



Endgames

L.E. Modesitt Jr.

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The twelfth novel in L. E. Modesitt, Jr's, *New York Times* bestselling epic fantasy series the Imager Portfolio, and the third book in the story arc that began with *Treachery's Tools* and *Assassin's Price*.

Solidar is in chaos.

Charyn, the young and untested ruler of Solidar, has survived assassination, and he struggles to gain control of a realm in the grip of social upheaval, war, and rioting. Solidar cannot be allowed to slide into social and political turmoil that will leave the High Holders with their ancient power and privilege, and the common people with nothing.

But the stakes are even higher than he realizes.

The Imager Portfolio

#1 *Imager* / #2 *Imager's Challenge* / #3 *Imager's Intrigue* / #4 *Scholar* / #5 *Princeps* / #6 *Imager's Battalion* / #7 *Antigon Fire* / #8 *Rex Regis* / #9 *Madness in Solidar* / #10 *Treachery's Tools* / #11 *Assassin's Price* / #12 *Endgames*

Other series by this author:

The Saga of Recluce

The Corean Chronicles

The Spellsong Cycle

The Ghost Books

The Ecolitan Matter

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Endgames Details

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From Reader Review Endgames for online ebook

Patricia Turner says

This 12th and last book of the Imager Portfolio is just as enjoyable as the previous books in the series. It is a series where you need to read the previous books to fully understand them. Nonetheless, I highly recommend the you read them. It's intriguing to watch Rex Charyn, the main protagonist in the last two books, make the transition from heir to King. He manages to become effective despite assassination attempts, civil unrest, and a religious uprising.

Marlene says

Originally published at Reading Reality

There's a saying about war being diplomacy by other means. Endgames feels like a story about politics being civil war by other means. Alternatively, one could extend the metaphor that Lois McMaster Bujold proposed of SF as fantasy of political agency and expand that to speculative fiction, which includes fantasy, as, well, fantasy of political agency. Because most of the Imager Portfolio in general, and this book in particular, is certainly all about the politics.

However, unlike the traditional epic fantasy, neither this book nor this series focuses on the adventures of a "chosen one". Instead, the protagonists of this series often feel, particularly from their own perspectives, more like the "stuck one". The person who finds themselves the linchpin of epic events they did not plan on. And they would generally rather that the cup had passed to someone else – at least until they decide that whoever might have been stuck into their position instead would have done even worse.

The events in Endgames directly follow the events in the previous book, Assassin's Price. There was an assassin in that book, and the person who was assassinated was the Rex. Now his oldest son, Charyn, is Rex, trying to stay alive in the midst of the continuing chaos.

Unlike the previous heroes in this series, Charyn did expect to be in the position he now occupies. Someday. Eventually. Just not quite so soon, or in the midst of quite so big a crisis. As the saying goes, "the king is dead, long live the king." But when you're the second king in that phrase, and not the first one, if you love your father – and Charyn did – you hope that when the first king dies it occurs peacefully, in his bed, after a long and fruitful life. Not in his prime, at the hands of an assassin.

An assassin who is now gunning for you. And who may be much closer than you'd like to think.

So Charyn is busy in this book. First, he is shoring up his internal defenses, trying to stay one step ahead of whoever is trying to kill him. Second, he is attempting to guide his country into the future. A future that he alone envisions, and one that will be much different from its past.

Not that the future won't come whether Charyn guides things or not, but it's a question of what that future will be. The High Holders, who are the hereditary aristocracy and the major landholders, want the future to look like the past. A past where they were on top of the heap and could grind anyone they wanted under their heel.

But Solidar is changing. The Factors, who are the business class, are amassing greater and greater power – mostly by getting richer and richer. But it’s happening because Solidar is going through its version of an industrial revolution and power is flowing towards them and away from the aristocracy – as occurred in Great Britain during its Industrial Revolution.

Charyn recognizes this shift in the tide, while at the same time seeing the need to regulate some business practices for “the greater good” – a greater good that is explicitly NOT the good of the aristocracy, but the good of Solidar as a whole.

He’s aiming toward a compromise that serves everyone. If he lives long enough to bring it to fruition. If he survives the dagger aimed at his heart from much, much closer than he imagined.

Escape Reading A: I read this in a day. All 576 pages of it. And pretty much immediately upon receipt four long months ago. I’ll also confess that I had to wipe away a tear at the end. The only reason I’m not grading it higher is that it would be impossible for a new reader to get into the series at this point. As the title implies, this is an endpoint for the series. Possibly THE endpoint, but when asked the author said that he was still deciding. I hope he decides in favor of MORE IMAGERS!

But Endgames is certainly the ending of this middle sequence of the series. Interested readers can begin the Imager Portfolio at one of three places. Either the first published book of the series, Imager, the first book of the internal chronology of the series in Scholar, or the first book of this subseries, Madness in Solidar, which is the middle sequence in the internal chronology.

Endgames is a very political story. That’s true for much of this series, but particularly this subseries in general and this book in it in particular. Charyn is caught between a rock and several hard, sharp and pointy places. We see the story from inside his head, so we understand just where he’s coming from and just how difficult a position he is in at all times.

Everyone has an agenda. Including, admittedly, Charyn himself. But each of the factions that Charyn has to juggle has an agenda that benefits them alone, where Charyn’s agenda is a sometimes desperate attempt to do what’s best for everyone. Or at least what is a reasonable compromise for everyone.

Most of the factions do not want to compromise and their feet will have to be held to the fire – at least metaphorically – in order to make that happen. Charyn is fortunate that the imagers are on his side and perfectly capable of providing that fire – literally if necessary.

The contrast between events as directed by Charyn and current events in the US is also a stark one. As the person at the top of the pyramid Charyn could arrange the situation to benefit himself and his allies only. The laws of the time allow that possibility. But it is not good governance. The best course involves compromises between a lot of people whose interests do not seem to coincide. That he manages to make it happen in spite of each faction’s self-interest is a joy to watch – even though the personal cost is incredibly high.

If you like epic fantasy with lots of politics, this series could be your jam. It certainly is mine!

Jennifer Gottschalk says

A weighty tome heavy on philosophy and intrigue but very light on action.

Dedicated fans of Modesitt will most likely enjoy this installment of the Imager Portfolio although I preferred earlier books in the series.

In short, the story was much more drawn out than necessary but the ending was deeply satisfying.

eyes.2c says

Imager Portfolio draws to a fascinating conclusion!

The culminating volume in The Imager Portfolio, and the final story of a sub series of three, when Solidar was under Charyn's rule. An historical note if you like on the life of the last Rex.

Charyn continues to struggle with the personal, social and political threads that threaten the well being of Solder. I love the thought and soul searching he displays as he brings his considerable intellect to the problem of ruling and how to change things politically for the better. His is a visionary's view for what Solidar has the potential to become if he can only break the stranglehold of the High Holders.

As he looks towards a more democratic way of being, that vision puts him at odds with many. For the traditionalists the idea of power is a seductive notion. For Charyn's it's a burden.

Charyn has survived one assassination attempt, and how to move forward and stay alive in order to bring about the changes he contemplates will be a challenge. He is like a chess master, steps ahead of others, seeing the long term consequences. Although sometimes he falters. At the same time he looks to his personal life and searches for a companion who will be his mainstay.

As always Modesitt provides us with a dense, deeply personal, and thought provoking read. Not to mention the intrigue!

A MacMillan-Tor / Forge ARC via NetGalley

Liviu says

Billed as the last Imager book, Endgames starts where Assassin's Price ended and goes for a few crucial months with an epilogue set decades in the future; enjoyable but very slow and quite repetitive and predictable by the end (regarding its main villains, motives and even resolution etc), it packs a lot of emotional punches along the way and lots of other goodies (including more references to Vaelora and more anticipation of Rhenn's times) ; still not sure how using Charyn's pov and having imagers just as background worked out finally, but I definitely enjoyed the long book in 2 volumes of which this is the second half, quite a lot overall and much more than the Alastar books, especially the last one there which was the weakest Imager book by far. Ultimately this series volumes rests on the main character and while Rhenn and Quaeryt are still my favorites, Charyn was considerably more interesting than Alastar

Overall recommended, but read first the original Imager books and the Quaeryt ones if not done so

Jim says

This is the final book, #12 in Charyn & Alastar's arc told chronologically in books 9-12 which take place sometime between Quaeryt & Rhenn's time again separated by centuries. Books 9 & 10 focus on Alastar &

his issues while 11 & 12 focus on Charyn, the Rex around 400 A.L., with Alastar playing a supporting roll. It's neat how they & Rhenn know only a powerful, unnamed imager & looks on his works with awe. The history that Alastar, Charyn, & Rhenn know isn't completely accurate. How & why are a thread that runs through the series. This happens in the Recluse series, too. I find it fascinating.

The first 3 books take place in 755 A.L. while those in the middle are probably around 0 A.L., when the land is becoming a nation. (That's a guess. It's been a while since I read them & I don't remember dates in them. If you know, please comment.)

Charyn is facing a changing world as Rex. It's an industrial revolution with High Holders trying to keep their traditional roles. The emerging middle class (traders & manufacturers) has become a power to be reckoned with while the crafters & laborers are in an economic crunch. It's a messy time, so there is plenty of action & thought as Charyn tries to ride the tiger.

Possibly the neatest (underhanded?) thing Modesitt has done is creating a loop. I REALLY want to go back & read the first 3 books now which take place roughly 350 years after the events in this book. The 5 books in the middle take place about 450 years earlier. Next time I read this series (There WILL be a next time.) I'm going to start with book 4 & read them through. After this one, I will read the first. I do NOT recommend this order for a first read. The first few books describe how imaging works & set the stage too well, but I know that now so I'll be more interested in following the social & economic threads that Modesitt has spun. He does such a great job of it, too.

His thoughtful trends & meticulous attention to detail is appreciated. I'm reading another popular fantasy book now that has a neat system of magic, lots of action, & keeps stepping on itself with plot holes & nonsensical actions. None of that in this series. Highly recommended.

Paul Calhoun says

We've seen Solidar form with a Rex (though not all the way - sad that section never got completed but understandable), we've seen it at the height of industrialization with no Rex, and now we get the finale for the middle connecting those two parts of Solidaran history.

Modesitt's histories rhyme, and this is apparent in the visionary Rex, intelligent and challenging noble woman, and Imagers who are keeping things moving smoothly. It's a continuing exploration of the philosophies of politics and law which make up the majority of his Recluse, Imager, and Corean books. It's been a nice break to have the protagonist be a non-magician, and to see the culmination of some of those hard choices bite people in the butt. Charyn is a remarkably well adjusted person given how many of his family members he's personally seen to, how many guns have been aimed at him, and how unstable most of the male line in his family seems to be.

That all said, it would be nice to have a matriarchy other than Westwind and the other one in Recluse, or at least a more egalitarian fantasy civilization. Let's see some expansionist, authoritarian women out there who need a philosophically challenging man (or woman) to keep them in check!

MM says

Modesitt has such a great talent for writing, for communicating. This story, like all his others, has that great Modesitt music drawing you along. There is an aesthetic in great art. It communicates. It can be painting or poetry or music or prose, but you can feel it. It's the quality of communication that comes across.

All his books have this and this one is no exception. Loved it.

Vincent Archer says

The end of the Portfolio is upon us (or at least the current arc).

This 12th volume of the Imager Portfolio closes the book on the 3rd arc of the series, and makes a great stopping point for the series, which I think Modesitt wanted. It's, as usual, long and convoluted, until the various bits of the plot emerge and then the dramatic conclusion closes it brutally. It shouldn't be a surprise since that's been the format of the last books, but as usual, Modesitt makes it work even if it is formulaic.

I still miss the imager-centric stories. While writing about the Rex was a nice variation, it's the Imager Portfolio, not the Solidar Portfolio... But that's not enough to bring the rating down to 4.

Barbara Douglas says

This is the twelfth and likely final book of a very long series, and is probably not for everyone, but I enjoyed it very much, though not quite as much as some of the other books in the series. Like the rest of the Imager books, there is a lot of political philosophy, a lot of mystery and intrigue, strong but frustrated female characters, and a satisfying resolution after many tensions. As in earlier books (Scholar and Princeps), there is a courtship conducted almost entirely by letter, which is a good excuse for all sorts of musings. What there is not is much imaging, or even much interaction with imagers, so though the main character has their support, he is mostly wrestling with the same sorts of problems and resources as in the real world. The pace is slow, and most of the action comes at the end, but if you've enjoyed the rest of the series, it is worth reading, and may just send you, like me, to re-read all the others.

S.J. Higbee says

I always enjoy Modesitt's protagonists and Charyn is no exception. He has the steady good sense and even temperament that is the hallmark of many of this author's main characters. As ever in a Modesitt book, we get a progression of everyday details alongside the ongoing drama which tends to build slowly. I don't know anyone else who writes fantasy in quite so much detail and gets away with it. However, the question has to be with this particular offering – is there just too much detail silting up the pace?

Unfortunately, I would have to say yes. While there were still many elements that I enjoyed and I found it difficult to put this book down, I also found myself skipping the love letters that passed between two of the main characters, along with the long-winded philosophical questions they discussed. I don't dive into a high

fantasy adventure to read several pages about the nature of evil being discussed between the protagonists – I would rather it was played out within the action. However, it wasn't a dealbreaker and at no time was I tempted to DNF the book because I still cared about the characters and I really wanted to know how it was going to work out.

I was surprised at where the story went, with real poignancy during the aftermath of the action. This is one of the aspects that Modesitt handles really well – because we are pulled into his stories by following the day to day routines of his characters, it matters when bad things happen to them. Overall though I enjoyed this one and know that the next time I have an opportunity to get hold of another Modesitt book, I will jump at it. He may not always get the balance absolutely right, but he remains one of my favourite authors.

While I obtained an arc of Endgames from the publisher via Netgalley, the opinions I have expressed are unbiased and my own.

7/10

Mary Soon Lee says

"Endgames" is the twelfth book in Modesitt's Imager Portfolio, a fantasy series set in a world where a tiny fraction of individuals--Imagers--have a magical ability to create things that they imagine. It's the second book in the series centered on Charyn, born the eldest son of the ruler of Solidar. Out of forty fantasy novels that I've read by Modesitt, the two about Charyn are the only ones whose protagonist lacks fantastical abilities. Charyn, especially in this second book, is trying very hard to do what is best for his country, against considerable opposition, and he does so without possessing even a modicum of magic.

As is probably clear by the number of books I've read by Modesitt (more than forty, since I've read some of his science fiction as well as most of his fantasy), I like his books very much. The style of "Endgames" might be perceived by some as dry; its pacing might be perceived as slow. I found it neither. That Charyn's efforts entail patience and diligence increases the book's immersive realism for me. Most of Modesitt's protagonists are, like Charyn, male, but his secondary characters include strong, intelligent, interesting women, and happily "Endgames" is no exception to this. His books usually also include a romantic thread. In "Endgames" much of the romance was conducted via letters and poetry, and this was handled nicely.

Modesitt is a thoughtful author, one who thinks out the economic, political, religious, cultural, and technological background of his stories. His fantasy oeuvre quietly examines the use and abuse of power, and the effect of different legal and political systems, though most of his other books do include more action and a higher bodycount than Charyn's story, which may give them broader appeal. I highly recommend the Imager Portfolio series in its entirety, and "Endgames" in particular.

Glenn Martyn Otto says

As usual

As usual, a slow burn, that builds to climax. I have read all of Modesitt's books and only regret that he only manages two a year.

Julie says

Although Modesitt must have planned the story arc for this latest book in his Imager portfolio years ago, the novel is a remarkably timely portrayal of an attempt to bring about political change, the pernicious effects of income inequality, difficulties in imposing a minimum wage, and factions who can't see beyond their own agendas. Maybe we need a Rex Charyn of our own.

Dale Moorhouse says

Endgames, as the last book in the series, ties up the Imager series nicely and left me feeling like Solidar would continue to thrive for a while, possibly several generations, before neglect, stupidity and laziness set in again and another crisis developed. It also sets the stage for another series set in Solidar's future and if that comes to pass I will eagerly read it to see how things turned out.

Mr. Modesitt Jr. writes at a mature level which for me is much more enjoyable than the "See Dick run. See Dick catch the ball." level that all too many authors try to pass off as literature. His stories also build gradually so don't expect everything that matters to happen in the first two or three chapters.

He builds his characters with weaknesses and strengths that give them depth and describes their relationships such that they are vibrant and real. The author also does a meticulous job in building the settings of his stories to the extent I can close my eyes and visualize them and the characters in them. I've even been able to cook some of the dishes he describes his characters eating.

Thank you once again Mr. Modesitt
