



Collected Fiction

Hannu Rajaniemi

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'Inside the firewall the city is alive. Buildings breathe, cars attack, angels patrol, and hyper-intelligent pets rebel.

With unbridled invention and breakneck adventure, Hannu Rajaniemi is on the cutting-edge of science fiction. His post-apocalyptic, post-cyberpunk, and post-human tales are full of exhilarating energy and unpredictable optimism.

How will human nature react when the only limit to desire is creativity? When the distinction between humans and gods is as small as nanomachines—or as large as the universe? Whether the next big step in technology is 3D printing, genetic alteration, or unlimited space travel, Rajaniemi writes about what happens *after*.

Collected Fiction Details

Date : Published May 19th 2015 by Tachyon Publications (first published May 12th 2015)

ISBN : 9781616961923

Author : Hannu Rajaniemi

Format : Hardcover 242 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Short Stories, Fiction, Fantasy

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Carly says

~4.5

Hannu Rajaniemi must be one of the most creative and ambitious science fiction writers in our era, and his imagination is fully displayed in the whimsical, imaginative, and often downright peculiar stories of the collection. In fact, to echo that motif, I'll start with the last two sections, in which his experimental streak is most prominent. The first, "**Snow White is Dead**," is intended to be an interactive neurofiction experience: machine learning algorithms used feedback from an electroencephalography headset to lead the reader on a subconscious choose-your-own-adventure story. The second section is a collection what Rajaniemi terms "**microfiction**:" each microstory must convey the bones of the plot and scene in under 140 characters. The microstory starring Imhotep Austin became a serial. One of my favourite episodes:

"Kidnappings, impossibly aged bodies, green chronal energy dome in Brooklyn. Routine case-- for a half-mummy detective. But now it's personal."

In fact, given Rajaniemi's gift for fantastic first sentences, I suspect that many of the stories in this collection are microstories given flesh and substance. Almost all of them begin by concatenating two startling and apparently incompatible events that automatically pique the reader's curiosity. Every single such sentence is in fact a perfect summary of events while simultaneously expressing nothing about the story's essence. Take "**Tyche and the Ants**":

"The ants arrived on the Moon on the same day Tyche went through the Secret Door to give a ruby to the Magician."

The story is an odd melding of myth (Tyche's friends on the moon include Chang'e and the Jade Rabbit), technology (the aforementioned ants are of the ANT-A3972 variety), and the dreams of childhood. Similarly, the first sentence of "**The Haunting of Apollo A7LB**" ("*The moon suit came back to Hazel the same night Pete was buried at sea*") manages to both fully describe the plot while not even alluding to the core of a story about love and loss and racism. "**The Server and the Dragon**" ("*In the beginning, before it was a Creator and a dragon, the server was alone.*") is slow-paced and contemplative, and explores what it might mean to be a server isolated from the world of information it feels compelled to serve. While not my favourite in the collection, I savoured that first sentence and the contrast between dancing dragons and baby universes.

Rajaniemi's stories are often bewildering, catapulting the reader in the middle of an intricate world whose rules can only partially be gleaned from the story. One of the most obvious examples of this was "**His Master's Voice**" ("*Before the concert, we steal the master's head.*") which is narrated by a dog. A hyperintelligent dog, I grant you, but a dog nonetheless. Rajaniemi does a wonderful job in capturing the essential dogginess of the perspective, creating a voice that muses on his master's "god-smell" and the great triumvirate: the bowl, the Ball, and the master. The first story in the collection, "**Deus Ex Homine**," opens with an energy and incredibly alien imagined future that is carried through the story:

"As gods go, I wasn't one of the holier-than-thou, dying-for-your-sins variety. I was a full-blown transhuman deity with a liquid metal body, an external brain, clouds of self-replicating

utility fog to do my bidding and a recursively self-improving AI slaved to my volition."

The story is told by one of the casualties of the "godplague," a phenomenon in which humans, in becoming something more than human, wreaked havoc upon civilization. As one character notes,

"Recursively self-optimizing AIs don't kill people. Killer cyborgs kill people."

Like other Rajaniemi stories, I was initially overwhelmed by the strangeness and complexity of the world, but was inexorably sucked into the story nevertheless. I was glad that Rajaniemi returned to the world of the godplague in another story in the collection, "**Elegy for a Young Elk**," which also highlights his fondness for flashbacks. It gives the perspective of another type of casualty, a poet who refuses to become transhuman but loses his family to the godplague and its aftermath.

Rajaniemi is one of the few authors that makes me regret my lack of knowledge about physics. Although I spent a certain amount of time on wikipedia learning what WIMPS and Shkadov neclases were, a lot of the references flew past me. One such story was "**Invisible Planets**," a series of brief glimpses of bizzare worlds tenuously connected by a conversation between a darkship and one of its subminds. All the same, I enjoyed the vignettes, which, as the darkship notes,

"Are each defined not by what you speak of but by what is left unsaid."

The technological allusions of "**Skywalker of Earth**" ("*Twelve hours before the rain of ships.*") were also lost on me. Skywalker, the longest story of the collection by far, was almost reminiscent of a Professor Challenger adventure story if it could be transformed into modern hard science fiction. (view spoiler)

Not all the stories take place in a far future. Many weave together elements of contemporary life and Finnish mythology. "**Fisher of Men**" tells the story of an ambitious entrepreneur's run-in with Vellamo and Iku-Turso. "**The Viper Blanket**", which involves the myths of Tuoni, is a perfect blend of creepiness and mundanity. It starts with an old man checking his brother out of the nursing home as they discuss ritual sacrifice and then just keeps getting weirder from there. "**The Oldest Game**" weaves together one man's broken life and a contest with Pekko.

Some of the stories involve neither Finnish mythos nor possible futures. "**Ghost Dogs**" creates its own urban myth. It is a nostalgic, bittersweet story, told with a child's perspective and insight. "**Paris, In Love**," is a sentimental tale a Finnish man who falls in love with a city only to discover that the feeling is mutual. "**Satan's Typist**" is a disturbing bit of horror that puts a different perspective on hellish forms.

Several stories explore the way technology may shape humanity in the not-too-distant future. In "**Topsight**" ("*The night before Kuovi was supposed to fly home, the four of them went to bring back Bibi's soul*"), Kuovi finds her dead friend's "halo," a contraption of sensors with a brain-computing interface, and begins to wonder if it will let her see through Bibi's eyes. "**The Jugaad Cathedral**" ("*On the day they finally got the Cathedral's mermaid bone factory working, Kev told Raija he was not going to come back.*") explores not the threat of technology but of its regulation. It takes place in a future world where human interaction revolves around social networks, where every action and inaction is reflected in the numeric scores that describe each person's place in the world. Cloud computing is everywhere, but after the Lockdown, everything is monitored and regulated and limited and subject to DRM. "**Shibuya no Love**" ("*They were eating takoyaki*

by the statue of Hachiko the dog when Norie told her to buy a quantum lovegety.") whimsically portrays a future in which artificial intelligence and advanced algorithms can predict far more than romantic compatibility.

Rajaniemi combines incredible technological expertise with such a vast imagination that many of his stories leave me overwhelmed by the worlds he creates. This collection demonstrates his breadth as well, involving everything from his invention of neurofiction to his stories of algorithmic romance to his tales that invoke ancient Finnish gods. Whatever the genre or subject, Rajaniemi's stories are guaranteed to be interesting, unique, and utterly captivating. If a science fiction author's job is to "think of impossible things," then I can't imagine anyone who does it better.

***Note: the quotes here are taken from an uncorrected advance reader copy of the book; however, I believe they speak to the nature of the book as a whole. Any typographical errors are mine. ***

~~I received an advanced reader copy of this ebook through Netgalley from the publisher, Tachyon Publications, in exchange for my honest review. Thank you! ~~

Cross-posted on BookLikes.

Althea Ann says

A nice collection which could be a good introduction to Rajaniemi's work. Mainly science fiction with a splash of Finnish folklore thrown in, the book showcases a greater breadth to the author's talents than I'd expected, having only read one of his novels previously.

***** Deus Ex Homine**

The world is recovering (?) from an AI plague... Computing viruses symbiotically meshed with human intelligence, creating 'gods.'

Now, a 'nerd' who was once a god and now relies on another kind of artificial symbiont, meets up with an ex-girlfriend who has devoted herself to the military battle against monsters like what he once was. Talking out how things ended, unexpected revelations ensue...

Definitely one for those with an interest in transhumanism.

***** The Server and the Dragon**

In a distant, lonely reach of space, an isolated AI node follows its programming and sets up shop. However, a corollary of intelligence may be the desire for companionship. Although this 'server' is powerful enough to create universes, it may find that it has a very human vulnerability.

***** Tyche and the Ants**

A little girl is trying to survive alone in a hostile environment; a desolate moon. She's trying to follow the last instructions her parents gave her. But an infestation of self-replicating, antlike machines may bring about a paradigm shift... as well as a shift in the reader's perception of the situation.

******The Haunting of Apollo A7LB**

A woman who worked crafting the spacesuits for the 1960s moon missions is nonplussed when one very particular spacesuit turns up at her doorstep one night... with someone in it.

A touching tale of dreams deferred.

***His Master's Voice

Alone on a floating raft-habitat, a brilliant engineer 'adjusts' the intelligence of his pet dog and cat. But tinkering with his animals isn't what gets him in trouble with the authorities, in this transhumanist future. Funny and truly bizarre.

***Elegy for a Young Elk

A man who has chosen to live in a primitive way, following ancient traditions of hunting - well, except for the fact that he keeps company with a genetically modified bear - receives a visit from his ex-wife, who has chosen another path. She, like most of the people of this future, has chosen a tranhumanist path, after the manmade disaster that destroyed the world we know. And now, she has a favor to ask...

***The Jugaad Cathedral

Reminded me of 'Ready Player One' in many of its themes. A young man feels forced to choose between his immersive online role-playing game and his 'real-life' friends and social status. The story makes a good argument, that goes against today's 'mainstream' narrative about this kind of issue.

***Fisher of Men

A modern Finnish man comes up against powerful natural forces out of folklore. The story vividly evokes both modern Scandinavian life, and the chthonic forces of ancient tradition.

****Invisible Planets

Written in homage to Italo Calvino's 'Invisible Cities.' I haven't yet read Calvino's work, but this reminded me very much of Angélica Gorodischer's 'Kalpa Imperial,' (<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>) which has also been compared to Calvino. The piece consists of descriptions a few vividly imagined and disparate societies, connected by a framing device of an ancient and fractured probe ship, having collected data on its journey for so long that it is no longer sure what is real. Very nicely done.

*** Ghost Dogs

Black dogs are a classic horror element - this story brought to mind both Peter M. Ball's, "Black Dog: A Biography" and other tales using this legend (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_do...).

Normally I'm not a big fan of horror stories that use their supernatural elements as an ambiguous metaphor for the traumas of childhood or strained family relationships - but this story pulls it off with aplomb.

***The Viper Blanket

This is another piece where modern Finnish life meets dark and ancient magic. An elderly man picks up his brother from the nursing home for an annual family reunion. But this event is most likely not like YOUR family reunion (I hope.)

***Paris, in Love

Magical realism/surrealism. A rural Finnish man visits Paris for the first time - and then dreams of the city when he returns home - with remarkable & absurd results.

***Topsight

Almost a 5-star story - but only half of a story. This reads like the first chapter of a brilliant cyberpunk thriller. A group of edgy young people... an exotic, futuristic setting... a suspicious death, and clues left in a startlingly original online environment. I wanted to read the rest!

***The Oldest Game

A man returns to his childhood home, thinking only of death. But in an encounter with the ancient forces of

nature that he goes to meet, the result he experiences is unexpected. Nicely contrasts bleakness and vitality.

***Shibuya no Love

Mixed feelings here... on the one hand, I liked the idea of the 'virtual dating' gadget/app. It was original, thought-provoking, and believably Japanese. On the other hand, the portrayal of Japan seemed informed by a superficial visit rather than deep knowledge, and although the setting is at a minimum 20/30 years in the future, the fashions and behaviors described seemed very 5-years-ago, rather than futuristic.

****Satan's Typist

Very brief, but I liked it! There's a very Clive Barker-esque feeling to this vignette featuring a secretary in Hell.

** Skywalker of Earth

My least favorite in the collection. I felt like this was intended to be a clever, modernized take on Golden Age space opera... but it dragged on a bit, and I just wasn't that interested in which megalomaniac (if either) would control the Earth.

****Snow White Is Dead

Fascinating concept - this story was originally presented as a 'Choose Your Own Adventure' presentation based on individual readers' neurological feedback. [<http://andrewblackman.net/2014/03/the...>]

The 'version' printed here was the one most popular with 'test' readers.

From a purely literary perspective, I actually liked it a lot - I enjoyed the update to the classic fairy tale based on a modern scenario involving cosplaying teenagers from broken homes.

I do wonder what the other 'options' were, though...

**Unused Tomorrows and Other Stories

I understand that authors sometimes enjoy the challenge of trying to produce meaningful work within the limits of artificial constraints. However, I have serious doubts about the actual worth of bothering to write a 'serial' Twitter story, and the other 140-character "stories" here didn't really do it for me, either.

Alexander Popov says

This one actually verges on 4 stars, but since I gave as many to **The Quantum Thief**, one of my favorite SF books for the last 10 years or so, it feels right to make explicit the difference between the two.

*

It's hard to even begin to express how much of a Hannu Rajaniemi fan I am. I have reviewed his books before (here and here in English, and here and here in Bulgarian), journeying through them has always been electrifying. His fiction is a vortex where the science and strangeness of the future meet, exploding in ferris wheel fireworks of bold ideas, narrative complexity and damned good writing. It's the kind of prose that could go into textbooks on why and how SF is the awesome thing it is (alas, no such textbooks that I know of).

Seriously. Hannu Rajaniemi is one of the few writers who balance a sound scientific background with a vivid writerly talent, expertly enough to hammer out a vision of the future that is truly alien, and yet so very relatable. It is one of the crowning feats of good SF – to make the seemingly impossible behave as though it

is reasonable and, ultimately, quite plausible. The miracles of fantasy and SF lure readers with their desirability, even when they are terrifying. The gap between *how much we want those miracles* and *how impossible it is to have them* is by now something we as readers are comfortable with (should we really be?). But Rajaniemi's fiction imbues the genre with a brand new strain of cognitive dissonance: *yes, you can have those miracles!* Maybe not literally, but you can certainly understand them rationally, you only need to pay attention. Often enough, you don't even need to have read academic papers in the relevant subjects!

"Damn you, Occam's razor," thinks one of Rajaniemi's protagonists, when rationality forces her to parse the impossible into the most likely. Incidentally or not, that story is probably the most flamboyantly incredible of those in the collection (think Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon). This has to mean something when the very first paragraph of the book runs like this:

"As gods go, I wasn't one of the holier-than-thou, dying-for-your-sins variety. I was a full-blown transhuman deity with a liquid metal body, an external brain, clouds of self-replicating utility fog to do my bidding and a recursively self-improving AI slaved to my volition. I could do anything I wanted. I wasn't Jesus, I was a Superman: an evil Bizarro Superman."

Many of the stories erupt with similar bravado, right away; he knows how to write his first sentences. But his stories are not just flashy toys for the nerdier segments of society. In fact, they work best when they connect at a deeper level with real life.

"Real life? I see," says another female character, a Dwarfcraft master architect in one of the best stories, **The Jugaad Cathedral**, in which deep learning algorithms can safely predict whether you are going to have sex tonight and augmented reality pop-ups inform you that the beer you just downed inflicted a -1 Constitution penalty on you. It is a piece that blurs the lines between real and virtual, not as in cyberpunk, or in a Philip Dickian sort of way (though there are the seeds of both in that garden), but on a much more human level. The future is coming and, yes, it probably will be super exciting, but it will also challenge our humanity; we can either model or be modelled. Most of his characters—be they post-gods, elk hunters, kids in troubled families, dragons, darkships, dogs, tourists or expats—ultimately choose to model, in their own way. Some of the stories, of course, have more depth to their models and modelers. None lack in inventiveness, though.

It is remarkable how much range Rajaniemi shows here. Having read the Jean le Flambeur novels, I wasn't surprised by the techno-miracles and post-singularity futures (fans of the trilogy will recognize a lot of familiar concepts; in that regard the collection very nicely modulates the vision outlined in the series). Even the micro- and "neurofiction" stories toward the end weren't unexpected, what with him having a PhD in string theory, running a math think-tank, being a Singularity University alumnus, etc.

What surprised me more was Rajaniemi's readiness and apparent relish in employing Finnish folk lore in the fantasy/horror-oriented pieces (some merpeople, a goddess of death and a heavy-drinking giant make appearances). Those evoke a strong sense of place, and of the people who call those places home and are in some sense trapped in them (associations with Mieli and the Oortians from the trilogy come naturally to mind); that is something that can enliven immensely any tale of the fantastic. His stories about outsiders in alien countries convey with equal force what it is like not to be at home, to miss that familiar trap. And there is that final cluster of tales that can only be called cosmic (I heard it on a podcast that Rajaniemi is a big Stapledon fan), half-fable, half-cosmogony, doffing proverbial hats to the likes of Calvino, yet blithely ironic and not shying away from some hot dragon sex. That last one seems to be a thing for Rajaniemi, there's also this quote from **The Fractal Prince**: "I'm going to find a job that does not involve breaking into giant

machines full of lesbian dragon sex.” The man might be diverse, but he’s also consistent!

The writing too is top-notch. Sometimes it is a bit too wordy and eager, especially when technology talk threatens to overrun the narrative, but most of the time Rajaniemi is in control. And sometimes he conjures an image of juxtaposition that is so impossible and bittersweet that it just feels right:

“They come down slowly. The downdraft from the micron-sized fans in the angel’s wings tears petals from Sue’s chrysanthemums.”

“Words had become slippery, harder to catch than elk.”

Being a Finnish SF writer working in English has turned out very well for Rajaniemi, that’s all I will say.

This collection of short fiction is not without flaws. The SF novel is a very natural artistic form to host these grand visions. There Rajaniemi fleshes out baroque constructions that somehow manage to come fully alive, borne by logic, authentic vision and structural experimentation. Writing novels like **The Quantum Thief** and **The Fractal Prince**, slim though they are, is simply impossible without huge investments of time and effort. The stories here rarely enjoy this kind of structural support, they are more straightforward and light-hearted. As such, they probably won’t inform the genre comparably. That lack of play with structure prevents them from growing connections between each other, from achieving unity. Nevertheless, they certainly constitute an important gesture in the early stage of this writer’s career path, one that will hopefully serve as a foundation for many more to follow.

The nature of this gesture? I will use a quotation from the book: “the elusive algebra of emergence”. Isn’t that what we read SF for? Let’s hope he gets to complicate and elucidate that algebra again and again, with even more verve and sharpness, over many creative iterations. For infinity is always elusive, and we won’t settle for less.

“During the millennia of its journey, the darkship’s mind has expanded, until it has become something that has to be explored and mapped. The treasures it contains can only be described in metaphors, brittle and misleading and distant, like mirages.”

PS: Special thanks to the folks at Tachyon Publications for the ARC. It was a pleasure.

Hannu Rajaniemi: Collected Fiction

Deus Ex Homine

The Server and the Dragon

Tyche and the Ants

The Haunting of Apollo A7LB

His Master’s Voice

Elegy for a Young Elk
The Jugaad Cathedral
Fisher of Men
Invisible Planets
Ghost Dogs
The Viper Blanket
Paris, in Love
Topsight
The Oldest Game
Shibuya no Love
Satan's Typist
Skywalker of Earth
Neurofiction: Snow White is Dead
Unused Tomorrows and Other Stories

Andreas says

For my full review with detailed, longer reviews of each story in this anthology, go to my blog

This is Rajaniemi's second anthology after Words of Birth and Death's three stories. It collects his best-of stories, re-publishes stories that are not accessible anymore and brings three previously unpublished stories. Their length reach from twitter size to novelette, they are in the genres of SF and weird fiction.

Considering that Rajaniemi published stories since some 10 years, one might get the impression that it is a bit early for a retrospective, comparing to other names like Zelazny, Vance or Dick. I found that some earlier stories showed the author's unfinished narrative voice, and I'm not so sure if they'd have been published or that even that I wanted to read those.

Rajaniemi is an author who seems to have set out to deliberately confuse readers by throwing strange words and complicate contexts at him without any explanation at all. One should be firm in geeky physics and mathematics when he throws terms like quantum theory, dark matter, cryptology, or recursion unexplained at you. That is my impression from the Quantum Thief. But don't despair: He exploits his PHD to a far lesser extent in the anthology's stories. Having stomached his novel, got used to this style I enjoyed them very much. But beware, they are not trivial. Either you like Rajaniemi's style or you run away from it - it certainly isn't dedicated to the weak-hearted who don't want to leave their comfort zone.

A second characteristic is that he often mixes mythology or Finnish faerytale subjects and hard SF: Interstellar routers and dragons, wizard and robots on the moon. It remembers me a bit of Science Fantasy style by Roger Zelazny.

I was overwhelmed by the first half of this anthology and would have given it five stars. The second half brought the overall quality down. The stories are best as long as Rajaniemi's imagination carries the tale. But when they need an easier style or when emotions and characters need to drive the narration, his stories sometimes lack - the plot is driven forward, leaving characters behind. Rajaniemi's vivid imagination isn't the only outshining factor - he also varies narration style and experiments a bit in structure (not always succeeding, e.g. with Invisible Planets).

I'd fully recommend this collection - as an introduction to the author you might want to cherry-pick a couple of stories, as a hardcore fan you'll want to read the whole thing.

Finally, let me thank Tachyon Publishing for providing an ARC.

Scott says

I love my cat.

However, after reading Hannu Rajaniemi's *Collected Fiction* my cat and I have scheduled a performance meeting to set some new feline goals. In Rajaniemi's frenetically inventive universes a good cat is one that dons weapons and launches a combined real-world and virtual guerrilla campaign in aid of its embattled owner. Sadly, my lazy tabby shows no interest in coding, co-ordinating air support or mastering small arms.

Anyway, my perpetually slumbering feline aside, if you've read *The Quantum Thief* or any of his other work you'll know that Hannu Rajaniemi is an astonishingly inventive writer who liberally sows his stories with fascinating hard-SF ideas.

Collected Works showcases these ideas, and Rajaniemi's engaging style pretty well, along with his quite unique voice. Rajaniemi brings a uniquely Finnish sensibility to his stories, and it's a genuine pleasure to read SF set in his home country, and based around Finnish characters living elsewhere in the world. The snowy chill of Finland can be felt in a number of these stories, and Finnish characteristics, such as the nation's strong sauna culture) play out in interesting ways in Rajaniemi's narratives.

There are some very good stories in here, full of interesting characters and compelling scenarios. 'His Master's voice' is a particular standout, with a pair of heavily augmented pets avenging the abduction of their master, and 'Elegy for a Young Elk', the story of a one of the last remaining base-level humans performing a favour for his now post-earth and post-body wife, in a world ravaged by plague creatures, among whom is the couple's son.

Others, such as 'The Oldest Game' - the story of a suicidal son returning to his father's farm in Finland - and 'Paris, In Love' are more magical realism or fantasy than SF, but are still well-written and entertaining.

The longest story in the collection, 'Skywalker of Earth' is also one of the most fun, and brings to mind golden age SF tales of derring-do and dastardly villains, updated with the latest physics and a bucket of very cool ideas. Rajaniemi knows how to pull a reader along, and does so with panache in this one.

So far, so good. However, short story collections are often patchy, and *Collected Fiction* is true to the norm.

Some of the stories, such as 'Satan's Typist' and 'The Haunting of Apollo A7LB', didn't work for me, and felt a bit aimless - more like well-polished writing exercises rather than the fully fleshed out stories of the level that Rajaniemi is capable of.

The final two sections are particularly weak. One is a story designed for reader interaction via a brainwave detector, the other a set of twitter-based micro-stories, and neither work in the context of a static paper (or e) book. They aren't particularly engaging and contrast poorly with the high points in this collection.

Overall, this collection won't rock your world, but it's still well worth a look for the stronger stories it contains, which aptly demonstrate the range and skill Rajaniemi brings to his work.

3.5 stars.

Angela says

Reading Hannu Rajaniemi inevitably makes me wish I was smarter. The science and physics in his novels usually have me pulling up Wikipedia for a crash course in string theory, quantum physics, entanglement, or something else my brain was previously unaware than I needed to know. Any other time, this kind of intense reading would put me off of an author, but Rajaniemi catapulted to near the top of my favorites with the release of his first novel, "The Quantum Thief." It was a hard read, and a lot of the science still doesn't make as much sense to me as I wish it did, but the storytelling was phenomenal and, every release since then has been an instant pre-order almost as soon as pre-ordering became available.

So I was thrilled to receive an ARC of Rajaniemi's Collected Fiction, and I was immediately thrown in over my head again and never more happy to be there.

Collected within these pages is plenty of the sci-fi Rajaniemi has become known for, but what might surprise readers is that there are also stories here that step outside that element. From the whimsical and romantic "Paris in, Love," (my personal favorite in the collection), which tells the story of a city falling very literally falling in love with a man, to "Fisher of Men," which is steeped in folklore with a splash of good old-fashioned horror thrown in for good measure, Rajaniemi presents his audience with a diverse collection that never disappoints.

It's a strange thing, trying to explain my love for Rajaniemi's writing to my friends. I'm not much of a sci-fi reader. "The Quantum Thief" was my first venture into the genre, and though it was one of the hardest reads I've ever picked up, I couldn't put it down. I had to indulge in very small doses, but I could not put it down. Trying to explain *why* I couldn't put it down to my friends who know my very short tolerance for books proved somewhat of a challenge, and it wasn't until I read "Invisible Planets," Rajaniemi's ode to Italo Calvino's "Invisible Cities," that I was finally able to really make sense of my own adoration for his works.

There are people who tell stories. There are people who tell damn good stories. And there are people who paint masterful stories using words as their canvas. Rajaniemi is the third. In an age where authors seem overly enamored with adjectives and compete to throw as many as they can into one sentence, you know, to make sure you *really* see it, Rajaniemi can evoke the whole of a scene with a handful of well-chosen words. He doesn't saturate his stories. He doesn't need to. As a reader, you are thrust fully into his world. You know move through his worlds as a traveling companion to his characters. You fall in love with them, and are sad to leave when your time with them is over.

Whether dragons are skillfully weaving stories to trap their unwitting victims, or hyper-intelligent dogs scheme with hyper-intelligent cats to steal back their imprisoned master, or an admin assistant with one hell of an employer searches desperately for a way out of her current job, you always get the full story with surprisingly few words, none of them ever wasted.

Geoff says

A satisfying and eclectic collection of stories. There are a few recurring themes: dogs, social media and Finnish mythology. I was really looking forward to reading these stories and they didn't disappoint. I'm probably going to check out his novels in the future.

Favourites:

Invisible Planets

His Master's Voice

The Oldest Game

Fisher of Men

Unused Tomorrows and Other Stories

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

I had never read anything by Hannu Rajaniemi before I read this collection and I was a bit doubtful in the beginning because the two first stories didn't really rock my boat. Actually, I found myself a bit confused. It felt a bit like I had missed something and I had a bit of trouble understand what was going on. But by the third story, it started to get better.

I will not list all the stories in this collection instead I thought I would mention some of them that were really memorable.

The Haunting of Apollo A7LB - A tragic love story that includes a haunted space suite.

Elegy for a Young Elk - Kind of hard to explain this story, but I loved the ending. It showed that despite everything a father would do anything for his child despite that the child has evolved into something new.

Fisher of Man - One of my favorite story in this book. Nothing to do with AI or technology, but instead, it's a story about the daughter of the Sea that catches men in her net. I was intrigued with the story and with the Finnish mythology, a subject that I'm not at all are familiar with.

Ghost dogs - What happen with dogs that die? If they don't go to heaven, are they still in the house? A very good story and the one with the saddest ending.

Paris, in Love - A very unusual love story between a Finnish man and Paris.

Topsight - The death of a friend is the topic here and was it really an accident or was it murder? I wish this story had been longer, it was such an interesting story.

The Oldest Game - A man against a god in a drinking contest. More Finnish mythology. I really need to read more about the old Finnish Gods.

Shibuya no Love - Another interesting take on love. Heartbreaking ending.

Satan's Typist - A very short story, but honestly it didn't need more to tell its story. Being a typist is really not a fun job when your boss is Satan himself.

In the end, I just want to say that despite the fact that I was a bit doubtful in the beginning of this book did it turn out to be a really good collection. There were some stories I didn't that much and some were a bit confusing, but most of the stories were good. I really loved the mix of stories about technology and Finnish mythology. It gave a good balance to the collection.

Thanks to Tachyon Publications and NetGalley for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review!

Ari says

Very few authors can put hard sf in a story without making it a boring science class or a pretentious show-off, and Rajaniemi is one of those chosen ones. You don't feel dumb for not catching all those terms or weird names; in fact, they don't really matter much, because they're not the center of the story but an instrument when conveying big, complex concepts. I've been hearing about Rajaniemi for a long time, but the situation didn't present itself for me to read one of his novels. Now that this collection appeared, I could not delay this task.

The experience when reading for the first time Rajaniemi, is like a person reading Gibson at the beginning of the internet and computer age in the 80's. You know it sort of makes sense, and yet you don't quite get it all; all that remains is the essence and the music of these words and ideas in your mind after finishing a story, wishing you knew more quantum physics just to get more out of it, even if only details. It's like literature written by aliens, and that's great.

As it happens with every anthology, it is a mixed bag, but luckily this one, has better ones than not so good ones. I decided to write a little bit about each one of the story without giving too much away.

[*****] Deus Ex Homine?—?In the first story we find people infected with 'god viruses' and a war against those turned evil with soldiers called angels using a sort of armor to fight with. The concept is mind-blowing, but at the end what sticks with you are the characters reacting to this technology and their intact human feelings despite all this environment.

[*****] The Server and the Dragon?—?The writing is so abstract and obtuse that one can't be mad at it for being smarter than oneself, and you don't have any other choice than to revel at what it means, its mystery and what it entails. Science terms are thrown at you, things that maybe you've never heard of, and yet, after finishing the story and you search on the internet what they mean you get a definition (an interesting one, and exact) but the realness of the meaning doesn't always fit the way it is used in the story. You may google what a Shkadov thruster is and get a straight-forward answer, but in the story is not necessarily used like we would: Rajaniemi adds mysticism to it, making it abstract which gives the story and its tone a peculiar sensation. The story is about a 'server', take it as the electronic definition of it, or as a living advanced being, it does not matter. It speaks about itself and about its environment as if it was a living, sentient being. It talks about creation and evolution through the darkness of its surroundings. It speaks about a Controller (maybe a god, or maybe us, people using it), and of an encounter with a dragon (which may or may not be a virus), all the while using astrophysics terms that make you wonder if indeed, it's talking about an advanced being playing god in the future with all this knowledge of the cosmos.

[*****] Tyche and the Ants?—?A girl living on the Moon is guarded by a computer and robots. she has several friends with silly names, who are most likely fruits of her imagination. She soon finds a creature, an ant, that destroys the house of one of her friends. The ant, and more that come along, are probes from the

Great Wrong Place (Earth). Interesting story where the author beats around the bush (not really a bad thing) when it comes to explain the background and origin of the character and how she got there, like in the following paragraph: “You see, in the Great Wrong Place, people like us could not be safe,” Dad continued. “People like Mum and me and you were feared. They called us Greys, after the man who figured out how to make us, and they were jealous, because we lived longer than they did and had more time to figure things out. And because giving things silly names makes people feel better about themselves. Do we look grey to you?”. Another part of it that is really well done is that there’s no description of her appearance, we know she was created by the people on the Great Wrong Place, but maybe she’s not really humanoid and that can play with one’s imagination for a while.

[**] The Haunting of Apollo A7LB?—?A spacesuit haunts a man that bought it illegally. He shows up at the house of the spirit’s wife, without willing to and with no memory of how he got there. A straightforward tale, simple, minimal and well-written.

[****] His master’s Voice?—?This one is another magical story with almost the same language of the server and the dragon, but quite easier to get into. It’s about a dog and a cat who go rescue their master after being imprisoned in a virtual jail for cloning himself. The world -so I’ve read- is the same as his quantum trilogy one, and for one who hasn’t read it, certainly may serve as a kind of Introduction. The way he mixes the fantasy and the technological gives it a flavor of fairy tale. This one is still abstract because the hypothesis of singularity sounds like that to us, now.

[***] Elegy for a Young Elk?—?Another post-human set story. A poet and a talking bear roam the outskirts of a city. It has a firewall that keeps some advanced beings outside of it and live in the sky (orbit, I suppose). The wife of the poet is one of them and comes down to ask him to get something for those beings that fell into the city. I liked how he creates a future where nothing is like we would imagine, so different that it doesn’t look like our future at all, but a completely different dimension. I read too that this one is in the same universe as the QT trilogy, so, one more introductory text.

[***] The Jugaad Cathedral?—?There’s a mention in this story about some sort of software implanted in the cornea with which people can actually see the interface of a virtual program. They type mid-air and can check stuff like clout status and fashion status. That particular thing, typing in the air and seeing all in their heads, reminded me of an anime -Access World- where they do the exact same thing. And curiously too is that, in Rajaniemi’s story the main character plays often in a virtual game where she regularly meets her friend, Raija, a game that is a sort of Minecraft or Warcraft. And I say curiously because in that anime, there is, too, a virtual game, where they fight other players. But that’s as far as the similarities go. The short story actually is a little more than that and portrays the use of the virtual technology and its impact in the real world, which has been dehumanized. Good pace, but not particularly original.

[**] Fisher of Men?—?Maybe the most accessible of all the stories: a man finds a sea woman, mermaid most likely, and she wants to marry him and live with him underwater. Now, that may not sound too inviting, but it is, since there’s an aura of danger in this woman and not everything is peachy-looking. Simple and not your average fantasy tale.

[***] Invisible Planets- A ship’s AI listens to the ‘memories’ of disappeared planets which it carries. Kind of a nostalgic story, the planets’ history is short but interesting, and there’s an aura of poetry in the way it is written. Also, a nod to Calvino’s Invisible Cities.

[***] Ghost Dogs?—?Another fantasy tale about a boy and ghost dogs. It was really nicely written, yet not amazing. It’s kind of sad and nostalgic, so if Rajaniemi could convey that (which is no easy task) that means he has another great skill besides his Physics knowledge, and that is the ability to flesh out characters in so short a space.

[**] The Viper Blanket?—?An interesting story about a satanic cult. Well written, and again there’s a poetic feeling about it that is quite catching.

[**] Paris, in love?—?Quite an unusual story about a Paris, the city, falling in love with a man, literally. Fun and weird.

[*] Topsight?—?A couple of friends go get the ‘spirit’ of a dead friend and put it in a bottle. One of them

finds a halo of her that, with an app, allows her to see her dead friend. I didn't feel it as strong a story as all the others but still interesting the way Rajaniemi creates different technology for different stories without repeating himself.

[*] The Oldest Game?—?A man goes back to his old house in Finland and meets his childhood friend and talk about what the former's father did before killing himself. Although at first sounds like a drama story, it does change at the end when the character meets a giant and talks about the other world and creatures of mythology. Not quite a story on the level as the other tales, but still has some exotic ideas.

[***] Shibuya no Love?—?An interesting concept surrounding a dating gadget that allows people to experience emotions and situations with a person that he/she finds attractive. The ironic ending only shows the double-edge side of technology.

[**] Satan's Typist?—?The shortest story of all (barely two pages) and still good. The title says it all: a woman writing contracts for men in despair.

[***] Skywalker of Earth?—?The longest story in the collection. An adventure story about a NSA agent that is going to interview a scientist concerning an object heading to earth. All which follows is completely unexpected, and fun. I'd trust Rajaniemi with any page-turning space-thriller.

[***] Snow White is Dead?—?There's an introduction to this story, and it goes about an experiment where Rajaniemi used electrodes to test a readers mind while reading this same story but following the reader's reaction and adapting to his/her mental state. A sort of choose your own ending kind of experiment where the story changed adapting the reader's mood states. Although i would have liked to test that, I only could read the story 'raw', and it was still very good. Basically is a retelling of that tale, more modern, but darker. Surprising and well done.

The last sections are a number of micro fiction tales posted on Rajaniemi's Twitter account. An indeed, experimental exercise.

Overall, they're unpredictable stories, which are always welcome, but once we read those two first stories, it is very difficult for all the other ones to reach that level, and so it results in quite an unbalanced buffet.

However, if one wants to try a Rajaniemi before tackling his hard trilogy, I'd say this is compulsory reading. Also, that's one killer cover.

*Thanks to Tachyon Publications for providing an ARC via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Claudia says

HR has a truly weird and rich imagination: stories with servers and dragons, cats and dogs, evil babies, elements from Greek mythology and 'Alice in wonderland' (maybe) and many more, all entangled with very hard sci-fi concepts from quantum physics.

After the first story, I found myself staring at the kindle with mouth open. After the second, I tried to calm my neurons which were screaming in distress. Tried two more after that and marked it as read. It's like watching a very erudite and sophisticated person dressed as a clown or, I don't know, who's wearing all the known and unknown colors and textures in the world in a single outfit - seems kitsch and too much work is needed to understand something out of it. It's a hotchpotch of genres and symbols. Reading is about getting pleasure, not performing a chore.

I'm pretty sure there are people who will enjoy it immensely, but I did not like it a bit. That's the 1 star meaning, not for being a bad book.

Bradley says

I am so thrilled to be finally reading this book that I have to put in a disclaimer that I'm a huge fan of Mr. Rajaniemi. My expectations are set very high, and as a result, I'm worried that the readings will fall far below it.

We'll see. I'll review stories as they affect me, and skip the ones that don't.

Deus ex Homine

It's just a freaking short story, and yet I got enough info running through my head to make one hell of a great novel, including a blow-you-out-of-the-water feel-good ending. If this is a sample of things to come, I'm probably going to burst into tears of joy.

Me, biased? Perhaps. But one thing I appreciate the most out of his works is the way he can make my imagination sing with all of the spoken and unspoken possibilities. It just lights my mind up. The babies of god.

Hell, this story is drowning me. It's got my mind fixated on mid-air battles between nano angels and baby gods. My heart is racing for mommy's furlough and daddy's heartbreak. And in the meantime, the gods ravage the Earth. Fantastic.

The Server and the Dragon

From start to finish it felt like a children's tale, and by hell, I know I'll be reading it to my daughter when she gets a little older. It's a fairy tale, plain and simple, about creation and destruction, advancement and freedom, solitude and travel, with the birth of a universe, a holographic dragon, and a transformed solar system housing a singular AI. If you don't believe my word when I say it's a classic, thought-provoking tale, then read it for yourself and wonder where the hell you're sitting and how far away you just traveled from your cozy little life. It sparkled with so much quick imagination that I was lost for a time.

Tyche and the Ants

I didn't get into this one as quickly as the first two stories, but by the end I was fine. It just didn't grab me. Perhaps throwing an emotional imperative at the beginning would have made me enjoy the galavanting across the moon's surface a bit more. Still, once I knew the secret, that this tale was more psychological than anything else, then I could really begin to appreciate it. And I do. After the fact. I found myself wishing for more starfish and dragons during the reading, though.

The Haunting of Apollo A7LB

Short and sweet haunting of an astronaut's spacesuit and how his old flame got to get into space. Pretty mainstream if magical.

His Master's Voice

Fucking brilliant. Obviously set in the same universe as QT/FP/CA, these are some of the most unique characters I've ever come across. Meet dog and cat. Loyal to their master. Fierce musician/gladiators. Not enough? Try entering the microcosm of fast and slow time, raiding the Necropolis, blowing up dance floors while millions of fans' avatars get hacked, and the simple kindness of a cat finding a dog's lost ball.

Like I said, Fucking Brilliant.

Elegy for a Young Elk

I can see how this fits into the histories of the Earth after the singularity. It brings in the god-plague and squarely places a drunk poet living with a drunk bear into the position of being the husband and father of gods. If that isn't elegant, then I don't know what is. And as always, the descriptions and logic gates in the antlers of the elk gave us, finally, not death, but freedom for both gods and god-plagues to find their destinies in the snow. Does this sound like fantasy? Oh no. It's hard sci-fi at its most delicious. This is why I write. This is why I imagine. Great stuff.

The Jugaad Cathedral

This one hits closer to home, combining close approximates of twitter/fashionworld/rpg with minecraft and phantom limb hackers into an indictment on corporate copyright.

Fisher of Men

Thank goodness this wasn't a Christ parable. It was a much more traditional fisherman story about the daughter of the sea and her many husbands, updated slightly to our modern age, but still timeless. I loved the last line and how it twisted the whole meaning of the original tale. The story was all about Finnish mythology and it was well crafted and dark.

Invisible Planets

Tie-in to The Server and the Dragon, from the point of view of a darkship and its sub-mind, almost beginning like an echo of Scheherazade, but quickly forming into an oh-so-rich backdrop of many worldbuildings rife with flaws and glories, cumulating in a sun-drenched embrace of the one thing that makes the filling of a universe eventually worthwhile. This story is truly crammed with great worldbuilding, each one worth a novel's exploration, but crammed into a tiny story instead.

Ghost Dogs

Being a dog lover, this one hit me pretty good, but the story is only a light fantasy. I was getting into the rules right as the story ended, leaving me feel dreamy and sad.

The Viper Blanket - The underworld is calling to its own in this mostly sedate and strange view of an extended family of the dead.

Paris, in Love - Humorous and magical personification of Paris traveling to meet her love in Norway.

Topsight - A sad and realisticish tale of death among friends and how a little overview and oversight connectivity might not, in the end, be right for anyone, especially if the dead girl can continue to change the world. The little connections with others hint at being the very best that life can offer.

The Oldest Game - Gods still roam the Earth, but this time it has a modern fantasy feel revolving around the god of grain, and by extrapolation, alcohol. It's very dark, and everyone in the tale accepts the darkness with open arms. Are Finnish people as pessimistic as the Russians? Good story though. Very fine read.

Shibuya no Love - Japanese teenage subculture meets zoku tech. Talk about romance in a bottle! It was funny and I had no problems laughing at the main character, even if I kinda felt like I oughtn't have.

Satan's Typist - Short and sweet and more of a short short for other writers. What a cool and dark implication it had.

Skywalker of Earth

OMG this was so cool. Think thirties rip-roaring space adventures or buck-rogers with Rajaniemi's screaming modern science toolbox and you'll get true galaxy screaming monsters out of old-time heroes and thoughtful master-villains who retired peacefully on pensions. I cannot, and I repeat, I cannot imagine a world where this short novella wouldn't make a FANTASTIC movie. The pacing is perfect, it's lead-in's are hokey, just like the old stories they emulate, and when the science gets full-blown wacky with q-dots and gravitational lenses taking out the sun, it's based on real theory. It's awesome, squared.

Snow White is Dead

I respect the story for the concept behind it: a choose your own adventure written through reactions in brainwaves, and respect it more that it still felt coherent and dual-layered as well, but it was only a so/so story. I respect the process, but not so much the final product.

Unused Tomorrows and Other Stories - Another one that I can appreciate because it's TwitterFiction. Not exactly my cup, but I can approve of it. A few of the single pieces, I thought, were better than the longer, continuation of the 140 character stories. I kinda wish this collection hadn't ended on this note.

All said, this is one of my absolute favorite short story collections, and by far and away I was catching a lot of flies. I heartily recommend for every die-hard sci-fi fan and/or modernized fairy-tale consumer. The fanboy has spoken.

Sara J. (kefuwa) says

A truly eclectic and oft times bizarre collection of stories. Part surreal, part sublime, part cyberpunk - with some stories touching base with Finnish mythology/folklore and some stories having an almost light playful feel to them. There is even a sort of tribute to Calvino's Invisible Cities - but with planets which I found delightful (aptly titled "Invisible Planets").

The first few stories were a bit so-so for me, but it started picking up with "The Haunting of Apollo A7LB" - and then I really enjoyed "His Masters Voice", "Elegy for a Young Elk" & "The Jugaad Cathedral" - as they all reminded me of Tad Williams's Otherland series.

(... to be continued... sigh, I wish GR had a draft/publish feature. Lol.)

Ok, where was I? Oh yes. Did you know there is actually an MMORPG recently released based on Tad Williams' Otherland series? Yeah, great series. I really enjoyed reading it. Doesn't appeal to everyone though, it is notoriously doorstopper-ish in nature and fairly prone to being confusing and meandering in

parts. (Mmmm, I should write a review for those books, but I am more than a bit apprehensive O_O at the thought of re-reading it, occh)

Which brings me back to Rajaniemi's collection of short fiction. Also prone to being confusing and meandering! Leaves you wondering whether you are just too obtuse or whether it really is as addled as it seems. But I guess when stories blur reality lines like those in this collection - then its a given.

I didn't care much for the twitter story though. And the Snow White story I feel would probably be more interesting on the medium it was originally laid down for ('twas mainly written for an interactive choose your own adventure with choices made based on neurological feedback from readers - such an interesting concept!)

Some of the other stories I enjoyed were "Shibuya no Love" & "Paris, in Love".

The collection has definitely pushed Quantum Thief up my TBR pile.

Source: Netgalley digital ARC

First Finished: 16sep2015

Would consider buying physical copy: Yes.

Yzabel Ginsberg says

[I received a copy through NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review.]

A few months ago, I read Hannu Rajaniemi's first two installments of "The Quantum Thief": not so easy to follow novels, but unique in their own right, because of their fascinating blend of science and, dare I say, poetry.

These short stories are a little easier to follow, while retaining this quality, as well as first sentences that almost always manage to pique my interest, combining as they do totally different elements. Typical example: "Before the concert, we steal the master's head." We often hear or read that first sentences and first pages are important to grab a reader's attention, and I think this author manages to do that very well here.

Most of those stories kept me enthralled, although not always for the same reasons. Some of them were clearly set in a distant enough future that men had become digital gods, or launched starships meant to drop servers into spaces just like one would plant seeds, aiming to create a network spanning entire galaxies. Other stories felt closer to contemporary times, while toying with Finnish myths and legends (Tuoni...). Not to mention the inclusion of Edinburgh: I very often derive pleasure just from reading about a city I know well and/or live in.

Generally speaking, I would divide these stories into three (somewhat loose) categories:

- The exploring of technology, pushed back to its limits and beyond, and what it means to be a sentient being in such a world. I use the words "beings" here on purpose, since not all protagonists are human: "His Master's Voice" features two extremely enhanced and intelligent pets, and is narrated by the dog itself. Brilliant.

The same applies to "The Server and the Dragon" (a lone server growing in space, questioning its own purpose), "Deux Ex Homine" (the story of one who briefly embraced a plague turning people into digital deities), "Elegy for a Young Elk", or "Invisible Planets" (where the protagonist is, in fact, a ship).

"Skywalker of Earth" has its own charm, in between a contemporary alien invasion adventure and a pulp serial—considering the people who initiated the conflict in it, and when they did it (1930s pseudo-science). I also really liked the idea of going open source in order to pool all resources available and fight back.

Certainly closer to our own time period, "Topsight" deals with what's left of people in the digital world after their death, while "The Jugaad Cathedral" explores the meaning of living in a digital world, most specifically a MMORPG, vs. embracing the "real" world, and blurs boundaries between both.

The one I didn't like so much was "Shibuya no Love", because its portrayal of Japan and its inhabitants felt too close to caricature. It was probably on purpose, but it didn't work for me.

- The mythical-tinged stories: "Fisher of Men" (includes Iku-Turso), "The Viper Blanket" (with its bizarre family following ancient rites), "The Oldest Game"...

- The others: "Paris, In Love", "Ghost Dogs", or "Satan's Typist". The first one was close to urban fantasy, in that the City in it really took on a life of its own. The other two are more the horror-infused type—the ghost dogs especially echoed Gaiman's wolves in the wall for me.

Definitely a unique collection, one that I will recommend without fear of the science thrown in: maybe the concepts will be lost on some (I won't pretend I understood absolutely everything either), but it doesn't really matter. Context, feelings and ideas largely make up for it, allowing to mentally draw a bigger picture in every case.

Samantha (AK) says

I knew nothing about Hannu Rajaniemi prior to reading this. It showed up in my recommendations and I was in the mood for short stories, so I snagged it on a whim.

Now that I'm *done* with it... I probably won't look for more by this author. It's fine, but it never got better than that. There's a mish-mash of genres here, from quantum physics to Finnish mythology (often within the same story, which sounds interesting but isn't really). As a collection, it's inconsistent, and I had a lot of trouble connecting to the individual stories. I can't think of any that warrant more than a "that was nice", and several inspire less enthusiasm.

Maybe it's just me. Clearly, plenty of people like it. Still, I have to wonder if they really like the writing or just the underlying vision.

Manuel Antão says

If you're into stuff like this, you can read the full review.

Neurofiction: “Hannu Rajaniemi: Collected Fiction” by Hannu Rajaniemi

Contents, and in some instances, with some appropriate quotes for each short-story:

1 - Deus Ex Homine

2 - The Server and the Dragon: “These days, the nerd rapture is like the flu: you can catch it. The godplague is a volition-bonding, recursively self-improving and self-replicating program.” Narrative taking place in the span of millennia and feeling like a dream-quest. My favourite story.

3 - Tyche and the Ants

4 - The Haunting of Apollo A7LB: “The moon suit came back to Hazel the same night Pete was buried at sea.”

5 - His Master's Voice: “Before the concert, we steal the master’s head.”

6 - Elegy for a Young Elk: “No point in being a poet: they had already written all the poems in the world, up there, in the sky. They probably had poetry gardens. Or places where you could become words. But that was not the point. [] Bright words from dark matter, that’s what poetry was about. When it worked.”

7 - The Jugaad Cathedral: “They did something right when they made her, up there. [] She lives in many worlds at once, thinks in qubits. And this is the world where she wants to be. With me.”

8 - Fisher of Men: “The summerhouse was his, his alone. He hadn’t built it, of course, but the vision was his. He had built a 3D version of it out in Second Life.”

9 - Invisible Planets: “In the lives of darkships, as in the journeys of any ambassador, there always comes a time that is filled with doubt. As the dark matter neutralinos annihilate each other in its hungry Chown drive heart and push it ever closer to the speed of light, the darkship wonders if it truly carries a cargo worthy of the Network and the Controller.” À la Italo Calvino, Rajaniemi follows the concept of a dialogue between two entities, but in his story the characters are spaceship with embedded AI. Their dialogue is centered around inhabitants of various planets, leading to a reflection on society. This is another fine example of providing backstory without infodumping (there’s a passing mention of a much known and central theorem in the field of Quantum Physics, though it isn’t called by its own name in the story; can you name it? Hint: it has to do with Teleportation...).

10 - Topsight: “The night before Kuovi was supposed to fly home, the four of them went to bring back Bibi’s soul.”

11 - Ghost Dogs

12 - The Viper Blanket

13 - The Oldest Game

14 - Shibuya no Love: “They were eating takaoyaki by the statue of Hachiko the dog when Norie told her to buy a quantum lovegety. [] A what? , she managed to ask. [] You don’t have them in Finland? How do you

meet boys there? Oh, I forgot, you have the sauna!”

15 - Paris, in Love

16 - Satan's Typist: “Tap tap tap tap tap, said the typewriter.”

17 - Skywalker of Earth: “Twelve hours before the rain of ships. I am four years old and wearing my best dress. The last man on the moon is on TV. He moves in slow, deliberate bounds and leaps next to a long-legged spidery craft wrapped in tin foil.”

You can read the rest of the review elsewhere.
