



Off the Main Sequence: The Other Science Fiction Stories of Robert A. Heinlein

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Stories include...

Successful Operation Let There Be Light -And He Built a Crooked House- Beyond Doubt They Solution Unsatisfactory Universe Elsewhen Common Sense By His Bootstraps Lost Legacy My Object All Sublime Goldfish Bowl Pied Piper Free Men On the Slopes of Vesuvius Columbus Was a Dope Jerry Was a Man Water is for Washing Nothing Ever Happens on the Moon Gulf Destination Moon The Year of the Jackpot Project Nightmare Sky Lift Tenderfoot in Space -All You Zombies-. Here are smart, savvy tales of space adventure, time travel, weird science, mysterious phenomena, apocalypse and dystopia, tales that reflect the concerns of their day, yet eerily foreshadow our own. There's Successful Operation, a Twilight Zone-ish gem in which a dictator gets his just desserts...Let There Be Light, about two inventors who triumph over political corruption...and On the Slopes of Vesuvius, in which a Bomb-fearing barkeep sees his worst fears realized. - And He Built A Crooked House- tells of an architect whose innovative home design leads straight into a funhouse fourth dimension. Solution Unsatisfactory gives us a chilling alternate end to WWII, while -All You Zombies- paints a time-twisty picture of the ultimate causality paradox. All these and more, including three previously uncollected stories, Beyond Doubt, My Object All Sublime and Pied Piper, display Heinlein's creative genius to full extent.

Off the Main Sequence: The Other Science Fiction Stories of Robert A. Heinlein Details

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Author : Robert A. Heinlein

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From Reader Review Off the Main Sequence: The Other Science Fiction Stories of Robert A. Heinlein for online ebook

Sally Ember says

Just not into these types of stories, I guess. Loved most of his novels, though.

Sean Randall says

Obviously, heinlein is just amazing. I've always, always loved Gulf. All you Zombies hit me a good one, as did Destination Moon and both the scout stories. Even By His Bootstraps, even though I'd recently re-read it in another collection, yet held my attention. I've also reread The Puppet Masters and Time For the Stars during my holiday, so a real good mix of new arrangements and old favourites. But this collection is great, some of the stranger stuff really makes one ponder.

Kathy says

Lesser known short stories by Robert Heinlein. It's been awhile since I read any of his works, so it was nice to once again read one of the SF masters.

The stories vary in quality and each reader will probably like different ones. I found ones I enjoyed, plus some I slogged through.

All in all, I highly recommend to anyone that enjoys reading some the golden age of SF. For younger readers, however, I remind you that you need to read many of the stories with the time frames in mind; read in the context of the historical time Heinlein was writing them (mostly the 1940s) and extrapolating the future. Those "futures" are mostly our history now and things didn't quite work out the way he envisioned. But the stories and the forward thinking are what makes it fun. For instance, I can see "Project Nightmare" made into a movie, or an episode of something, with a modern day "enemy."

Darth says

Nice collection of stories, largely consisting of what RAH himself considered to be his second and third tier stories - the stuff he couldnt sell to the highest paying sources, and so he didnt release them under the Robert Heinlein by line, and instead let them be published under alias.

The funny thing is, that although some of them are second or third rate, some of them are even better than his more highly acclaimed works. At least, that is how I felt about them. Many of these have been collected in other books - especially if you have read this one:

<http://www.amazon.com/Past-Through-To...>

All in all, there is some real gold in here, and some of it you may not find in print outside this edition, making it a must for any RAH fan who wants to read it all.

Judy says

need to track this one down

Lisa Liel says

This was very cool. I've read the vast majority of the stories before, but there were some new ones in there. The first short stories I ever read by Heinlein as a kid were in here. It's a nice companion to "The Past Through Tomorrow".

Timothy Boyd says

A nice collections of short stories. I tend to prefer Heinlein's novels more. Recommended

John Bruni says

I love Heinlein's work. He was light years ahead of his time (except when it came to smoking; no one could have predicted how drastically we've changed in regards to cigarettes). Surprisingly, I've only read one of the stories in this book before. (Side note: I actually read that one in the original pulp magazine it was published in.) There was only one story that didn't grab me. The rest were sheer brilliance. You'll find a lot of great characters in here, like the guy who figures out a way to make himself invisible just so he can squirt bad drivers with skunk juice. Or the guy who uses math to see the cycles of time so he can predict disasters. And then there's the person in the final story of the book, "All You Zombies." This story is easily the best in the book. I will never forget it as long as I live, and you won't either after you read it. I'd talk about it here, but the whole story is a spoiler. I wouldn't even know how to describe it, anyway. Just read it, all right?

Austin Wright says

If anyone has a physical copy of this book, could you please email "My Object Most Sublime" to me? It is the only Heinlein story that I have not read. I think it is only a few pages?

This book was a beast to complete, but it was my favorite out of the collection of six

Keith says

I may be over-rating *Off the Main Sequence*, but I really enjoyed these *Golden Age* stories; if possible I'd have given 4.5. Most of them were originally published under one of RAH's pseudonyms and can be presumed to be not his best work, but *He Built a Crooked House* and *By his Bootstraps* are among my favorites.

Tracey says

A limited edition collection of stories that aren't connected to his Future History universe. I'd read many of them before, thanks to years of used-bookstore scrounging, but still quite enjoyed the compilation. The intros by Greg Bear and Michael Cassut were nicely done and informative.

In general, Heinlein's earlier stories leave me feeling upbeat (if a bit inadequate); however, the later stories were much more cautionary ("The Year of the Jackpot"), but considering what he was seeing happen around him, it's easy to understand.

Ryun says

It might surprise some of you, but science fiction writing, historically, hasn't paid very well. For the majority of the 20th century, science fiction writers, even the true geniuses, had to be prolific to put food on the table. And thank God for that.

One example of why I'm happy for the hardships inherent in SF writing comes in the form of OFF THE MAIN SEQUENCE: THE OTHER STORIES OF ROBERT A. HEINLEIN. Edited by Andrew Wheeler, this is a collection put out by the Science Fiction Book Club that pulls together the short stories that weren't part of Heinlein's "future history" timeline, of which STARSHIP TROOPERS is a piece.

More: <http://www.bookgasm.com/reviews/sci-f...>

Stephanie "Jedigal" says

Includes three short stories published under pseudonym Lyle Monroe that had not previously been issued in any anthologies or in book form.

Muath Aziz says

Universe: My favorite so far; so mythical, so thrilling, so philosophical, so beautiful and true! What's happening among them, not being able to correctly interpret Jordan Plan, needing to resort to nonsense metaphysical interpretation of it! This reminds me so much of Hobbes and his Materialist interpretation of

the Bible. Also, Hugh going out to the no-weight zone, learning the truth, descending back to his fellows, informing them with the truth, they're blinded: Heresy! Prosecute him! This is so Plato's Cave, which is also parallel to the prosecution of Socrates.

Elsewhen: Berkeleian Idealism, where you control the time/existence.

"But you engineers are as bad as metaphysicians -you ignore any fact that you can't weigh in scales. If you can't bite it, it's not real. You believe in a mechanistic, deterministic universe, and ignore the facts of human consciousness, human will, and human freedom of choice- facts that you have directly experienced"

"When you die, you won't die all over, no matter how intensely you may claim to expect to. It is an emotional impossibility for any man to believe in his own death"

Damn man, this is the trippiest thing I've ever read! I wonder how high in weed and mushrooms Heinlein was when who wrote this. And cut the subconscious crap, the professor clearly gave his students a joint hahaha. The awesome thing is that they can get inside each other's trip! Oh good old hippies.

By His Bootstraps: Time Travel, Philosophy.

I think I watched enough TT movies to know all the twists, all three persons in the room where the same person (the protagonist), the bearded man with the TT machine was also the protagonist. Closed loops of Cause and Effect common in TT stories. The protagonist writing a failed Physic paper but then magically finding a schematics for a TT machine that leads him to make and travel to the future only later when he get older he sends back the same schematics to his younger self (this wasn't exactly what happened here but you see the similarities).

Tho I founded it very cliché and fought to finish it in 2015, I'm sure it was quite avant garde when he wrote at the time. The last 20 pages I was planing to skip but eventually didn't, were so enchanting and saved the day!

Also there is the usual "f#%k you scientists with all your entropies and cause and effect nonsense!" talk common in other stories of the author.

Lost Legacy: Superpowers.

This reminds me of the movie Lucy, "release the hidden powers within your brain!". I like how he connected it with lumps of the brain that we don't know the use of, medically. Choosing main characters of a sergeant, a psychologist, a lady, got the story going. The doctor stands for skeptic-in-metaphysics scientist, the psychologist is one that believes in the subconscious powers etc, the girl, well he always put a girl that the other main characters romanticize (check "Let there me light").

I like how Religion is involved here! The characters, explicitly for no reason (destiny?), climbed up a mountain only to get caught in a storm then some guy rescue them. They discover a community with

superpowers up there (x-men school?). Jesus, Buddha, all climbed up mountains. Men had these powers before The Deluge but shortly before the event some grouped started a war and Atlantis sank (The Deluge) and Humanity forgot the superpowers but for small groups live hidden.. Jesus had superpowers!

Goldfish Bowl: Aliens? Mythical elements (Water/fish, Mud/man, Air/super-intelligence, Fire?/under-the-crust-creatures)

It start hard to read and hideous narration then it gets better, when he wakes up in nowhere and naked.

"He awoke refreshed, but quite hungry and extremely thirsty. The matter of dead, mor not-dead, no longer concerned him; he was interested in neither theology nor metaphysics. He was hungry."

He got all poetic, he was trapped by a superior race (Martians, it was obvious from the beginning like many other twists in other stories) and helpless, just like when he trapped his goldfish in the bowl, hence Goldfish Bowl. (It reminds me of Attack on Titans where titans suddenly attacked people and ate them, just like when people attacked sheep and cows!)

Aaaaand there is the usual (skeptic scientist: nonsense! This weird bizarre phenomenon can be easily explained by hypothesis!).. Really? O dear Robert, really? Even scientists need luv ya know..

Pied Piper: Pacifist

I like how the author have two general themes, Metaphysical Philosophy (Absolute Idealism?) and Politics (Pacifist, Juvenile), such a hippie lol.

"Men are willing to be killed in war for one reason only -that their tribe may live after them. That is to say, they fight for their children. To a nation without children, war is meaningless, not worth fighting. That is a primary datum of mass psychology!"

"Go on."

"I propose that we kidnap their children!"

So, music saved the world!

Free Men: Post-Nuclear-War

Meh. No SF or any stuff, just that America was bombed, the government fell, a group is fighting to get their freedom back unlike some americans. This reminds me of France during WW2 with guerrillas up on the mountains against the Vichy.

Jerry Was a Man: Genetically-Modified Animals

SF where horses can be modified to fly and elephants read and write. It's human; animals too have feelings!

Water is fro Washing: Natural Disaster

I like how epic this is. It's unique, no Politics, no SF, Metaphysics. But the disaster was expected; the bartender expected it explicitly. This is common with the author; he ain't that good in planting seeds or delivering twists and punches but he sure have a brilliant Imagination!

Nothing Ever Happens on the Moon: Moon exploration.

I like how this collection is ordered chronologically (of writing not publishing) so it shows how the author style of writing is changing by time. This one is way more realistic than earlier writings, no Politics and no Metaphysics. And truly, nothing ever happens in the moon.

Gulf: Thriller, Action, super weapon, supermen (very intelligent ones).

So Superman is going to save man from himself? I smell the usual hippie pacifist politics of the author hehe. One of the characters destroyed the dangerous film and saved humanity.

And this mysterious film of Nova Effect weapon reminds me of the mysterious box in the movie Kiss Me Deadly.

"The gulf between us and them is narrow, but it is very deep. We cannot close it."

Oh and there is the usual "oh you're pretty, let's get married!" But this time a girl is telling the protagonist not the other way around.

548-552 has some good fiction linguistics that I may return to later.

The beginning and end is thrilly, the middle part when he het his fellow x-men they taught him how to unleash all of his brain's power not just the 20% just like in Lost Legacy, middle part was lame at least Speedtalk was fun.

There were some small details of Alternative History but is was negligible, had nothing to do with the story.

And it ended with them marrying but both dying trying to save the world. And how did the evil old woman make the superweapon? It suddenly happened! Okay there was a good seed, when he first met his fellow supermen he told them they must train them to kill her, also there were some news of her moving to the moon to retire, only to find that she moved there so she can blast Earth with the superweapon without dying since she is on the moon! But still, very weak writing..

Still, I really like this along with Universe (my favorite so far) and maybe Elsewhen.

Destination Moon: Trip to the moon, Thriller.

This reminds me so much of the movie Apollo 13, keeping in mind that the author wrote this as a screen play from a movie with the same name.

It's really nice, nothing special but well written story. There are aliens living on the dark side of the Moon (just like that in Gulf there was mass always behind the Sun that we can't see from Earth thus it was blasted while testing the superweapon), however they had nothing to do with the story.

The Year of The Jackpot: Statistical Apocalypse.

How cool is that! So events happen in cycles (war, love, death, natural disasters, etc) and a statistics mathematician predicted that after few days all the cycles will peak at the same time (year of the jackpot!), Los Angeles was nuked, WW3 happened so fast, 40 major cities blasted in a blink (he mentioned something like this before in another story; the 40 mins War, or something).

I like the Cause-Effect talk. He has the we-shouldn't-how-it-happens cuz it just happens, this is similar to Data Mining (Computer Science) where we have very big data that we don't need to do the root-cause analysis required by Statistics, meaning Correlation is good enough!

I like the "3 million free-wills go to the center of New York every morning, 3 million free-wills go back home at the end of day". Meaning by statistics (big number of individuals not specifically an individual) we act as if we don't really have a free-will.

Also there is the regular "hey gurl you're pretty, let's get married!".

In general I like the narration of this story along with the ideas in it.

Project Nightmare: yet another ESP story, Thriller, Cold War?

It just so happens that people with ESP abilities were gathered in a military base demonstrating that they can set off A-bombs just when Russia threatened USA in the middle of the demonstration that they implanted 42 bombs across big cities in America. They used ESPers to blackout the bombs and help the police in finding them. The beginning was bad but it gets better, when ESPers got so tired that when one of them fainted, the city he was searching for the bomb in it exploded!

I like that when something strange delivered to the reader (ESP/psychic powers in this story) the author exceeds that and delivers something even strange to the characters in the story "they can set off bombs, but can they defuse them? No one tried that before!"

The pacifist ending tho:

USA President: "could you set off those Russian bombs while they are still far away?"

She got a far-away look. "Dorothy and I had better have a quite room somewhere. And I'd like a pot of tea. A large pot."

Sky Lift: SF, Fast Traveling.

I like the narration of this story! I felt what the protagonist felt! My mind was filled with scientific questions! Is it really "the time advantage dropped by inverse squares. 18 days requires 1g, so 9 days took 4g", really?

I like that they are talking about how much acceleration not speed! Of course they shouldn't feel the trip took 9 days when they are at 4g, going so fast means the time you feel is less compared to stationed observers! Check Almost-speed-of-light Twin paradox.

And why is it always that the protagonist named Joe?

A Tenderfoot in Space: Life in Venus.

I love this! The narration is so good. He's narrating about a dog, I liked this more than Kafka on Shore's cats. I would recommend this story for reading. He is here saying "respect our long gone scientists even tho they were ignorant at some stuff, if it wasn't for them we wouldn't be here!", no more "f%\$k scientists" lol.

All You Zombies: TT, paradoxes.

The transexuality is discussed as usual. This is very similar to By His Bootstraps, cliché TT where five characters is the same person.

This is not just the grandfather's paradox, here a girl sleeps with a guy then gets pregnant then changes her sex only to get older as a man to seduce an orphan girl (himself before surgery) so this orphan girl gets pregnant then her baby is stolen, this baby is taken back in time (by a very old him/her) so the baby grows up as an orphan to be seduced by himself.

As usual the name of the story is a quote from it: The Snake That Eats Its Own Tail, Forever and Ever ... I know where I came from - but where did all you zombies come from?

I know this is his collection of "not so good" stories but still some of them are really good. I would recommend Universe/Common Sense, Elsewhen, Gulf, A Tenderfoot in Space. Also: They, Goldfish Bowl, The Year of The Jackpot.
