

Time After Time

By Laura Stoll, Assistant to the Director

I could count on one hand the number of sci-fi books I've read. Robots, space travel, and parallel universes could put me right to sleep. Books about time travel or reincarnation, though? They're all over my reading list. There's something realistic about the magic that I could be dropped into another era.

Likewise, I am fascinated by the idea that a person's life could be completely different based on various circumstances. This is sometimes called the butterfly effect. In the early 1970s, mathematician and meteorologist Edward Norton Lorenz coined the term using the example of a tornado's path of destruction influenced by a minor disturbance like a distant butterfly flapping its wings sometime in the past.

Some of my favorite books delve into the "what ifs" of time travel, the butterfly effect, and the many lives we could have led. Even though there is a supernatural element to these stories, they are grounded in the reality of how everyday life could be instantly changed.

Kate Atkinson's 2013 book "Life After Life" is about the many lives of Ursula Todd. In every version of her life, Ursula was born in a snowstorm on February 11, 1910. After that, Atkinson creates innumerable versions of her life and her death, including being strangled during her own birth, crushed in the London Blitz of the early 1940s, murdered by an abusive husband, as payback for an attempt to assassinate Hitler, and old age. Some of Ursula's deaths are predictable (the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918), some are dramatic (see the Hitler assassination mentioned earlier), and some are tragic (falling off the roof as a little girl trying to retrieve her doll), but all are thought-provoking.

"This Time Tomorrow" by Emma Straub asks, "What if you could take a vacation to your past?" Forty-year-old Alice has a good life but she misses the connection she had with her ailing father when she was a teenager and he was middle-aged. When she wakes up in 1996, she finds the younger version of her dad (and herself) and must decide what to do differently this time. The book is funny and clever and takes place in a special corner of the Upper West Side of Manhattan. I was so charmed by the locations in the book that I visited Gray's Papaya for a hot dog just like Alice did with her dad.

My most recent audiobook obsession has been the "American Royals" young adult series by Katharine McGee. The four books imagine what life would be like in America if we had our own royal family. If, instead of a democracy, the founders of our country had created a monarchy, how would that change daily life? Don't be fooled: this isn't serious history, it's a teenage romance. The stories about Queen Beatrice, her court, the spare, and all the other characters are fun and engaging.

I haven't read many Stephen King books but I highly recommend "11/22/63." It's a long one but it's worth the time. Jake Epping is a thirty-five-year-old high school English teacher in modern-day America. After discovering a portal to 1958, Jake goes on a mission to try to prevent the assassination of JFK. Jake slowly adapts to life in the early 1960s as he is an eyewitness to history. There is also a television miniseries available for streaming on Hulu. It's not as good as the book but it's a fun watch.

According to the publisher, "The Day Tripper" by James Goodhand follows twentysomething Alex "as he suddenly wakes one day and finds it's fifteen years into his future;

the next day, it's nine years later still. Never knowing which day will come next, Alex sets out on an emotional and at times gut-wrenching journey to discover just how much one can change their fate." This new release is coming soon to library shelves.

Thanks for reading! See you next time...or will I!?!?