



Foundation's Triumph

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Isaac Asimov's Foundation Trilogy is one of the highwater marks of science fiction. The monumental story of a Galactic Empire in decline and a secret society of scientists who seek to shorten the coming Dark Age with tools of Psychohistory, *Foundation* pioneered many themes of modern science fiction. Now, with the approval of the Asimov estate, three of today's most acclaimed authors have completed the epic the Grand Master left unfinished.

The Second Foundation Trilogy begins with Gregory Benford's *Foundation's Fear*, telling the origins of Hari Seldon, the Foundation's creator. Greg Bear's *Foundation and Chaos* relates the epic tale of Seldon's downfall and the first stirrings of robotic rebellion. Now, in David Brin's *Foundation's Triumph*, Seldon is about to escape exile and risk everything for one final quest—a search for knowledge and the power it bestows. The outcome of this final journey may secure humankind's future—or witness its final downfall...

Foundation's Triumph Details

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From Reader Review Foundation's Triumph for online ebook

Daniel McGill says

By far the best of the "new foundation trilogy" but I do not recommend reading the series, the guy who wrote the first book did so much damage to the story to the point of not even using Asimov's physics that between them even Brin and the guy who wrote the middle book couldn't undo it all. Only read if you're a fanatical completionist.

Henry Herz says

This is the third installment of a post-Asimov Foundation trilogy. Consider the honor bestowed on Dr. Brin - being entrusted with this revered sci-fi classic. And he delivers the goods. He expands upon the Foundation universe in seamless fashion - I could easily have believed this was a newly discovered Asimov manuscript. The writing is smart and heartfelt. I found myself moved by the relationship between Hari and Dors. And I shared the characters' frustration when enormous archives of knowledge had to be destroyed. This is one more reason why Dr. Brin is in the pantheon of living sci-fi writers.

Sarah says

Brin has some very interesting ideas in this book, but I think overall it's very poorly executed. He turns Daneel into a crazed megalomaniac and makes the robots responsible for the entire course of human history, and he attempts to explain Asimov's other books in terms of this robot theory, which is an interesting concept, but I think Asimov would be rolling in his grave. This was also just really difficult to get into, and confusing to try to keep track of who was on which side when, who was betraying whom, etc. The second book is the best in this series, but I don't think it was worth reading the whole series, unless you're just really curious (which I was).

Jeremiah Johnson says

This book was better than the previous two in this trilogy, but that isn't saying much.

Brin's writing is far superior to the other two authors, but I still couldn't get into the story. To his credit, they didn't leave him anything good to work with.

I am very torn over the notion that the robots were in charge of everything that happened throughout the Empire's history. While it makes sense and is believable, it doesn't seem like it is true to what Asimov's vision for the universe was.

The characters were decent, but at times it was difficult to keep track of all the changing factions and alliances.

John Derderian says

This was the best of the 3B trilogy, and the only one that felt at all in the spirit of Asimov's originals. You probably have to read the other two to really appreciate this one, and I can't really recommend that.

Roddy Williams says

'As for me, I am finished.'

With these words, a frail, dying Hari Seldon completes his life's work. The old man has just recorded messages for the Time Vault of the First Foundation. And psychohistory's Seldon Plan is unleashed, propelled by the ponderous momentum of destiny. Younger hands will now take up the task.

But Seldon knows that neither the First nor the Second Foundation will provide ultimate solutions. The Seldon Plan has three possible outcomes. None of them fills him with joy but he is consoled by the thought that any of the three is better than the chaos that would have happened without him.

However, the future still holds some surprises for Hari Seldon.

Blurb from the 2000 Orbit paperback edition.

An exceedingly suitable and satisfactory denouement to this posthumous sequel to Asimov's Foundation series. Following a rather disjointed opening Benford's 'Fear' and a sublime sequel in Bear's 'Chaos', David Brin wraps it all up very neatly with a highly readable tale of Hari Seldon's final adventure. The three authors have very cleverly managed to weave a complete new story over and around the original Foundation trilogy with a complexity that borders on X-Files level conspiracy. In some ways it is a little disappointing to discover that Hari Seldon's predictions – such as the secession from the Empire by Anacreon which left Terminus alone and undefended – were to a large extent 'helped along' by interfering robots and telepaths. (Those pesky interfering robots!).

There was a kind of precise beauty in the way Seldon's mathematics predicted the outcome of each crisis and to some extent these late revelations (not really helped by Asimov's own additions to his Milieu) lessen the power of the original trilogy. However, these novels are a great tribute to a Golden Age of SF and all three manage to evoke the spirit of a bygone period in SF history while infusing a contemporary flavour. In Brin's finale, the robots once more are heavily involved in meddling behind the scenes in human affairs and Dors Venabili (a robot designed as a guardian and companion to Seldon) discovers that it is not only human history that has been repressed for the last twenty thousand years. Dors is bequeathed the head of R Giskard Reventlov, a robot visionary and allegedly the creator of the Zeroth Law of Robotics which negates the famed Three Laws of Robotics in the case of a robot having to protect the long-term security of the Human Race as a whole.

The series as a whole has wasted an opportunity to create an objective view of human nature, to examine what it is to be human in terms of Seldon's mathematical waves of human progress. We know far more now than Asimov did in the Nineteen Forties of body language, human interaction, the psychology of crowds etc.

Seldon's aim in this final book is to refine his equations by finding reasons why Chaos worlds (planets which undergo a sudden and inventive renaissance) should subsequently fall into pandemonium and madness. It is disappointing to discover that the Chaos worlds are suffering the effects of a Chaos plague, an ancient designer disease akin to that of Brain fever, another manufactured plague designed to attack the most intelligent children and prevent a rise in the IQ level of the general public.

We also discover that many planets are being kept docile by robot telepathic machines left in orbit about these worlds. One can see now how Asimov muddied the waters of his premise by attempting to conflate his various work into one great galactic history. We can no longer watch the intricate interplay of unstoppable forces of change because the basic concept has been undermined by the intrusion of these robotic and other influences.

It's a daunting task (and one does have to question why it was ever done at all) to produce a posthumous trilogy with three different authors engaged on the project, and to be constrained not only by Asimov's original trilogy, but by his later additions and qualifications.

One can see why the writers thought that the only way they could do it was by treating the original trilogy as the exoteric (i.e. the public) version of events and this set of novels as the esoteric machinations (quite literally) of the robots behind the scenes of the events of the classic original series.

Yes, it works, and it is, as I have said, a decent tribute to Asimov who, despite later rather negative reassessments of his work, was a major influence on and supporter of, SF as a whole.

One could argue however, that had Asimov left his original trilogy alone it would shine much brighter than it does with the baggage of a welter of sequels and additions.

It looks as though there will be further additions since Brin has left 'openings' for other writers who wish to take up the baton. Hari Seldon has apparently been cloned and possibly rejuvenated by one of the robot factions; the robots Dors Venabili and Lodovic Trema have 'evolved' human reactions and emotions and find themselves drawn to each other, and there is Mors Planch, the rebel starship Captain who has been catapulted five hundred years into the future to a time when a decision must be made on Galactic coalescence into a single consciousness and the ensuing Human Transcendence.

A valuable appendix to the book is the very helpful timeline of Asimov's future history which not only marks important dates and events in the Foundation galaxy's chronology, but annotates the relevant books and stories in which these events either occur or are 're-examined' for want of a better word.

Colleen says

Brin's a good writer and I really liked Asimov's Foundation Trilogy when I read it in college, but I didn't particularly like this extension of the original. I guess utopias have lost their appeal. I didn't realize how devoid of action the original foundation books were. And this book was mostly conversations and theory. The omniscient computers run the universe and humans just have to follow their dictates. They've determined that some humans must be eliminated for the majority to be happy. Not exactly free will, and not easy to fight. It should have been a great battle, but it was strangely uninspiring.

Brian says

When a favourite author writes in a favourite universe, you hope the results will be awesome. Unfortunately it was just "meh". Asimov's Hari Seldon molded the future of the galaxy and mankind as he knew it into his own vision of perfection. Brin's Seldon refuses to do the same. The situations, backgrounds and major players keep setting up to be special and repeatedly fall short.

Don't get me wrong, Brin doesn't slight Asimov's work, he just takes it in a direction that doesn't work for me. Maybe if I'd read the other two books in the Second Foundation trilogy by Benford and Bear I would have been more in tune with this one.

Foundation lovers likely can't resist another book in the same universe they love so well, just don't expect another Asimov Foundation novel and you won't be setting yourself up for disappointment.

Lis Carey says

SPOILERS AHEAD; SKIP IF YOU'RE PLANNING TO READ THIS AND DON'T WANT TO KNOW. This is the third book in the new Foundation trilogy, and it's quite an interesting addition. Hari Seldon, now old, isolated from what's left of his family by the exigencies of the Plan, and no longer a major object of suspicion for the Imperial security forces, decides to pursue a minor mystery brought to him by a minor bureaucrat who has been working at the mathematics of psychohistory as a hobby. The mystery concerns "tilling", the fact that nearly every human-inhabited planet was subjected to a major churning and grinding of the soil, making it suitable for agriculture, before humans arrived--in an expanding wave just ahead of the wave of human colonial expansion, in fact. There are exceptions, though, worlds where the process didn't happen, and substantial amounts of life unlike the life on most human worlds still survives. What do these anomalies mean? Why do they appear to track so well with the distribution of "chaos worlds", the worlds that experience a runaway outbreak of advancing science, art, and technology, before collapsing into equally runaway disaster?

Hari quickly discovers he's on the trail of something very important to psychohistory and the Plan, and Daneel, the Calvinian robots, imperial security, and several other forces are in hot pursuit of him. All fairly standard, except for where Brin takes this. Put simply, not only is psychohistory wrong, in the sense of inaccurate and inadequate to the job Hari's trying to do with it, but the goal is wrong. Hari's Plan rests on certain assumptions about human nature and human capacity that are not correct, based on facts which are incomplete and which have been subjected to seriously flawed analysis by Daneel and Giskard, which have never been checked against the wishes and opinions of humans. And Daneel has deliberately deceived Hari Seldon about these facts. He has done it from the best of motives, but he's wrong. He's concerned only with taking the safest path for the human species, not the best path; because of the Three Laws, and the Zeroth Law, he can't really distinguish between the two. Hari's plan is really Daneel's plan, and it's a mistake. At the end, it appears that Daneel's plan is triumphant; the hope for a genuinely human future--and perhaps a future where humans may finally be able to run the risk of meeting intelligent aliens--is that Hari's Foundation will be more robust than Hari or Daneel have believed, and prevent Daneel's rather horrifying, but very safe, Gaia plan from coming to fruition.

Altogether, a rather darker and more interesting book than I expected.

Phil Giunta says

Isaac Asimov's classic Foundation series comes to a conclusion in a trilogy of novels each written by different noted SF authors. David Brin adequately delivers the final entry, Foundation's Triumph, with similar pacing and style as Greg Bear's Foundation and Chaos. Like Bear, Brin minimizes story elements introduced in Gregory Benford's opening book, Foundation's Fear. I was grateful for that, since Benford's 600 page sleeper was a disappointment and could have been trimmed by half.

I described Brin's book as "adequate" mostly due to an ending that, to this reader, seemed like a chapter of exposition disguised as a philosophical discussion between aging protagonist Hari Seldon and the mysterious puppet-master, robot Daneel Olivaw. Both of these characters had been present from the very beginning of the Foundation series, with Olivaw then disguised as the galactic Emperor's right hand man, First Minister Eto Demerzel. Olivaw then vanished and re-appeared sparingly until the very end when elements threatened his grand plan for the future of humanity.

We learn in Brin's novel some startling facts about Olivaw's involvement in Hari Seldon's childhood years when the brilliant "mathist" began to show promise, alluding to the possibility that Olivaw had guided the burgeoning genius toward his career-defining discovery of "psychohistory"--a complex set of mathematical formulas for defining the future of the galactic Empire.

In the first half of Foundation's Triumph, Brin also picks up on Bear's introduction of "mentolics", humans with varying levels of telepathic abilities. It is clear that Seldon had not accounted for these elements in his psychohistorical equations and adapts to this by forming a secretive Second Foundation elsewhere in the galaxy. However, about mid-way through Brin's tale, the mentolics seem to fade into the background and the robots take the forefront. We learn more about the different sects of robots, some who follow Olivaw's teachings, others that oppose it, and yet more who fall somewhere in between.

Treated a bit more lightly by Brin are Seldon's robotic wife, Dors Venabili, and the emancipated robot Lodovik Trema. Sometime between Benford and Bear, Dors had faked her own death when she was recalled by Olivaw to be reassigned elsewhere. Trema was introduced in Foundation and Chaos as a robot once loyal to Olivaw but whose positronic brain was altered by a surge of neutrinos. This unexpected event caused Trema to question the Three Laws of Robotics set forth by Olivaw. Eventually, Trema decides that he is no longer bound by them and acts on his own volition.

Brin restricts Trema and Dors to the sidelines in Foundation's Triumph, at one point leaving them stranded in outer space for several chapters aboard one ship. Rather than completely abandoning them, however, Brin uses their predicament to soften Dors distrust of Trema. Shortly into the story, Dors is already questioning the motives of her master, Daneel Olivaw as a result of ancient robotic records given to her by Trema. By the end, Dors wants nothing more than to return to Hari Seldon's side one last time before he dies--a scene which Brin denies us. It never happens.

We'll never know if this is what the late Isaac Asimov intended for his beloved Foundation series. At the same time, I can appreciate the challenges faced by authors who undertake projects based in another writer's universe, especially when they are denied the benefit of that writer's consultation.

Ethan I. Solomon says

I think that giving two stars to any of the books from this trilogy is actually being very generous, and is mostly because of the names involved and thus the quality they brought to the books. Nevertheless the books are a complete failure despite being set in Asimov's universe. The authors attempted to bring some of Asimov's genius to the table but were unable to convey their ideas in the gloriously simple and direct fashion that Asimov could. As a result the entire trilogy is extremely convoluted and despite exploring interesting topics in a familiar setting is nearly impossible to follow.

The trilogy was a good idea but unfortunately I believe it's execution proved to be too difficult even for the authors involved.

EvilGeniusKant says

Aunque el libro es demasiado caótico y la historia no es gran cosa tampoco (En parte debido al daño residual que Benford dejó en la primera novela). Sí hay un par de cosas que si me gustan de esta trilogía:

1- La visión más oscura de Daneel Olivaw: El robot es presentado como una entidad manipuladora dispuesto a cometer diversas atrocidades en nombre de su ley cero. En ningún momento se llega a cuestionar sinceramente si su intervención ha sido perjudicial a largo plazo o si por el contrario está cometiendo el mismo error de someter a la humanidad a la dependencia robótica como ocurría en los mundos espaciales. Cosa que Giskard consideraba un factor perjudicial.

2- Lodovik Trema: Es interesante ver a un robot que se opone a los planes de Olivaw, aunque la idea de que esté libre de las 3 leyes no se elabora ni se explota correctamente. Aunque sus partes en el segundo libro y como se va relacionando con los robots disidentes son entretenidas.

3- Trevize es una farsa: Trevize es el peor protagonista de toda la serie. La idea de un hombre que nunca se equivoca es ridícula. En esta novela Daneel revela que Trevize es sólo otra de sus manipulaciones, destinada a engañar a los robots que se le oponen, para que acepten su plan Galaxia.

Por lo demás hay muchos conceptos que no hacen sentido alguno. El caos parece más un recurso barato para justificar las acciones de Olivaw, las simulaciones no tienen nada que hacer, las entidades meméticas (que podrían haber hecho mucho sentido) se desaprovechan por completo, etc y etc.

Si van a leer algo de esta trilogía, lean el final del tercer libro. Seldon lanzando un desafío a Olivaw, profetizando el triunfo de su fundación sobre Galaxia es una parte que me gusta.

Pablo Fernández says

Formas de estropear una saga. Luego esto.

Jen says

This is it! I have finished my Asimov Foundation challenge. It only took me two years!

Foundation's Triumph picked up right where Foundation and Chaos left off. Hari Seldon isn't yet dead, though he really ought to be at this point. Hari doesn't have any real strategic plot importance other than to bear witness to the actual planning that would be/is revealed later-in-time-but-earlier-in-series-reading-order in Foundation and Earth. Since you are supposed to have read that novel first, it should come as no surprise that Hari learns of the plans for Galaxia, and "always right" human, and the location of Earth.

It should come as no surprise, given how much page real-estate our maligned SIMs occupied in Foundation's

Fear, but they once again make a cameo. Now that the new trilogy is finished, I can once again reiterate my opinion that the SIMs are superfluous to the plot. Read or skip any parts that contain them; you won't miss or gain anything.

As Phil Giunta said in a different review,

"Isaac Asimov's classic Foundation series comes to a conclusion in a trilogy of novels each written by different noted SF authors. David Brin adequately delivers the final entry, Foundation's Triumph, with similar pacing and style as Greg Bear's Foundation and Chaos. Like Bear, Brin minimizes story elements introduced in Gregory Benford's opening book, Foundation's Fear. I was grateful for that, since Benford's 600 page sleeper was a disappointment and could have been trimmed by half."

Not much more I can add to that.

Rob says

The best of the Second Foundation Trilogy, picking up a number of the threads - or, as a prequel, putting them in place - that Asimov deployed in the original trilogy and the follow-up books; and, I'd have thought, pretty in line with the way Asimov developed the series after the first trilogy.
