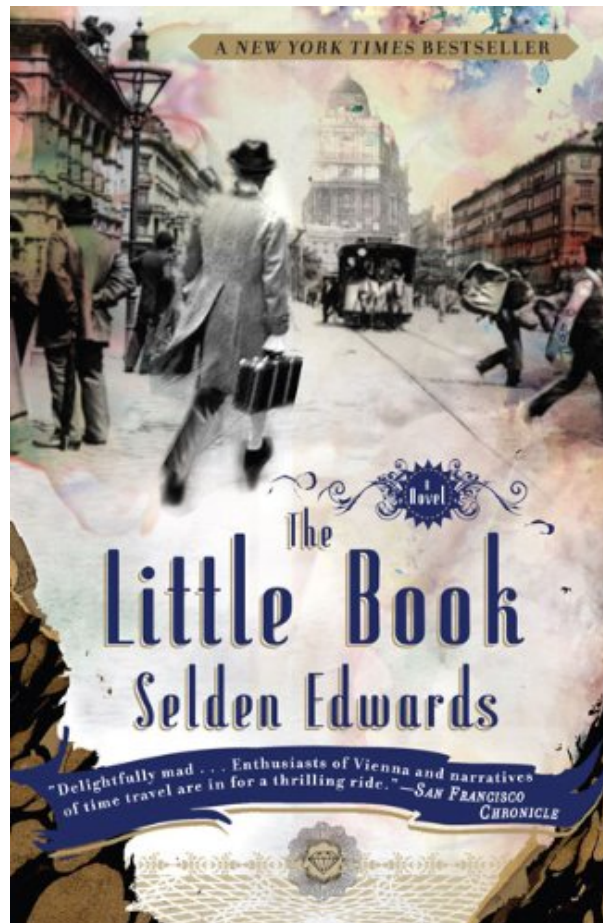
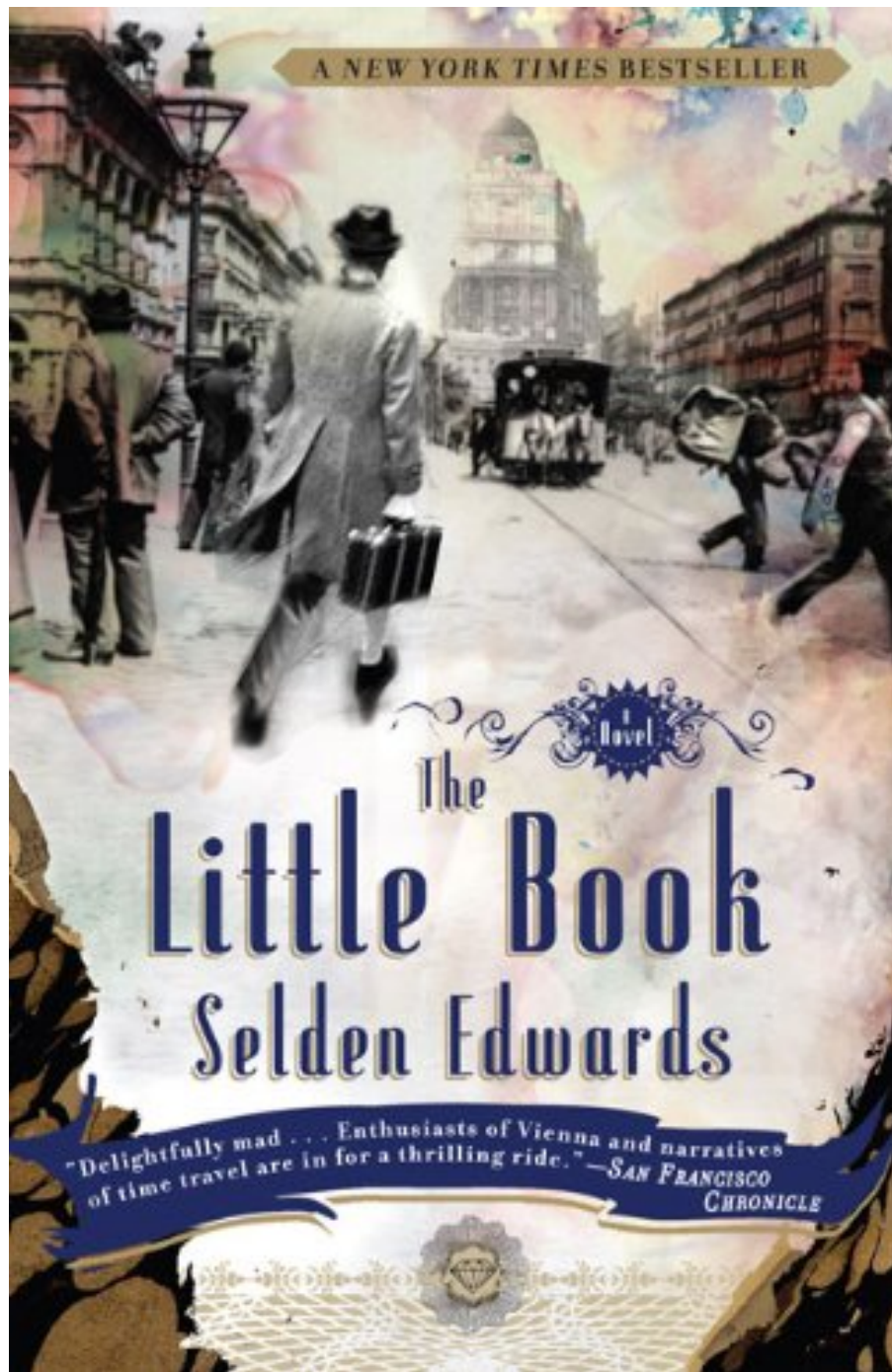


# THE LITTLE BOOK: A NOVEL BY SELDEN EDWARDS



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Thirty years in the writing, Selden Edwards' dazzling first novel is an irresistible triumph of the imagination. Wheeler Burden-banking heir, philosopher, student of history, legend's son, rock idol, writer, lover, recluse, half-Jew, and Harvard baseball hero-one day finds himself wandering not in his hometown of San Francisco in 1988 but in a city and time he knows mysteriously well: Vienna, 1897. Before long, Wheeler acquires a mentor in Sigmund Freud, a bitter rival, a powerful crush on a luminous young woman, and encounters everyone from an eight-year-old Adolf Hitler to Mark Twain as well as the young members of his own family. Solving the riddle of Wheeler's dislocation in time will ultimately reveal nothing short of one eccentric family's unrivaled impact upon the course of human history.

Edwards, author of *The Lost Prince*, brilliantly weaves romance, art, history, and culture in this unforgettable and dazzling debut novel.

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- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
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- Binding: Paperback
- 432 pages

## Features

- signed first paperback edition

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124 of 143 people found the following review helpful.

#### A Wild Ride for Book Clubs

By Joanna Westley

I am a self-admitted book-a-holic, and for a book to keep me up and guessing - that's saying a lot. For a book to completely surprise me - that is saying even more. For a book to challenge me intellectually and make me laugh out loud in parts - to be cerebral and totally cool at the same time - sheer delight! How did Selden Edwards pull THAT off? This book makes me want to sit down with the writer and ask a hundred questions about the obvious craft of turning such an outrageous idea (and it is that) into a cohesive story. I didn't want the book to end, and I miss the characters already. My book club is reading it, and I can hardly wait to hear everyone's favorite passage/character/scene/line. It's clearly my favorite book of the summer, and I wouldn't

be surprised if it wasn't a terrific movie in a summer to come; it plays (and stays) in the mind like the best kind of film.

48 of 55 people found the following review helpful.

This is one of the best books I have ever read

By Karen

The Little Book is impossible to describe and impossible to forget. The characters that Edwards creates- and the insights about different cultures and eras- are nothing short of remarkable. Just like Pat Conroy says on the cover, it forever changes you. I finished it and immediately began re-reading- and was still sad when it was over. It is a perfect book club choice, vacation read, or book to recommend to a friend. You won't be able to put it down!

27 of 31 people found the following review helpful.

Edwards is obviously a talented writer with a knack for history, art, philosophy and even baseball

By Bookreporter

Time travel is a tricky theme for writers to tackle. It's difficult to make the events and reactions feel real and natural, and to tie up all the loose ends of the plot. It's even harder to do all this and still explore other ideas in the story, giving the fantastic aspects a foundation and relatability. First-time novelist Selden Edwards's tale, *THE LITTLE BOOK*, presents readers with the story of an amazing family, two members of whom have become dislodged from linear time.

Beyond the incredible lives of three generations of the Burden family, Edwards paints a picture of Europe on the brink of a new age. In 1897 Vienna holds all the promise of a fully realized and splendid civilization. But, as history has shown, collapse and violence were on the horizon.

Wheeler Burden --- famous American college baseball player, rock star and author --- suddenly finds himself in Vienna. It is the end of the 19th century, and the city is full of artists, philosophers and musicians. It is the time of Mahler, Klimt and Freud, and the youth of the city are part of a social, artistic and intellectual revolution. Because of his prep school mentor, Arnould Esterhazy (known as The Haze), whose memoir he edited and published, Wheeler knows all about Vienna. He steals some clothes and money and sets off to see the city. But that theft leads to an incredible chain of events that plays out over almost the next 100 years and then circles in on itself starting all over again.

In Vienna, Wheeler comes to meet his war-hero father who died when he was just a small boy. The two, Wheeler and Dilly Burden, agree not to interfere in history (as Dilly has time traveled to Vienna as well), but Wheeler falls in love with the beautiful Bostonian writer Eleanor Putnam. The biggest problem with their affair is that she is his own grandmother.

This incest, though explained away by Edwards, is problematic. Wheeler and Eleanor are supposed to be having a monumental love affair, but the duality of their relationship is hard to get past. This is not the only flaw in Edwards's book. Full of big ideas and interesting characters, a blend of fantasy and historical fiction, *THE LITTLE BOOK* is often a victim of its own devices. The loops of time are occasionally confusing (which relationship came first: Wheeler and Eleanor as lovers, or as family?), the characters are more heroic and perfect than is realistic and their motivations are sometimes unclear. Whole sections of narration read like Freudian therapy sessions, which isn't surprising since Freud (along with Mahler, Hitler and other famous Austrians) is an important figure in the story. Edwards owes just as much to Joseph Campbell and his theories on the hero's journey as he does to Freud in telling this ambitious tale.

In the end, while much of what Edwards attempts in *THE LITTLE BOOK* is compelling, the main characters, especially Wheeler, seem to lack any real humanity: they are beautiful and talented, brilliant and



influential, and, for some reason, stuck in a time warp moving from California in 1988 to Vienna in 1897, all using a set of books (who wrote what first and inspired by whom? It gets lost in the narrative shuffle) to navigate their way around.

Edwards is obviously a talented writer with a knack for history, art, philosophy and even baseball. Here he tackles not only time travel but also cultural change, anti-Semitism, the birth of psychoanalysis, modern European history, the perfect baseball pitch, the emergence of contemporary feminism and much more. Here's hoping that his next book will be published with a firm editorial hand.

--- Reviewed by Sarah Rachel Egelman

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