



The Long Utopia

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It is the middle of the twenty-first century.

After the cataclysmic upheavals of Step Day and the Yellowstone eruption, humanity is spreading farther into the Long Earth. Society, on a battered Datum Earth and beyond, continues to evolve.

And new challenges emerge.

Now an elderly and cantankerous AI, Lobsang is living with Agnes in an exotic, far-distant world. He's determined to lead a normal life in New Springfield—they even adopt a child. But there are rumors, strange sightings in the sky. On this world, something isn't right. . . .

Millions of steps away—learning about a hidden family history and the father he never knew—Joshua receives an urgent summons from New Springfield.

Lobsang has come to understand that what has blighted his Earth is also a threat to all the worlds of the Long Earth. Countering this threat will require the combined efforts of humankind, machine, and the super-intelligent Next. And some must make the ultimate sacrifice. . . .

The Long Utopia Details

Date : Published June 23rd 2015 by Harper (first published June 2015)

ISBN : 9780062297358

Author : Terry Pratchett , Stephen Baxter

Format : ebook 373 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Fantasy

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Tfitoby says

Something of a return to form for this series that by the end of the third instalment had threatened to become a colossal waste of time and effort. Gone is the multiple vignette style of book three, added is a fair dose of Baxter's scientific imagination and explanation, replaced is the inevitable conclusion in favour of an unexpected denouement that whilst still squeezed in to the same number of words as a description of a forest (I exaggerate) is at least moving the story in a new direction, even if that new direction is aimed at simply selling the final instalment. Baxter isn't known for his characterisation and here at least he seems to recognise that, letting the universe he created with Terry Pratchett do much of the lifting and resisting the urge to speechify in expositionary tones if not all the time then for large chunks of story. I started to think of the sequence in terms of Asimov's original Foundation trilogy and whilst not set over such a vast timeframe or with an evolving cast of protagonists (the same crew from the previous books all seem to return here) it does perhaps seem to have the same goal. The end section as Baxter/Pratchett describe events on the Earth of New Springfield is probably some of the best writing in the series and dark too, when coupled with the Granny Weatherwax/Shepherd Crown spoiler I couldn't avoid I suspect that this holds an insight in to the mood of our beloved dying author.

Alex Sarll says

The first Pratchett book to come out since the chap who talks in capitals came for him, and as such sure to be a melancholy read whatever its content. Though obviously this series was always a collaborative effort, and in some ways this one feels tilted more Baxter's way than its predecessors. There are occasional bursts of stilted dialogue, undigested exposition and repetition more familiar from his work than Pratchett's – though as with such an assessment of any collaboration, this is pure inference on my part, and very likely wrong.

The first Long Earth book, too, where I read a review before getting my own review copy. First world problems, I know, having to wait for the very fine local library service to hook me up. The reviewer in question liked this more than anything in the series since the first book, because it felt more like a novel again. I feel pretty much the opposite about that return to conventionality, especially disliking the misplaced historical subplot here. I liked the intervening books, the way the characters and the plots had become little more than an excuse for unfettered world(s)-building. But then I like Olaf Stapledon, whose influence is still strong here, and who was usually much more interested in the big picture than standard novel business. That said, like this book he would find time for the occasional uneasy encounter between humans and their strange progeny, in which the lacks on both sides are felt as forcefully as the benefits. I was reminded too of John Crowley's 'Great Work of Time', and several stories by the great Clifford Simak - the eponymous 'Utopia' here is at least partly bittersweet, a sense that the great human experiment is being abandoned for a more pastoral and nomadic life in the endless forests of the Long Earth. A utopia to some, but a quiet apocalypse or dying fall for others, especially the old-timers who remember a humanity confined to one Earth. At times, the back-to-nature thinking involved is just maddening; there's one scene which is clearly supposed to be heartbreakingly touching, but is instead as needless and infuriating as the finale of [a popular recent-ish SF series I don't want to drive-by spoiler, just in case].

Helpfully, the book opens with a diagram clarifying one key concept. Unfortunately, it's a concept which is supposed to be a mystery for the first 200-odd pages. It might have been better placed in an appendix.

Phrynne says

I am not sure why I left it so long between book 3 and this one but luckily I still had a good memory of what went before. There is nothing worse when reading a series than forgetting who did what to who in the earlier books!

I really enjoyed The Long Utopia. I think I now have my head around 'stepping' and millions of parallel worlds. I even coped with Lobsang moving from one body to another and working alongside one of his own alternate selves. I was upset with what happened to Sally, Stan and the cat.

There is a lot of explanation in this book. We find out some of the history of natural steppers and start to understand more about the Next. We also experience an alien invasion of amazing proportions. There is more out there outside the Long Earth.

I will not wait so long before reading book 5!

Scott says

The Long Earth series is showing its age in this, the fourth book. The first book, The Long Earth, was entertaining and started out strong with an innovative take on the multiverse concept and introducing a handful of interesting characters. Those qualities were carried over into the first sequel, The Long War. The Long Mars recycled the same characters but did little to add to their growth or to continue world-building and innovation. That unfortunate trend continues in The Long Utopia, which revisits the same familiar characters but ultimately provides them with little growth, adventure, or action, and fails to exhibit any innovation or creativity. In fact, many of the characters are poorly developed cliches, and the main characters lack the animation and depth from the first two books, becoming just rubber stamps of themselves. For a book about the future and the interesting things to be found far from our mundane earth, the novel even wastes about a dozen chapters on flashbacks to 19th Century England to fill in some family background on a main character, which is clearly useless filler designed to fluff the book up into novel length to meet contractual obligations. The authors committed to delivering five novels in this series, and this one was clearly written merely to fulfill that obligation. It's too little jam spread over too much stale toast.

Sinn says

Ich habe es schon öfter erwähnt - und ich sage es wieder: Die Reihe wird niemals mein Favorit werden. Und doch kann ich sie nicht einfach abbrechen. Warum? Ganz einfach. Mir gefällt die große Idee, die hinter der "Langen Erde" steckt.

Denn in der von Terry Pratchett und Stephen Baxter geschaffenen "erweiterten" Version unseres Universums ist es wirklich nur ein paar kleine Schritte zwischen Hochkultur und Dschungelcamp. Nur eine simple Kartoffel, untergebracht in einem kleinen Kästchen mit Schalter, trennt seine Protagonisten von der rauen

Wirklichkeit unbetretenen Territoriums. Und das beste dabei ist, dass dieses unbetretene Territorium auch noch in den verschiedensten Formen daherkommt. Von Wald-Welt über Wüstenplanet - alles ist dabei. Man muss sich nur entscheiden, in welche Richtung man aufbricht.

Tja. Und dann wäre da noch der Plot, der sich nun schon über mehrere (übrigens recht dicke) Bände zieht. Denn im Grunde genommen lesen wir die Chroniken mehrerer Figuren, die sich zu einem Geschichte der Zivilisation unter den geschilderten Umständen verbinden. Das hat wunderbare Seiten (so lernen wir sie eben wirklich kennen) und negative Aspekte (manchmal ist das einfach langweilig).

In "Das lange Utopia" zum Beispiel lernen wir eine neue Spezies kennen. Eine gänzlich neue. Nicht, dass wir nicht inzwischen wüssten, dass "da draußen" (oder vielmehr: da drüben) merkwürdige Wesen herumkrebsen. Aber diese Spezies ist schon noch einmal etwas ganz besonderes. Bloß: Sie ist im akademischen Sinn interessant, nicht aber für die Entwicklung der Geschichte selbst. Wie kann ich das wohl erklären ... Moment. Es ist, als würde einem "Breaking Bad" vorgelesen. Von der eigenen Urgroßmutter. Und sie lässt die "schlimmen Stellen" weg.

Man ahnt, dass da viel mehr ist, vermutet die Bedrohung - und weiß so erst recht, was man verpasst. So ist eigentlich die ganze Reihe.

Tja. Und jetzt? Jetzt habe ich den letzten Band auf dem Nachtkästchen liegen und weiß, dass ich ihn natürlich lesen werde. Weil - auch, wenn streckenweise eben jede Action fehlt und ich permanent das Gefühl habe, Stephen Baxter verrennt sich in Details ehe er drei, vier Minuten vor Abgabe drauf kommt, dass er ja noch zehn Handlungsstrenge auflösen und ein wenig Spannung applizieren muss - ich die Chroniken auf ihre ureigene Art interessant finde.

Ich freu mich schon auf den nächsten Band. Und auf sein Ende.

Eric Allen says

In my opinion this is the second best book of the series, behind the first. It's the first book in the series that really tries to reach for its full potential, exploring new ways of utilizing the setting and characters, rather than recycling the same old exploration plot like books 2 and 3 did. I found this to be quite enjoyable, and it shows what might have been expected from the series if not for Sir Terry Pratchett's death earlier this year. Stephen Baxter has reportedly said that, out of respect for Pratchett, he doesn't think he is going to continue the series beyond this volume, which is a decision that I understand and respect. (though that may just be a rumor, I don't know for sure) It's quite sad that the world was robbed of such a great and talented author just as this series was starting to find it's groove, and wherever Sir Pratchett may be now, I hope that he is happy. And those whom he left behind have my deepest sympathies.

That said I really enjoyed this book. It's not just the same old thing like we got with the last couple books. It goes deeper into the nature of the Long Earth, and explores different ways of using it, different moral dilemmas and goes into detail on steppers in the past, and Joshua's parentage. I quite liked the Knights of Discorporea idea, and, if anything, the book could have used a bit more of their adventures. The idea of British secret servicemen using stepping to spy and make assassinations back in the 1800s is really awesome. And the idea of invaders from a different world conquering the Long Earth is pretty awesome as well. I only wish that the previous two books had gone in this direction and developed these ideas further. The constant movie references in this book made me laugh quite a bit as well.

If you've been following this series up to now, you'll probably enjoy this one quite a bit. If you gave up on it because it was just more of the same, I'd urge you to finish the series, because this book was really very good, and reused very little previous plotlines.

Leona Lecturopata says

3,5/5.

Después de dos novelas algo descafeinadas o que por lo menos a mí me transmitieron poco, *La utopía larga* me ha reconciliado con esta saga (aunque sigue habiendo cosas que no me convencen). El final de lo mejor, deseando que nos llegue traducida la conclusión de este viaje.

Thomas Edmund says

There is a certain point in a series where a reviewer has to accept that the series is not going in the direction they expected, and either give up reading, or give up being critical of installments that don't confirm to expectation. You see I loved The Long Earth, and got really excited by the dramatically titled The Long War. Nonetheless I was disappointed by both War and Mars. There just seemed so many cool story lines not fleshed out, the weird giant blob-beetle travelling the earths, the tension between steppers and non-steppes and so on.

However, it seems unfair to review books based on what I thought should happen. For this reason I approached Utopia with an open mind.

Still didn't like it.

Much like the worlds spanning both directions from datum earth, endless story lines seemed to be introduced, I found myself struggling to grasp onto any as the key tension. Was I meant to be intrigued by Joshua's rather Dickensian family history? The reveal that possibly people could step North and South as well (way unused by the way), a plot involving the Next? or the bugs revealed on Earth number blah,blah,blah.

It wasn't until the final act and the characters explained what should have been a gut wrenching plan, if only the book spent more time coherently developing the characters beyond a strangely accepting and philosophical robot cat.

Anyway my point is even with an open mind the story lacked power as a plot, it was hard to know who to cling to and what to care about. If this is the last installment I'm disappointed but consider an end to the series as ideal if none the later books are to be as good as the first Long Earth.

Santiago says

3.5/5

Cuarta entrega de la serie que se iniciara con "La Tierra Larga" que versa sobre una infinita cadena de

Tierras paralelas donde la humanidad nunca se ha desarrollado y de un aparatito, cuya pieza fundamental es una patata, que da la posibilidad a casi todos los humanos de cruzar de una a otra. Unos pocos tienen una cualidad natural y no necesitan de estas cruzadoras para realizar sus traslados, otros no pueden hacerlo en ningún caso. La infinitud de mundos disponibles no se encuentra exenta de problemas, como muy bien han descubierto los protagonistas recurrentes a lo largo de las tres novelas antecederentes —de recomendable lectura antes de enfrentar la de la reseña—. Tramas de complots y terrorismo, desastres naturales, viajes a millones de Tierras alternativas de distancia, seres inteligentes terrestres pero no humanos, Inteligencias Artificiales, el descubrimiento de un Marte Largo, un nuevo paso evolutivo en la raza humana hacia un homo superior..., dan paso ahora a una amenaza de proporciones universales. Cabe avisar, como sabrá quien haya leído los anteriores, que no hay que llegar a estos libros buscando el humor satírico de Pratchett, sino más bien muchos de todos esos temas de calado humano con los que gustaba cargar de profundidad sus obras. De hecho, la Tierra Larga fue un proyecto que tuvo en mente durante muchos años, sobre el que incluso escribió el relato "The High Meggas", pero que no llegó a cristalizar en nada más hasta surgir la colaboración con Baxter, dando entonces lugar a una serie de ciencia ficción más cercana al hard de uno que a la fantasía desbocada del otro, llena de sentido de la maravilla, ideas y tecnologías sorprendentes, y cierto dispersamiento temático.

Reseña completa en Sagacomic:
<http://sagacomic.blogspot.com.es/2017...>

Jason says

2 Stars

The Long Utopia (The Long Earth #4) by Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter is a long...slow and mostly boring read. I have enjoyed the previous books quite a bit even though I had problems with both books two and three. I guess my feelings on this one were pretty inevitable.

The first 25 percent of this book involves pretty much nothing...sure there is a birthday and some stepping but very little happened. As a result I found myself bored and couldn't keep a focus on what was actually happening. I skim read through most of the rest and felt like this is probably it for me.

I absolutely love both authors, they are among my very favorite. They have tons of great works to gush about, this just isn't one of them.

Kate says

I love The Long Earth series very much indeed and this, the fourth, is, I think, my favourite. Mixing sadness with light, it delves deeper into the hearts and souls of a very special group of people (not all of whom are entirely human) to investigate the nature of the Long Earths as well as the greatest threats challenging its survival.

John says

The Long Utopia by Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter is my favorite book of this series, since the first one.

The first book in the *Long Earth* series captured my imagination to a degree that's rare. The world of the Long Earth is stunning. The characters Mr. Pratchett and Mr. Baxter created are fascinating individuals and it's a rewarding experience to spend time with them.

When I read a book, I want to feel like the story exists for its own sake. I want to feel like the authors are compelled to tell this story, and no other. But the stories in *The Long War* and *The Long Mars* feel like they exist mostly as excuses to explore the expanding world of the Long Earth. This isn't to say that the stories haven't been good—they're well-structured and well-told, populated by characters who I care about—but I can't shake the feeling that different stories would have served the purpose just as well. Exploring the world takes precedence over telling the best possible story.

With the fourth book of the series, *The Long Utopia*, the story finally takes its place front-and-center.

Compared to its predecessors, the characters in *The Long Utopia* don't spend much time travelling. The bulk of the narrative takes place in a few specific locations. This grounds the story and gives it a focus that makes it easier for me to immerse myself more deeply in the novel. Rooting the characters in a specific place lends tremendous power to the climax and conclusion of the book.

Just like the first three novels in the series, *The Long Utopia* opens up new vistas in the Long Earth. The primary conflict of the story results from a quirk in its cosmological topology, with profound implications. But in a new twist, the authors expand their world historically, as well as geographically. We learn much about the history of Steppers by following the exploits of one of Joshua Valiente's ancestors.

With their fourth entry in the series, Mr. Pratchett and Mr. Baxter are wise enough to realize that they need to switch things up from the travel adventure structure that defined the first three books. A less peripatetic narrative structure turns out to be a more solid foundation on which to create a more compelling story. In *The Long Utopia*, the story finally becomes more important than the world. As a result, I find myself more deeply invested in the action and the outcome.

The Long Earth presents a world that remains tremendously compelling. *The Long Utopia* finally presents an equally compelling story.

Kristina says

Jeg kan ikke anbefale denne serie nok! Bog fire bygger videre på de muligheder som The Long Earth giver menneskeheden, samtidig med at den sætter spørgsmålstegn ved om disse nu interdimensionelle væsner stadig er mennesker eller om de der naturligt 'stepper' er en helt ny art.

Brendon Schrodinger says

I took this volume and the next on holidays with me. Plenty of time on the beach, waiting for flights, on

flights etc to read. And these books are the perfect holiday reading material - short chapters, easy prose, great concepts.

The Long Utopia carries on the story of the main characters of Joshua, Lobsang, Sally and a few others, this time concerning the Next, homo superiors, and Lobsang's retirement with Sister Agnes to raise a family. Of course, things go wrong in a plot-movingly way.

This is very much the flavour of the previous volumes. If you enjoyed those, you'll enjoy this. If you didn't, you won't find anything new or different. These books are not brilliantly written, nor are they going to blow your mind in big set-ups. But they consistently deliver fascinating ideas and a small-scale plot. They're relaxing. They're like a great Twain ride. Nothing too strenuous or stressful, just sit back and enjoy the Long Earth.

Paul says

Humanity has reached the middle of the twenty first century. Datum Earth is never really recovered from the battering of the Yellowstone caldera and has slowly moved further into the Long Earths, and started to settle. Lobsang is now an elderly and tetchy AI, living on Springfield, an exotic earth deep in the Long Earth. Settled with Agnes, they have even adopted a child, but as he embraces normal life, there are strange sightings and unusual happenings in his new home.

These strange and unusual sightings have the potential to threaten all of the Long Earth Worlds, and this threat will bring together all of mankind, Ai and the hyper intelligent Next to counter it. In doing so, they may have to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Over all this isn't a bad book, Pratchett and Baxter have concentrated the story on a couple of worlds, bringing in old characters and new to counter the threat to all the Long Earth. Between them, their imagination knows no bounds. But there are a few flaws; it feels very slow moving, the characters have not really developed any depth and Pratchett's normally sharp wit seems to be blunted somewhat. Which is a shame really, because both authors are capable of so much more. One more to go in the series, which I will read, because it is rude to leave a series unfinished isn't it?

Myf says

This series of books makes me incredibly angry. It is a demonstration of the bizarre reaction that happens when you combine two authors who seemingly balance each other very well. Instead of fascinating science fiction concepts from Baxter with the exceptional character development from Pratchett you get uninspired characters from Baxter (whose work is rife with flat unbelievable people) and boring rehashed SF ideas from Pratchett (who is far better known for his use of wit than his ground breaking ideas).

These two took an idea for a series that was by no means revolutionary and instead of making it special with their unique skills as an author they just continued to force out tired over written and under plotted drivel.

For a more interesting look at people with the ability to step between parallel earths try The Family Trade by Charles Stross and for a better version of the characters in this series try any other book.

The plot drifts hither and yon with no regards for the basic concepts of pacing or linearity (or even a conscious disregard for linearity). The story collects characters like loose change and spends their lives in twee attempts to engender some emotional attachment to a story which ultimately delivers nothing in the way of real awe or amazement. While studded with creatures and places which could be fascinating or terrifying the story simply doesn't give them the time to shine in any meaningful sense leading to feeling of unreality about place which the authors want us to be able to imagine vividly. Over and over villains or disasters are built up only to be entirely undercut by the next book or brushed under a rug by a *deus ex machina*. This lack of suspense serves only to limit any empathy we might have for the frail shells of the almost human feeling protagonists.

The Long Earth had potential. Each book had enough plot points for 3 books and enough characters for 10 while paradoxically containing enough personality for 1/2 a book. These authors didn't need more time or more skill, they needed a good fucking editor who isn't afraid to tell two super star writers that they were putting out rubbish.

Michael Bohli says

Die Reihe "The Long Earth" von Terry Pratchett und Stephen Baxter stellt mich immer wieder vor ein grosses Problem: Ich erwarte etwas komplett anderes, als ich erhalte. So bietet die eigentliche Welt zwar viele tolle Grundsätze und Möglichkeiten für fesselnde Geschichten, aber leider finden die beiden Autoren auch im vierten Band "The Long Utopia" viele Wege diese zu umgehen. Bekannte Charaktere werden nicht wirklich weiterentwickelt, neue Personen so merkwürdig eingeführt, dass sie einem gar nicht ans Herz wachsen können. Ebenso passiert zwar vieles, aber zugleich wirkt auch alles belanglos.

"The Long Utopia" könnte ein wirklich gutes Buch sein, wenn man sich etwas mehr auf die technische Sci-Fi verlassen hätte und gewisse, doch sehr ursachenreiche Gegebenheiten nicht bloss unerklärt passieren lassen würde. So wäre der Anteil der "Siedler- und Bauernfantasy" kleiner und ich zufriedener.

Bar Reads says

Suffering severe book series withdrawal. I need the 5th book Now!

Phil Leader says

The Long Earth series of books presented an intriguing idea, that of being able to 'step' into parallel Earths, each an untouched wilderness and each one slightly different until they became very different planets. How would this affect people on a personal level and how would it affect the social and political stability of the original 'Datum Earth'?

The second book, *The Long War* explored the political theme further with the superpowers attempting to control the equivalent populations on the other Earths - and mostly meeting resistance to any governance at all. It also introduced the concept of the Next, a super intelligent sub-species of humanity.

The third book, *The Long Mars* had further incredible iterations of Earth on display and also did the same

thing for Mars on a quest to discover a material to use to make a space elevator. The Next also started to organise and to separate themselves from the rest of humanity.

Each of these took the original concept and gave us more interesting worlds and lifeforms. Although the law of diminishing returns was starting to bite - Earth fatigue if you like - the main interest was in seeing what new ideas the authors could wrestle for each new Earth or Mars.

That is where this book fails. It is almost exclusively interested in only one copy of Earth, which comes under direct threat. All the usual suspects - Joshua, Sally, Lobsang and the Next must join forces to prevent a catastrophe threatening the whole Long Earth. There is also a sub-plot involving Joshua's antecedents which although interesting in itself is essentially a Long Earth short story of no relevance to the rest of the plot.

Whereas the previous books had a sense of wonder at each world, this loses that completely. It is in fact a completely standard science fiction story and probably would have been better told as a stand alone story rather than being shoe-horned into the Long Earth concept, which doesn't actually add anything interesting to it. It reads very much like Baxter wanted to write a story about a Dyson motor and as he was contracted to write a Long Earth novel, that's what was used. Unfortunately even this story is not well told with stilted and flaccid dialogue, zero character development and no dramatic tension at all. It was a real struggle to read in places, there is no zip or flow to the story or writing.

Various bits of the plot don't make a great deal of sense and the ending is very lame indeed with the chain of Long Earth worlds being essentially fixed by just thinking about it. The Next decide that Stan Berg, a newly discovered one of their kind, is the only one to 'fix' this despite basically no contact. They are supposed to be super intelligent and think many moves ahead but this just struck me as absurd.

Overall, I would only suggest that Long Earth completists read this. Those who enjoy the Long Earth for its diversity and novel concepts would be better off leaving this one on the shelf.

Chris Boulton says

Kinda wimped out giving it a three, lol.. so went with a diplomatic four! What? Why did I want to give it a three, I hear you ask! Well, I'll tell you for why!

Although I have enjoyed all four of these books, I can't help feeling that it's kinda indecisive. It just can't seem to decide whether it's going to be one long interconnected story that's going to build up to one final and brilliant climax or individual stories that only have a few interconnected bits.

Personally, I think what this series needs is one long interconnected story etc etc. I've enjoyed them separately, don't get me wrong but I just feel that someone wants it to be a long story, ahem, and someone else wants it to be individual and it just causes a bit of confusion in my ole noggin whenever I finish a book and that influenced my 3* (if I hadn't wimped out and gave it a 4*) decision.

Anyway, that being said.. I did enjoy it as I enjoyed the others and I'll definitely suggest other people read them because they're good.. it just needs to make it's mind up!
