

Review of Hannu Rajaniemi's book *Summerland*

by [Jacob Williams](#) on 2025-04-12

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If you were judging by style alone you might not believe *Summerland* was written by the same author as *The Quantum Thief*; this is a much more straightforward, less impressionistic narrative. It's still got Rajaniemi's delightful creativity though and I quite enjoyed it. The setting is an alternate history in which an afterlife was proven real and humanity's scientific energies were redirected from investigating the material realm to investigating the spiritual. One fun sci-fi element is that there is an equivalent to the Fermi paradox regarding the afterlife: dead humans are able to build a civilization that interacts with the living, but why aren't there already many such civilizations, and why can nobody find any very ancient dead souls? The answer, we learn, is that something is culling these civilizations, though sadly we never get many details.

The Soviet Union is led by a man-made god constructed from a vast number of souls. One character has a cute take on that situation:

“What is it like? Working for a being whose thoughts and insights you cannot begin to understand?” ... “Why, it is rather like being a child again ... I highly recommend it.”