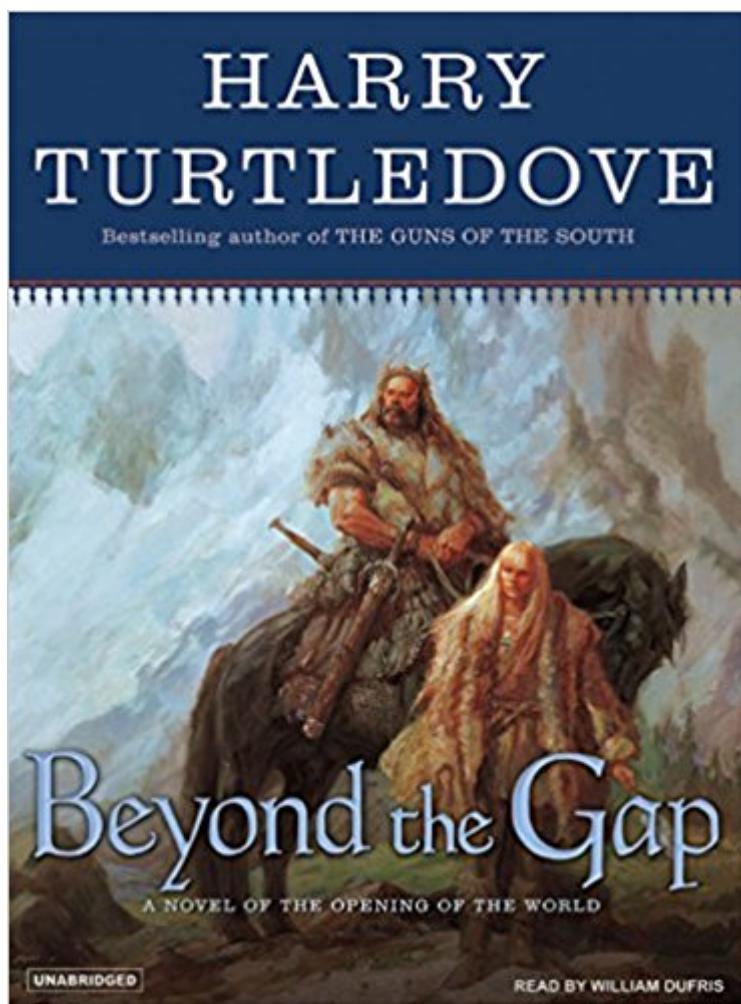


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Beyond The Gap: A Novel Of The Opening Of The World



Synopsis

Count Hamnet Thyssen is a minor noble of the drowsy old Raumsdalian Empire. Its capital city, Nidaros, began as a mammoth hunters' camp at the edge of the great Glacier. But that was centuries ago, and as everyone knows, it's the nature of the great Glacier to withdraw a few feet every year. Now Nidaros is an old and many-spired city; and though they still feel the breath of the great Glacier in every winter's winds, the ice cap itself has retreated beyond the horizon.

Trasamund, a clan chief of the mammoth-herding Bizogots, the next tribe north, has come to town with strange news. A narrow gap has opened in what they'd always thought was an endless and impregnable wall of ice. The great Glacier does not go on forever-and on its other side are new lands, new animals, and possibly new people. Ancient legend says that on the other side is the Golden Shrine, put there by the gods to guard the people of their world. Now, perhaps, the road to the legendary Golden Shrine is open. Who could resist the urge to go see? For Count Hamnet and his several companions, the glacier has always been the boundary of the world. Now they'll be traveling beyond it into a world that's bigger than anyone knew. Adventures will surely be had...

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this promising first of a new saga, alternate-history maven Turtledove (Ruled Britannia) depicts a Bronze Age society in transition. A growing gap in the glacier that has formed the Raumsdalian Empire's northern border for millennia allows Count Hamnet Thyssen and Trasamund the jarl, of the

nomadic Northern Bizogot, to become the empire's Lewis and Clark. They and their entourage, which inconveniently includes Hamnet's unfaithful ex-wife, Gudrid, depart the empire's capital city, Nidaros, to explore what lies beyond the glacier and search for the fabled Golden Shrine. On the way, a formidable and attractive (if unbathed) Bizogot shaman, Liv, joins the expedition "and Hamnet under the animal hides. If the Raumsdarians and Bizogots don't always get along, their culture clash is nothing compared to the threat they face on the other side of the glacier: the Rulers, a tribe of imperious, mammoth-riding warriors. A vivid setting and strong characterization bode well for future installments. (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The Raumsdalian imperial capital Nidaros was originally a mammoth-hunter's camp at the edge of a great glacier. The glacier retreated, and city, then empire, grew. The glacier remains, out of sight beyond the northern horizon but not, with the houses of Nidaros built to withstand frigid northern blasts, out of mind. A chief of the mammoth-herding Bizogots brings to Nidaros word of a narrow gap that has opened in a supposedly endless wall of ice, revealing new lands and new beasts. Are there new people? The emperor sends Count Hamnet Thyssen, an old soldier recently, painfully divorced, to explore. Rather than the fabled Golden Shrine beyond the ice, he finds enough blood, toil, and ignorance (also a few sympathetic women) to convince him that empire and Bizogots need to develop new defenses fast. Neither welcomes his counsel, and he'll have his hands full in subsequent books. Readers familiar with late imperial Rome will recognize the period and peoples Turtledove adapts. Not top-drawer Turtledove, but a solid actioner with an ironically attractive protagonist. Frieda MurrayCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I read this book and the first of the two sequels. It is not Turtledove's best work. The pacing is as slow as the glacier the characters mention on every other page, and the characters are little more than cardboard cutouts. I was hoping for something more like his Videssos books than the endless alternate world war stuff he's written over the last decade, but this does not measure up. This is evidently a book where Turtledove wanted to indulge in some world-building, and wanted to let the setting of the story create some of the magic. Unfortunately endless frigid steppes do not exactly make for magical reading, and the setting was emphasized at the expense of character development, plot, action, and everything else. I was going to scream if he mentioned ptarmigans or how bad horsemeat tastes one more time. If you want to read a dreary fictional travelogue about

living with mammoth-herding nomads on the tundra, reminded at every other page about how hungry the characters are, this is for you. I skipped the third book.

Although Harry Turtledove is best known for his stories of alternate history, this one is closer to traditional fantasy, which he has also written. That said, I liked the book as an interesting adventure story. The characters are pretty common fantasy fare- the carefree adventurer, the brash, proud barbarian, the brooding nobleman, his spiteful ex-wife, the clueless and egocentric emperor, etc. There is magic, and the discovery of new lands and peoples. For the most part I liked the story. It held my attention, and didn't have any of the problems that I associate with fantasy literature, such as obvious political motivations and shallow, stereotypical, unrealistic characters. I hope that Hamnet, the main character will be worked on a bit, because he is a bit stereotypical and predictable, but the others seem to be round enough to stand out in the genre. If the author devotes time to developing these characters, the series will turn out well. For those who like fun, sword swinging, fast paced adventure stories, this is for you. For those who are looking for a deep intellectual experience, look elsewhere.

I'll make this brief. If you are a fan of Harry Turtledove of course you will buy (or borrow) this book. If you've never heard of Turtledove you should try this book. Granted, he is not the most dynamic writer, but he is a craftsman at what he does. What he does is ideas. His sound knowledge of history makes his alternate reality settings seem real. (He is a former history professor, for crying out loud.) He also adapt at molding characters that are totally human, with both good and bad characteristics. His characters, like his settings are believable. Not giving away anything this story is set in an ice-age alternate reality. The protagonists seek to discover what is on the other side of what had been for thousands of years an impenetrable glacier. They find something they never expected. The good news for Turtledove fans is that the ending leaves the way open to at least a sequel.

Turtledove's dialog gets a little tiresome and predictable sometimes, but the plot is interesting. The book is worth reading, although it would have been better as a novella than as a full-length novel.

it was a great book

Good read.

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