lost Pilgrim (Gene Wolfe) *
Palindromic (Peter Crowther) **
Augusta Prima (Karin Tidbeck) ***
Life Trap (Barrington J. Bayley) ***
Lost Continent (Greg Egan) **
The Mouse Ran Down (Adrian Tchaikovsky) ***
The Great Clock (Langdon Jones) **
Traveller's Rest (David I. Masson) ***
Delhi (Vandana Singh) *
Come-From-Aways (Tony Pi) **
Terminós (Dean Francis Alfar) **
The Weed of Time (Norman Spinrad) ***
The Waitabits (Eric Frank Russell) ***
What If (Isaac Asimov) ***
As Time Goes By (Tanith Lee) ***
At Dorado (Geoffrey A. Landis) **
3 RMS, Good View (Karen Haber) **
Twenty-One, Counting Up [Justin Kloster] (Harry Turtledove) **
Loob [Goster County] (Bob Leman) *
The House That Made the Sixteen Loops of Time (Tamsyn Muir) *
Against the Lafayette Escadrille (Gene Wolfe) **
Swing Time (Carrie Vaughn) **
The Mask of the Rex [Files of the Time Rangers] (Richard Bowes) *
Message in a Bottle (Nalo Hopkinson) **
The Time Telephone (Adam Roberts) **
Red Letter Day (Kristine Kathryn Rusch) ***
Domine (Rjurik Davidson) **

In the Tube (E. F. Benson) **

Bad Timing (Molly Brown) ***

If Ever I Should Leave You (Pamela Sargent) ***

Palimpsest (Charles Stross) **

Johanne says

oh this started so well and then lost me. In the first two sections I was completely hooked. All the stories gripped me but then in the remainder I found fewer and fewer that caught my imagination. So the ones I liked were the experiments and investigators, the paradoxes and communicators didn't grab me. Maybe this is my sci-fi heritage just showing itself. The later sections seemed largely to feature newer works whereas the early pieces were more 60s and 70s items; the era of my introduction to time travel.
