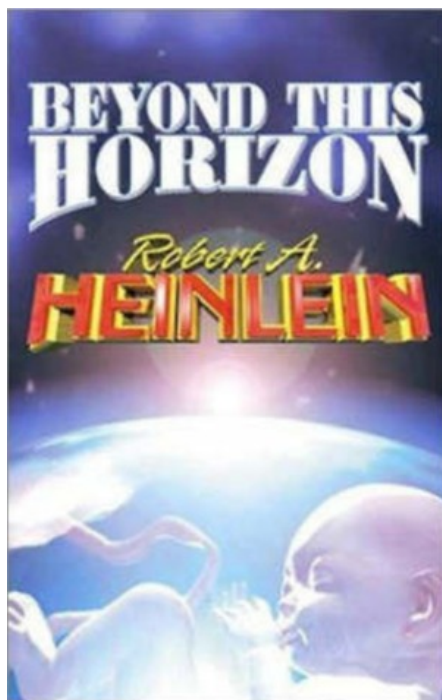




## Beyond This Horizon

*Robert A. Heinlein*

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# Beyond This Horizon

*Robert A. Heinlein*

## **Beyond This Horizon** Robert A. Heinlein

Hamilton Felix, the result of generations of genetic selection, finds his life as the ultimate man boring, until a gang of revolutionaries tries to enlist him in their cause.

## **Beyond This Horizon Details**

Date : Published September 1st 2002 by Baen (first published 1942)

ISBN : 9780743435611

Author : Robert A. Heinlein

Format : Paperback 248 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Beyond This Horizon for online ebook

### S. Naomi Scott says

*Beyond This Horizon*, is the second of Heinlein's published novels, and introduces us to a future utopia where poverty no longer exists and genetic engineering has advanced to a point where it is possible to selectively breed children for increased health, intelligence and longevity. The biggest problem faced by most of this world's denizens is what to do with their time, leading to a society in which decadence is the norm and duelling with sidearms is considered an acceptable way of resolving disputes. Non-advanced citizens also exist, known as control normals, and are seen by the majority of others as a baseline with which to compare the genetic improvements found in the general populace.

The main bulk of the story follows the adventures of Hamilton Felix, a notably superior (others refer to him as an example of a star line), albeit mildly disillusioned citizen of this world's breeding program and his attempts to find a meaning in life. When he is approached by a synthesist (effectively an administrator of the breeding program) with a request to help propagate the next generation of advanced humans Felix's apathy towards the future, along with an unwillingness to propagate initially leads him to decline, but only after he is convinced to agree that if the synthesist can provide him with proof that a man's life is more than just the existence he experiences then he would be willing to reconsider.

Along the way he is also drawn into a burgeoning conspiracy by a group of citizens who feel that the current system needs to be overthrown, and that their society needs to be restructured under their control. Felix agrees to join this group, known as The Survivor's Club, though his decision is motivated more by a sense of loyalty to society, leading him to act as a double agent within their midst, than by any need to change the status quo. When the Survivor's Club do make their move Felix turns against them and helps to overturn their coup.

The second half of the novel then explores the results of Felix falling in love with and marrying Longcourt Phyllis, the woman selected for him by the synthesists. Between them they produce a son, Theobald, who they soon discover has powers that seem to equate to telepathy.

By the end of the book Felix has found a purpose for his life, and his original apathy no longer causes him concern.

Some have suggested that *Beyond This Horizon* represents one of the first examples of a post-singularity novel and to some degree I can agree with that assertion, though many of the elements required for a true post-singularity world are absent simply as a result of when it was written; computers were barely known of, and the idea of a world-wide interconnected communication network (the internet) was still a few decades away from being considered.

Personally I don't consider this to be one of Heinlein's best, though it's still better than much of the sci-fi of the time. In it he explores themes of reincarnation and the immortality (and possibly even the existence) of the human soul. He also presents a world of social equality, a world where things such as race, creed, faith and gender are simply portions of a person's make-up, and not things to get concerned over. In that respect it was a highly progressive novel for the times, and introduced a number of themes that continued to crop up in his future novels.

In all I still enjoyed re-reading this one, though if you're new to Heinlein I'd suggest starting with one of his later works.

## Bradley says

It's time to prepare for the 1943 retro Hugo awards that will be presented in 2018! (Why? Why not? Some books deserve love even if they're before the Hugos even began!)

In this case, novels published in 1942 are eligible. Books like C.S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters* are technically eligible but really shouldn't be. There's nothing much SF about the religious satire.

On the other hand, I really enjoyed Olaf Stapledon's anti-novel and worldbuilding masterpiece *The Darkness and the Light* that came out this year and please imagine how thrilled I was to learn that Heinlein also published a bona fide adult-oriented novel, too!

He was generally known for his Juveniles by this point, so an early adult novel is something of a treat. And fortunately, his writing is always polished and clear and sometimes funny and always full of light agendas. It's Heinlein! He's a very opinionated man. :)

In this case, we're treated to science lessons on genetics and a superior-gene race of humanity planning on overthrowing the current Utopia. The hero is the ultimate perfect superman and I kept thinking about the Howard families in his later fiction, the prototype that gets so fully explored later.

We shouldn't forget the day. 1942.

Does this kind of story sound familiar? In Heinlein's case, it feels like a mirror to a huge segment of the American population that already agreed with the Eugenics movement and what was happening in Europe at the time. Maybe no one really understood the impact or scope or even the reality of the death camps, but everyone could see the implications and the stated goals. It was war and knowing the publishing field, there's a long stretch between when a writer finishes a text and when it actually gets put on the shelves. I'll assume for a moment that Pearl Harbor had not happened yet, or if it did, there was no way Heinlein could have fixed his novel to reflect America's sudden inclusion in the war.

However, it should be noted that he got all the salient points and sentiments RIGHT. It might have been a utopia like Stapledon's work but unlike Stapledon, he went the full "good story" option with interesting characters, exciting plots, cool snags, romance, and a big blowout. :)

Without even mentioning the Hugos or the need to find the best SF or Fantasy of 1942, I would have read this early Heinlein novel thinking that it's a very polished introduction to his later genetic-field obsession with longevity.

No Lazarus Long here, but enough ideas were packed in here to stand proudly with any of his later works. :)

Between Stapledon and Heinlein, I choose Heinlein for the sheer fun factor, the timeliness of the topic, the sophistication of the storytelling, and lastly, the idea. :) Stapledon might blow him out of the water for sheer scope and range of ideas and world-building and commentary, but Heinlein's soup had the perfect mix.

He's my main choice for the Hugo. :) So far. I'm still reading, however. :)

## Kat Hooper says

Originally published at FanLit.

<http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

Hamilton Felix is a genetic superman, carefully crafted from the best chromosomes his ancestors had to offer. He lives in a world where most people live long easy lives untroubled by disease, poverty, and tooth decay. It's boring. Until Felix accidentally infiltrates a revolutionary group of elitists who want to take over the world and run things their way.

As boring as Hamilton Felix's life is, this book about him is even more boring. There are lots of ideas in *Beyond This Horizon*, but very little story to connect them together and make them interesting. One problem is that most of these ideas — eugenics, selective breeding, survival of the fittest — are neither new nor particularly interesting for the 21st century reader, though that's not Heinlein's fault because *Beyond This Horizon* was published in *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1942. What is Heinlein's fault is that he presents these ideas in lecture format. He spends most of the page count of *Beyond This Horizon* drily teaching us Mendelian inheritance, embryology, natural selection, and economics. I felt like I was back in high school.

Read the rest at FanLit

<http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

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## Denis says

An early example of Heinlein learning the craft of writing novel length works. First published in serial form under his pseudonym - Anson MacDonald, this was his first attempt - "For Us, The Living" written during the late thirties and left unpublished until 2003, was an even earlier attempt and even less successful as a novel than this one, but both have all the seeds of the themes to come in future works as the Master refines his technique and finds his 'voice'.

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## Ron says

"Easy times for individuals are bad times for the race."

Utopias have their downside. A landmark science fiction novel by a dean of the genre. Written *before* the United States entered World War Two, yet amazing prescient of the next fifty years.

"But man is a working animal. He likes to work. ... likely to spend his spare time working out some gadget which will displace labor and increase productivity." (20th maybe, not 21st century)

Marred by lengthy exposition/preaching. While Heinlein was ahead of society in some ways and clearly foresaw many technology advances only made possible by the invention of the transistor some years later, he mistook then-current fads in economics and para-psychology as indicative of future trends. "The structural nature of finance is too deeply imbedded in our culture for pseudo-capitalism to return." (Can't win them all.)

"The only thing that could give us some real basis for our living is to know *for sure* whether or not anything

happens after we die.”

The protagonist voice is like P. G. Wodehouse’s Bertie Wooster. “I’m one long joke on myself.”

“An armed society is a polite society.”

Skip the post-script blather by Tony Daniels. “Which shows how much of the modern negative criticism that Heinlein evokes in the present day is not only completely mistaken and stupid, but pernicious and hatefully intended.” Denounces *ad hominem* attacks by “critics, most of whom I consider idiots.” Claims it “does not end with a twist” but with “an authentic answer.” Dissuades trying any of *his* works.

“The only choices that matter are those that we responsibly made based on the evidence, not on anyone’s declarations, however well-intentioned.”

(Finalist for Hugo retro award for 1943)

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## Steve says

First time I've read this book in several (for some definitions of the word several). It's mostly noted, and maybe notable for its first few sentences, where Heinlein uses phrasing to put you in the midst of his future world. "The door dilated" is justly famous. His portrayal of a society where everyone (or most people) carry weapons (of one sort or another) is known to with its supposed corollary an armed populous is a polite populous. i don't buy it, and he really doesn't demonstrate here. As David Brin pointed out recently, in an essay that reminded me I hadn't read this book in a long time, those who support its views on gun control pretty much ignore the other aspect of its utopia: people get all their needs taken care of by the government. Nobody has to work to earn a living. Other points about the society are that there's a bureaucracy that is guiding society, mostly through advising people on their breeding and how to improve the race. Eugenics!

As able as Heinlein is at using language in the first pages to dump you right into the world, the book is clumsy with a lot of its exposition, especially the early stuff about the eugenics wars. Two people sit there telling each other what they would have known forever, just so we can hear it. The plotting is a mess, too, with a silly revolution that is not well-drawn, and some very silly male-female relationship stuff. In most ways, this book is a real failure.

But. As is often with Heinlein, I very much enjoyed reading it. This isn't as bad as Sixth Column, Heinlein's other early novel I read recently. It has some entertaining spots, but by the end it grew tiresome. Maybe I'll read it again in another 30 years.

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## Jeff Yoak says

It was a delightful surprise to find that there are still Heinlein stories that I hadn't read in 2010. I would have bet against it. It makes me really appreciative that Audible Frontiers is releasing some of the oldest and less popular books in audio.

That said, this was one of my least favorite Heinlein novels. I'm such a huge fan that this is sort of a "bad sex" conclusion in that it just can't be that bad, but still it suffers by comparison. It feels like an early groping toward characteristics in which he would ultimately become a nearly unparalleled master.

Take the character development. This is usually the best aspect of a Heinlein novel. The characters in this novel have some remarkable aspects of development, but are still flatter and less sympathetic than what I expect from Heinlein.

Similarly, Heinlein typically creates startling, vivid worlds extending in plausible ways from his own generally colored by his own startling benevolence and sense of hope. There are interesting aspects of this world from his early occupation with social credit explained more thoroughly in his posthumously published first work, *For Us, the Living: A Comedy of Customs*. He also creates an extremely mannered society typical of many of his works and backed up by a well-armed citizenry. It also presents a eugenic society that is rather utopian rather than disaster because of the high virtue of the society. While ideas like this are perfectly integrated into plots and the lives of the characters in later works, here the ideas hang like window dressing. There are spectacles such as some nasties wanting to grab hold of control of the genetic program and destroy as side effect the liberty of the society which could become a major theme of the novel and highlight the dangers of such practices in the hands of a realistic citizenry. Instead, the rebellion is quietly put down and the story moves along forgetting the incident.

Some of his early and more limited books are explicitly aimed at juveniles and the limitations aren't weaknesses, but rather intentionally aiming at a more limited audience. Also, early works are mostly limited by the censorship of his day, both explicit and market, but both real. Neither seems to fit here. Instead, this seems like groping toward the future talent Heinlein demonstrates. Hardened fans will see glimmers of what future work will come to hold, but ultimately this work fails to deliver.

2014: I decided to revisit this, and while my comments above all apply, I felt a bit warmer toward it. I can't really explain why. The characters seemed a bit stronger this time, and I was more caught up in the story. It had been long enough I had pretty much forgotten most everything, so I got to experience anew in a sense.

2016: This really holds up with rereading.

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## Phil Giunta says

Three centuries into the future, the human race has become a product of artificial selection through genetic engineering. The world has conquered poverty, crime, and most diseases and while there are still natural-born humans, they are generally considered inferior.

Despite this alleged Utopia, wealthy game designer Hamilton Felix questions whether mankind should even continue as a race. Felix is from a "star line", the product of 300 years of tightly controlled genetics. Yet, when the District Moderator for Genetics, Mordan Claude, calls Felix to the Central Clinic to suggest that he take a wife and produce offspring, Felix balks.

Refusing to be easily dissuaded, Claude steers the attractive and willful Longcourt Phyllis in Felix's direction, but while Felix slowly warms up to her, he comes into contact with a dangerous revolutionary known as McFee Norbert who is gathering forces to overthrow the government and institute their own version of a perfect world.

Despite Claude's objections, Felix infiltrates the group, but can he and Claude stop the revolution when the rebels send forces to invade the Central Clinic?

A master storyteller, Heinlein does a deft job of revealing this new world as the plot develops, although the story is occasionally stifled by several pages—and an entire third chapter—of purely scientific (or pseudo-

scientific) discourse in the form of dense info-dumping. This is something that would never make it past a contemporary editor, of course, but avid readers of golden age SF novels would be accustomed to it. At that time, it was fairly common in the genre. Modern readers might also stumble over Heinlein's occasional use of what would now be considered archaic grammar, but, in such cases, meaning can easily be derived from context.

Published in 1948, Beyond this Horizon is one of Heinlein's earliest novels and offers a glimpse into the imaginative and prescient mind of one SF's legendary visionaries.

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### **Mark Nenadov says**

People who knock on this work as "the worst of Heinlein" obviously haven't taken time to understand it. This is a masterpiece. But it is a subtle masterpiece. If you buy this copy, I'd suggest you also check out the essay in the beginning of the "Gregg Press science fiction series" version. It explains some important details that the average reader may miss. Most prominently, it calls the readers attention to a particular transition that occurs on a particular page in the second half of the novel. Simply put, if you don't understand the transition, you haven't understood the book at all.

I recommend you read it, and hang on for a great ride. But read it with care!

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### **Max Ostrovsky says**

As a big fan of Heinlein, I was extremely disappointed by this book. Maybe I was distracted by the misleading blurb on the back cover, or the Burt Reynolds/Charles Bronson cover art.

But I think it was something more than that. The narrative was random and disorganized. Too much of the book was spent towards something that never really developed, and not enough of the story was devoted to the actual story.

The actual story was about a man whose dilemma was what's so great about life that I need to have children. Yeah. First of all, very close premise to "Time Enough for Love," which was fantastic. Maybe the seeds of that novel were born with this one. But not much was done with that.

Not much was done with anything.

There was a brief and pointless eugenics war.

There was a man from the past that served no purpose.

Advantages of antique weaponry.

Breeding for specific traits.

An experimental eugenically engineered woman who could get sick.

Telepathic babies.

Reincarnation.

Just way too much going on for such a short book that didn't properly address any of that.

What it did do was showcase Heinlein's misogynistic views. He's created some extremely strong female characters in his prolific career, but every once in a while, a bit of chauvinism creeps in. In the case of this book, it was entirely too much.

There were a couple things about the book that I did enjoy. First all, the society that is created seems to be the basis of Joss Whedon's Firefly episode "Shindig." Aside from the Asi-ctorian dress, the philosophies of the society with politeness and dueling seemed to echo through Whedon. The book even mentions "registered companions." Makes me wonder if Whedon has read this book and took notes.

That's it.

There was no connection with any of the characters. No story was truly and fully developed. Nothing in it that really made me like this book.

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## Collin says

This book answered a question for me that I've wondered about for a long time: what does an author do with his leftover story tangents that he likes but can't quite work in anywhere? Answer: he saves them all up for when he builds a great make-believe/alternate-reality society but has no storyline to go along with it.

Building great make-believe/alternate-reality societies is what Heinlein just does naturally, like a fish breathing water. In this particular novel, there are 2 fascinating aspects. 1) Guided human evolution (more like old-school dog breeding than outright genetic engineering) that has increased physical strength and intelligence while nearly eliminating disease, and 2) a well-armed society with impeccable manners.

However, there's no real story here. He instead clutters the book with tangents (a man transported alive but unaging through time in a stasis field, a secret group bent on overthrowing the near-utopian society, reincarnation, telepathy, etc) that feel random and pointless.

--update: Turns out that this is only the second "novel" Heinlein ever wrote. In addition, it was initially serialized rather than written as a single, cohesive whole, and it was initially credited to a pen name. These 3 facts, in my opinion, explain a lot about the book that I disliked.

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## Tom says

Beyond This Horizon  
by Robert A. Heinlein  
read by Peter Ganim

Beyond This Horizon is classic science fiction with social commentary thrown in as you may expect from Heinlein.

Mankind has created a Utopian society where poverty and hunger are studied in school but don't actually happen anymore. Mankind has also worked toward eliminating weaknesses in the human chromosome via gene selection and intentional breeding. There are still some normal people (referred to as "control naturals") that could potentially provide new genetic mutations for the good of mankind.

Hamilton Felix genetically represents the best of what humanity has to offer. He gets wrapped up in a group plotting to overthrow the government that thinks only the best of humanity should thrive in society while the control naturals are destroyed or used for experiments. There is little risk or adventure in this society, so a bored Hamilton decided to act as a mole within this organization. It's not really surprising that this novel came out in the 1950's when eugenics and superiority of different races was a current topic.

While their society is Utopian and futuristic, they also have notions of honor and violence such that people can get into gun duels when slighted. I found Heinlein's debate of honor and privilege in this to be interesting in much the same way as his notions of earning rights by military service in Starship Troopers.

I liked the main plot as described but thought it could have happily ended about halfway through. The main

plot of the story wraps up and the second half of the book felt like a really long epilogue to me. Heinlein seems to spread himself a bit thin on so many different issues like government influence of the market, government spending, the meaning of life, telepathy, duels for honor, and the afterlife. There were a few looong monologues/dialogues going into painful detail of chromosome selection where I had trouble paying attention and following the book.

On the audio book side of things, Peter Ganim does a good job. I thought he had a good conversational tone, did some decent voices (they didn't differ much though), and was easy to understand. If you're trying to decide whether reading or listening is preferable, I don't think there is much benefit either way.

Helpful tip if listening to this book: Hamilton Felix (superman, star line, game making guy) is referred to as "Hamilton" in the first half of the book but people start calling him "Felix" later for some reason. This wouldn't be confusing except that his friend Monroe-Alpha Clifford (finance, mathematician guy) also goes by "Monroe-Alpha" and "Clifford" at different times. Since Ganim's voices aren't very distinct, there were some moments where it took me a little bit to realize which character was talking.

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## **Manny says**

I read this book when I was 11, and I don't care who knows: I really liked it. I don't guarantee I'd like it as much if I read it again today. I'll admit I can't remember all that much about it. It's this future society run along sort of eugenic/libertarian lines. Everyone walks around carrying a deadly weapon, except for a few wusses. If somebody offends you, you challenge him to a duel on the spot. Or her, did I hear you ask? Good question. I don't think it ever came up.

The bit I remember best is near the beginning. They're having dinner at a fancy French restaurant, sitting on a balcony and eating bouillabaisse. A member of the hero's party carelessly drops a crab claw over the railing, and it lands on a table below. The guy downstairs pulls out his blaster, the hero is quicker on the draw, and honour is satisfied all round. I'm not sure if the other guy is killed or just seriously wounded - I think the latter.

At the time, I'm afraid I bought Heinlein's argument that, if everyone carried a gun and was ready to use it, people would have better manners. Look, I was 11. I still can't eat bouillabaisse without thinking of this scene.

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## **Mike (the Paladin) says**

I read this years (and years) ago but when I ran across it I couldn't remember much beyond the "general world" in which it takes place.

I reread it.

Now I..."remember why i really didn't remember it".

It's okay. It's a pretty good story set in an interesting world but for a teen it does have a "bog-down-factor". In the middle of the book we get a fairly long dissertation on Mendelian Genetics. While it's of course a bit dated it's somewhat more interesting than it was when i was a kid...

Especially since my high school biology teacher assigned me to do a paper on the said Mendelian Genetics...

Anyway good story as is usually reliably what you get from Heinlein...enjoy, even if not as much as some other of his books.

:)

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### **Lyn says**

Beyond this Horizon by Robert A. Heinlein was written ten years after Huxley's Brave New World and the influence from this genetic and sociological masterpiece is evident.

Also noteworthy is that the book was published during WWII and this may comprise Heinlein's response to Hitler's Nietzschean policies, especially ideas about elitist racism and possible supermen. Cannot help wonder if Woody Allen thought of this book while producing Sleeper as at least a couple of scenes reminded me of the 1970s film, though the film was apparently loosely based upon Wells' The Sleeper Awakes.

Heinlein would come back to this theme several times, most notably in Methuselah's Children and Time Enough for Love. This is one of his earlier works and the reader can also see glimpses of his strong libertarian principles taking shape in the narrative.

Being one of his earlier works, though, RAH had yet to come into his own in terms of characterization, flat here, but will blossom into masterpieces The Moon is a Harsh Mistress and Stranger in a Strange Land about twenty years later. The plot is also disjointed and incomplete, but all in all this is a good entry in the RAH pantheon and a fan will enjoy.

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### **Cheryl says**

Yeah, it's kind of a mess. And remember Heinlein has a certain sort of disturbingly sexist attitude, doesn't understand women at all - certainly the only armed one is seen as, erm, eccentric, to put it mildly.

Females don't need guns because men (aka people) are all about being protective and chivalrous... except when they're spanking the girls or otherwise dominating them, that is. I did like "Women will forgive anything. Otherwise the race would have died out long ago." And he gets a few other things right, like how to read that resource which replaces newspapers. And I appreciate his view of amiable eugenics, as it seems carefully thought out given the context of the times.

(For example, this was written a few years before it was figured out that genes are made of DNA, and well before the structure of DNA was determined to be the double helix. And so, the methods of genetic selection described are, erm, interesting.)

Heinlein is well-read, and clever. It could be argued that he's smart. He's not wise, though.

And finance is not his forte; is description of the Utopia in which nobody goes hungry and the government prints more money when statisticians tell it to is implausible. "A polite society is an armed society" is

nonsense. The low incidence of atheism is quaint.

But mostly it's both BS and lame. I guess I'll keep working through the stack of Heinlein books I own, but without high hopes for the enjoyment I'd expect given his popularity, and given the fact that I do remember liking him when I was a teen.

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## Ian says

“Beyond this Horizon” (1942) by Robert Heinlein—the dean of science fiction writers

I was prompted to reread this novel by my current reading of William Paterson’s readable biography of Heinlein “Robert A. Heinlein in Dialogue with his Century” (2010).

Rereading Heinlein after all these years!

I first read H. and this novel in my high school days—1970s. For two decades it held the distinction of being a novel I reread every three or four years. I was always tantalised by the nuanced background and eclectic narrative of the novel, however by the early 90s my reading tastes had sufficiently changed (matured?) that I no longer turned to H. to fulfil my reading needs. Therefore it has been three decades since I last perused the pages of H’s first successful novel.

After this long absence I still found H’s writing enjoyable. He creates a vibrant novel that challenges, entertainingly invokes, and criticises social norms. For example, he briefly, but directly states that men wear nail polish, that men wear brightly coloured clothes, even that a main character is both dark skinned, and highly intelligent. Ideas shocking a century ago when the story was written, still now surprising.

What has always struck me about the novel was the rushed pace of the narrative. Too much is squeezed into too shortish a novel. Also events jump from scene to scene without interlinking explanation, even minor events occur without explanation. Better editing would have produced a better novel.

I did not know this in the past—I had an ivory tower image of writers sitting before their typewriters, patiently whittling away their words—but Patterson tells how H. was pressed by the rapidly approaching WW2, and a dozen other needs, to finish the novel as quickly as possible. Whereas if you had asked me half lifetime ago I would have averred that H. had spent a year carefully polishing his masterpiece.

Putting aside the trivial, here is my serious objection to the novel—H’s casual acceptance of violence. H’s brave new world is a gun carrying paradise. An example of this is seen early in the novel. While discussing pistols the protagonist casually describes the unrecognisable damage his new weapon would make of an opponent’s face. No remorse, no introspection, no regard. Just bravado. Cold and empty.

There is also an early scene that has a man with “coldly dangerous eyes”. He and the protagonist almost come to a shoot out over the trifle of accidentally spilled food, in a crowded restaurant. This is followed by a scene when gunplay does occur and a perhaps fatally wounded drunk is dismissed as a “little excitement” that is good for the appetite. So to Heinlein (and his libertarian buddies) casual death is the norm, where the hero calmly ignores any qualms or feelings of empathy over the loss of another human being. Ummm.

Also, we are told later, that any ‘innocent bystanders’ who get hit do so because they didn’t move fast enough—natural selection. Ignoring this ridiculous take on evolution, such a cold disregard for human life is beyond shocking.

H's indifference and moral pragmatism on the matter of human well being is seen in one major subplot. In the novel a group of rebels attempt to overthrow this paradisiacal future. The coup is suppressed with lots of dead rebels, the deaths of which the main characters approve of (we are told how some are gassed to death). Yet the protagonist protects his best friend, who was also a member of the conspiracy. For the friend no punishment, as the hero believes him to be simply misguided. In this the protagonist ignores the possibility that the other now dead conspirators may also have been equally misguided and thus deserving of a pardon. The protagonist's compassion and awareness of shared humanity extends only so far as his circle of friends. The deaths of outsiders are a matter of little consequence. Them and Us.

This level of violence is mandated by the belief that an armed society is a polite society. A belief held now and then by a number of people and groups in our society. For H. it meant that men (more on that in a moment) go around armed, have elaborate rituals verbal and social to ameliorate interaction and disputes, and that a shoot out will occur every now and then. Those men who do not wish to go armed wear a badge indicating such ("brassard of peace"), and surrender some of their rights. Unspecified, but essentially they differ to armed men.

The reader is also informed, several times, that smart and capable men (H's type of men) do carry a weapon, but never have to use it, due to their skilful understanding and manoeuvring through the travails of society. Appealing?

Lest I seem overly critical of Mr Heinlein let me say that his description of 'modern' technology is second to few: voice control, water beds (a Heinlein invention), space flight as an every day happenstance, showers (the word seems too small for the services provided), all weave an appealing future. Even his libertarian society is not without appeal. There is a Universal Basic Income, various other welfare payments for various categories of citizens, free food for all, an open acknowledgement that unregulated capitalism does not work, and that the government should and does successfully guide the free-market.

Not your Ayn Rand libertarianism.

The theme of the novel is eugenics, and the extent to which genes control us, all in a world where genetic engineering is the norm. Heinlein does propose a more sensible proposal than many to deal with the dangers of this technology. Essentially, parents are free to use genetic editing to produce the best possible baby they can produce, but without artificial enhancements. Shades of "GATTACA" in there somewhere. Heinlein goes out of his way to dismiss both totalitarianism and pacifism as creeds that misuse genetics for their own flawed ends.

H's morality relies on evolutionary thought. Survival is his mantra. In doing so he does disregard the possibility that a succession of short term survival steps can lead to species extinction.

H's also expresses a dangerously modern view of religion. Raised in the Bible Belt he quickly threw away his own conventional religion when exposed to rationalism and the great minds of his time. BtH has only one indirect (possible) reference to Christianity, dismisses conventional afterlives, but abounds with references to an unexplained religious belief as the norm: "Great Egg", "Name of the Egg", and so forth. This was wonderfully entertaining when I first read, and is still so.

The novel's attitude towards people is also distinctively positive. Rather than condemning the poor (of which there were none, due to state intervention in the economy, and welfare), and the unenhanced, H goes out of his way, against prevailing attitudes then and now, to praise human beings. "man is a working animal"—people like to and will work, even when they don't need to. One of the enviable tasks of the future is to distribute new wealth to the populous. The outcome of this largesse is a cultured and accomplished society. This is in contrast to belief held by many today that giving away welfare money will lead to sloth, indulgence, and so forth.

Governments—governments and politicians—it is a conservative trope that both are incompetent, corrupt, and generally bad, but in BtH the “planners” of the novel are intelligent, thoughtful, and wise people. H’s post-BtH novels return to the traditional dismissive disdain of governments, but for now he shows a rare regard for those chosen to lead the world. Even democracy is praised, seemingly. The means by which his planners are appointed is unspecified, but they “represent” their electorates, suggesting some form of representation.

Women—as social forward thinking H is about other matters, in his novel women play a largely subordinate role to men. There are exceptions, but men are in charge of the world. Women have the same right to bear arms, but few do. Also, women like it when men are aggressive. Early on the protagonist wrestles his new love interest into submission and then kisses her several times. This is the first step in their love affair.

Sub-plots—the story is livened by a skilfully woven series of sub-plots that serve the dual purpose of providing indirect exposition and moving the story along. The most amusing of these is the man from the past: a man from the 1920s kept in stasis for centuries, who, when released into H’s world is seen to be a good man, but one unable to cope well with the modern world he is reborn into. There is also the search for the meaning of life. Not a new idea, but with Heinlein’s characteristic bravado, this age old question is tackled systematically—with science! Also, immortality, reincarnation? The tropes come fast, but are well handled.

H lacks little as a story teller. Fast paced writing, clear though complex exposition, and a conclusion. In doing so H never veers away from telling you the reader what he thinks about what he is writing about, but he does so in an entertaining and mostly enjoyable fashion (he could have tried to minimise the pages of gene engineering description). H’s writing still sells, decades after his death, which demonstrates something of his writing skill.

My take on the novel after half a century is what it was half a century ago. An entertaining piece of writing, fantastic ideas, but I deplore the violence and lack of regard for human life.

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## R.a. says

4.6 stars

“In the Name of the Egg!”

“Light is dark; up is down; and, life is death.”

Robert Heinlein continually surprises.

Somewhere beyond the dark future dystopia of Huxley’s *Brave New World* sits Robert Heinlein’s brilliant and provocative adult novel, *Beyond This Horizon*.

Subtitled “a Post-Utopian Novel,” the author earnestly sets out to create such a narrative amidst a future “utopian” society. Written eleven years after the Huxley novel, with its sub-plot anticipating the later horrific world of Orwell’s *1984*, *Beyond This Horizon* “bravely” presents humanity’s “progress” in a *supposedly* better” and positive future. Yet, Heinlein tacitly presents the idea that this future is *not* necessarily “better” or more positive.

Like other Heinlein “futures,” *Beyond This Horizon* presents a “general” future date, (later than 2075). And following, large geographical areas are merged into “districts.” Here, the new society unites a “whole

hemisphere” and the society has stations on various planets and satellites. The society has eliminated poverty through “an ever surplus” economics. American West type duels, an old European genteel politeness, (“Gentle Sir,” “Most Gracious Lady”), and a *Gattaca*-like class (or caste) system become a few elements within this future culture.

With this novel, Heinlein’s characters, plot, thematic investigations, cultural commentary, and other elements wonderfully combine for a truly unique vision.

Indeed, here, Heinlein seeks to explore life’s “meaning.” And so, of the literary allusions made in the chapter headings, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* appropriately appears twice. And like Shakespeare with his melancholy Dane, Heinlein presents his protagonist, Hamilton Felix, a genetically bred yet ennui-stricken “superman” who will explore life, death, friendship, and more, to include “investigat[ing] what the Universe had been and what it would become.”

Needless to say, *Beyond This Horizon* exceeds both story and genre expectations.

“In a nutshell,” the author weaves two plotlines in which he explores Preservation and Extinction, (or Life and Death), Evolution and Mutation, (or Fate and Chance / Free Will), the Individual and the Community, Logic and Emotion, and lastly, the Simple and the Complex via the Pastoral and the Metropolitan.

A “sneeze” may reveal one to be a “Control Natural,” i.e., *not* genetically bred and therefore “inferior,”—to be eliminated in future breeding alignments. The writer sketches out a history which includes a “Second Genetic War” and an ensuing “Empire of the Great Khans.” He posits the actions of Hamilton and his best friend’s actions, (Monroe “Clifford” Alpha) in relief against this highly specialized culture.

The error of history, so stated, was that the Great Khans *directly* experimented and cultivated desirable gene sequences. Learning from history, the culture now aims “to progress” through multi-generational breeding processes. And this yields a Social Darwinism-based culture.

[To] “eliminate . . . recessives . . . to tell whether or not an adult . . . was actually clean . . . Natural Selection . . . goes on day in and day out, inexorable and automatic. It is as tireless, as inescapable, as entropy.”

Another surprise occurs when Heinlein reverses his usual stance on individualism, making a case for community, and the larger society:

[Hamilton] “realized consciously and sardonically, that he himself was part of the throng,” and [Martha] “He doesn’t own the life in his body. It belongs to all of us—to the race.”

Unlike Monroe (Clifford) Alpha, the protagonist, Hamilton Felix comes across as privileged and arrogant. Yet, through his actions, he becomes likable. He acts out of friendship, rather than indifference. He maintains a sense of devotion, honor, and love despite the culture’s focus on logic and indifferent action. And, the reader can see a protagonist *without* the usual Heinlein- strident dogmas, (Major Ardmere of *The Sixth Column*, MacRae of *Red Planet*, the Old Man of *The Puppet Masters*, and Jubal of *Strangers In a Strange Land*). Here indeed is another pleasant surprise.

As Monroe Clifford acts as a foil to Hamilton Felix, Heinlein’s Time Traveler, J. Darlington Smith, (and the present-day culture he represents—ca. 1926), acts as a foil to Heinlein’s created culture. Smith provokes in Clifford a Romantic feeling for “the Simple.” Heinlein extends this with an episode involving Clifford in a “Redwoods Park.” The scenes become affecting and even poetic, with an amazing irony: Clifford easily can “burn down” a “Control Natural” but becomes sick when he shoots a deer. The woman he seeks, incidentally, is named “Marion Hartnet.” Hence, echoing Shakespeare again, Heinlein plays on the word “hart.” Wonderful.

At the center of the novel's plot lies an agreement. Unwilling Felix *agrees* to propagate, (to continue his "Star Line), *if and only if* he is allowed to participate as a Double Agent within a revolutionary underground revolutionary movement called "The Survivor's Club." Later, the novel shifts to a "domestic sphere," wherein Felix conquers his "ennui." This "shift" may cause reader disappointment simply because of the exciting action of the revolutionary sub-plot coupled with Heinlein's "clipped style" of writing. Yet, here again, the sub-plot functions as a foil revealing an "alternative" society, (that Orwellian, fascistic authoritarian state), to this genetically-bred based one.

The writer's diction alternates between his typical clipped descriptions to his charming, revealing, and sometimes outright funny dialogue: "Filthy!" "For Egg's Sake," and the "operator had stepped back without looking and stepped on pussy's tail. Pussy did not like it and said so."

Given Heinlein's influence, readers may see here parallels to aspects in Herbert's *Dune*, Orwell's *1984*, Clark's *2001, A Space Odyssey*, *Gattaca*, and, of course, *Star Trek*, (even the greeting "Long Life," we see *here* 20 years before the original television series).

Finally, allusion and social commentary permeate the novel. From H.G. Wells' notion of an "elite class as weakening through its own luxury" to Nietzsche's concept of the "over-man," Heinlein explores. From Gregor Mendel's work on genetics to Socrates' discerning "the good," Heinlein leads the reader to his greater question(s). Ultimately, he settles on an Ancient Greek / Freudian notion—one that links to his overarching metaphysical question.

Heinlein's conclusion both inspires **and** repels. And, the novel's last line admittedly frustrates. While it perfectly presents "an open interpretation," the effect of humor seems to thwart the otherwise seriousness of its implications. Yet, that invitation for interpretation, Heinlein *does* make.

And so, this early novel becomes beguiling. Seemingly a pop- Sci-fi, pulp novel, it excels in presenting and exploring serious questions.

A *great* novel, *Beyond This Horizon* deserves serious consideration—to include, frankly, a presentation and art cover representative of its achievement.

"Dark is light; down is up; and death is life."  
"Great Egg!"

"Not a whit, we defy augury.  
There is special Providence in the fall of a sparrow.  
If it be now, 'tis not to come;  
if it be not to come, it will be now;  
if it be not now, yet it will come

—the readiness is all."

--Hamlet, (V, ii)

## Kathryn McCary says

Not really what this non-Heinlein reader expected from Heinlein, somehow--but then, it seems to have been a relatively early work (apparently his first novel-length, serialized starting in 1942 and published as a whole in 1948). The society-in-which-adult-males-are-armed-by-default is unsurprising, but the easy acceptance of an essentially totalitarian eugenics program seems contrary to what I've heard from his admirers. Sadly, also, the plot is treated as secondary to the ideas (rarely a successful approach to fiction), and there are great wedges of explanatory prose. All the same, a reasonably pleasant and undemanding read.

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## The Fizza says

More of a conversation between Aldous Huxley and Robert Heinlein than anything.

While **Beyond This Horizon** is harder to get into than Heinlein's other early works usually tend to be - this piece having many of the 'problems' the average Heinlein detractor finds issue with - it doesn't make this a bad story... perhaps a mid-range?!

Though, as a rule, even *amiddling* Heinlein adventure is usually better than what most of the best SF writers of the same period produced... Of course for every rule there is an exception and unfortunately this story was originally published back in 1942, within the pages of Astounding Science Fiction, the same year ASF also serialized Isaac Asimov's highly acclaimed Foundation.

Still it is certainly a Heinlein tale and much of this book, as with many of the early Heinlein stories, provided a major influence to SF creators over the next 5 decades and into today. Most notably early Heinlein works provided inspiration to the creative teams which produced the "*pop*" SF series Star Trek and just like Space Cadet held the origins of Star Fleet this particular tale bore an early version of Khan Noonien Singh into the world.

I would recommend it to anyone interested in talking about Brave New World or having that utopia/dystopia conversation.

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