



The Long Cosmos

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2070-71. Nearly six decades after Step Day and in the Long Earth, the new Next post-human society continues to evolve.

For Joshua Valienté, now in his late sixties, it is time to take one last solo journey into the High Meggers: an adventure that turns into a disaster. Alone and facing death, his only hope of salvation lies with a group of trolls. But as Joshua confronts his mortality, the Long Earth receives a signal from the stars. A signal that is picked up by radio astronomers but also in more abstract ways – by the trolls and by the Great Traversers. Its message is simple but its implications are enormous:

JOIN US.

The super-smart Next realise that the Message contains instructions on how to develop an immense artificial intelligence but to build it they have to seek help from throughout the industrious worlds of mankind. Bit by bit, byte by byte, they assemble a computer the size of a continent – a device that will alter the Long Earth's place within the cosmos and reveal the ultimate, life-affirming goal of those who sent the Message. Its impact will be felt by and resonate with all – mankind and other species, young and old, communities and individuals – who inhabit the Long Earths...

The Long Cosmos Details

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Author : Terry Pratchett , Stephen Baxter

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From Reader Review The Long Cosmos for online ebook

Lisa says

Too many ideas, disconnected from the people in the story. Too many characters spouting technobabble in the face of the infinite. The few touches that felt like Terry Pratchett were few and far between. The professor always berating his assistant Jocasta was my favorite character, which is a little sad.

Jason says

2.5 Stars

The Long Cosmos (The Long Earth #5) by Terry Pratchett and Stephen Baxter is a slow and overall uneventful read. I have enjoyed the previous books quite a bit even though I had problems with the last several books. I love the premise and plot of the series as well as most of the characters, but that is not enough. I guess my feelings on this one were pretty inevitable. It is a testament to what a huge fan I am of both authors that I continued on with the series at all. It is their writing, their imagination, and also their style that makes these books worth your time and money. With the Legendary Terry Pratchett no longer with us, I have to seek out and read everything that he has done.

Much of this book involves pretty much nothing more than a sabbatical for Josh coupled with a way to take the Long world out into the cosmos. There is nothing new in this one and it felt forced to me. I did not care for where the series went and how it ended. Nonetheless, I absolutely love both authors, they are among my very favorite. They have tons of great works to gush about. This book and series are worth your read simply for the opportunity to read the collaborative results of two giants of their genre.

Janice says

The multiple alternate earths (The Long Earth) moves out into the universe.

The story is ok, more Joshua Valiente (sp - I've only listened to audio, so may have spelling wrong), more trolls, more Next, more Lobsang. It's another vehicle for speculation about other worlds and their flora and fauna. Our heroes are getting old, but still continuing.

And it's fine. I love it for the hints of Pratchett that still show up, though again, I think it's mostly Baxter. I love Pratchett enough to be happy with what I can get, since there won't be any more. :(

Read for completeness, and love of Pterry.

Lee says

A man walks into a bar and the barman says “Why the long face?” So the man says “One of my favourite authors died not so long ago. He was best known for a series of wonderful fantasy novels that mixed satire and slapstick to such an intelligent degree that I’d find myself admiring how clever he was even while slapping my knee and having a good chortle.

“He was no one-trick pony, though. He wrote other books in other genres. Some by himself and some with other authors. Most recently he set out upon a collaboration with a science fiction author who has written some of my favourite and least favourite novels in the genre.

“It finished just recently after five years and five books. Unfortunately it ran out of ideas about four and a half books ago. The basic notion was a good one: imagine if our world was just one in an infinite string of Earths, each differing from its two neighbours by some chance event turning out differently in the past. Here a volcano erupted, on its neighbour it didn’t. Here an asteroid struck full on, next door it merely grazed the surface, and two doors down it missed entirely. Not a single Earth, then, but a Long Earth of infinite resources and possibilities. And imagine if, all of a sudden, people discovered how to take steps between neighbouring worlds.

“Five years ago came *The Long Earth*, a novel that set up this situation but didn’t really know what to do with it beyond having the main characters wander between some of the worlds on the Long Earth and point at all the pretty differences. Next was *The Long War* which ostensibly asked what war would look like when the battle grounds could span planets at once infinitely close and infinitely far apart. The answer, it turned out, was a lacklustre shrug. There was no war. Instead the main characters wandered between some more of the worlds on the Long Earth and pointed at all the pretty differences.

“The halfway point in this saga was *The Long Mars*. Middles are infamously tricky to write since you no longer have the freshness of the beginning nor the excitement of the end. Fortunately the third book afforded us fresh excitement by having the main characters take a spaceship to Mars and then wander between some worlds on the Long Mars and point at all the pretty differences. It was totally unlike the other books because, you know, Mars.

“Book four was next, *The Long Utopia*. Believe it or not I kind of liked this one, or at least it provoked some feelings beyond utter tedium. Something new was introduced, the notion that our Long Earth and some other, cosmically distant Long Planet could become tangled somehow, and at the places where they were joined one could step not just in the usual two directions to your neighbouring worlds, but in a *third* direction to reach the other planet. It set up a neat invasion storyline. I mean, it wasn’t great, but it did suggest the authors hadn’t completely forgotten that they were supposed to be telling a story.

“Which brings us here, to the final part of the series. *The Long Cosmos* is clearly trying to build to an epic and grand conclusion. Underpinning the plot is the attempt to build a continent-sized supercomputer that will presumably tell us the meaning of life, the Universe, and everything. But building computers takes time. So, to fill in the years, one of the main character’s sons goes missing. Then a different character’s grandson goes missing. There are endless jokes about the fact that the characters we’ve been following for five books are now old. All this so that, finally, the computer gets up and running. What is its purpose? I dunno, it’s never particularly explained. It does at least somehow tell people how to repeat the fourth book and step between different planets, not just between copies of their own. And so the main characters wander between some different worlds around the galaxy and point at all the pretty differences.

“It’s not a conclusion by any means. The new worlds seem to be as uninteresting as the endless copies of Earth (and Mars) that we’ve spent four books staring at. Maybe the characters will meet some aliens on one of the new planets, but they’ve already met other sentient life on the Long Earth without much changing. You feel like there could be a sixth book where they learn how to step between different times and it’d be just as much of a grand finish.

“And what’s worse is that the books aren’t even bad. They’re occasionally a little amusing, occasionally a little interesting, and occasionally a little thought provoking. But only occasionally and only a little. They didn’t make me angry at how bad they were, nor bored that I was reading them. I was just disappointed and a little sad that an author who brought me so much joy has his name on these books that brought me so little.”

To which the horse standing behind him says “Actually I think he was talking to me.”

Gerhard says

Fittingly enough, the spirit of Sir Terry Pratchett seems most present in this final instalment. Here I am thinking of such gems as a Shakespeare replicator that devours a planet to make copies of the Bard's work, and an inspired riff on Sancho the troll as a Librarian... At last, the Long Earth is brought to an elegiac close. Well, more of a pit-stop than outright closure, for the story still has legs... Again, a series of setpieces in lieu of a single narrative. But strong characters, and a good dose of old-fashioned sense of wonder, keep the pages flipping, like the myriad worlds of *The Skein*. Science fiction at its most intelligent and humane.

reherrma says

Dieses Buch ist wohl der Abschluss des Zyklus um die "Lange Erde", einer unendlichen Kette von Parallelwelten der Erde, wobei die Datums-Erde (unsere reale Welt) in der Mitte dieser unendlichen Kette liegt. Die Menschen können mit Hilfe einer Wechselbox in einem Schritt in die nächste Parallelwelt wechseln, sie können aber nur wenige Gegenstände (keine Metalle) mitnehmen. Eine Reise in die hohen Megas (Parallelwelten die mehrere Millionen Schritte von der Datum entfernt sind) ist daher zeitaufwändig und mühevoll. Joshua Valiente ist jetzt schon 60 Jahre älter, als er zum ersten Mal gewechselt ist und er ist noch immer ruhelos in der Langen Erde unterwegs. Eine geheimnisvolle Botschaft, die überall in der Langen Erde empfangen wird elektrisiert alle, ob Menschen, Next oder die Trolle, lautete "Mach mit". Sie wurde offenbar von Außerirdischen gesendet...

Dieses Buch, bei dem die Hintergründe der Botschaft lange im Dunkeln bleibt (und m.E. auch nicht endgültig beantwortet wird) ist die Wiederholung aller Erkenntnisse, die in den letzten Bänden über die Lange Erde gesammelt wurde. Es werden m.E. kaum neue Erkenntnisse gewonnen, aber Baxter/Pratchett bringen nochmals die meisten altbekannten Figuren aufs Tablett, die Völker der langen Erde werden nochmals genauer vorgestellt, wie die Trolle und die Next. Besonders hat mir gefallen, wie die Autoren die Next (eine neue, hochentwickelte Menschengattung) weiterentwickelt haben, die eine Koexistenz ahnen lassen.

Im Übrigen geht die Botschaft der Außerirdischen, samt dem Bau einer Maschine, deren Bauanleitung in der Botschaft verborgen war, ganz eindeutig auf den Roman "Contact" von Carl Sagan zurück, bzw. eher den Film mit Jodie Foster, es wird im Roman auch mehrmals eindeutig erwähnt. Auch das fand ich eine schöne Reminiscenz, insgesamt hat mir der Roman sehr gefallen und hat mir einen schönen Abschluss der Abenteuer in der Langen Erde gegeben...

Christopher says

The Long Cosmos brings the tale of Joshua and Lobsang to another roller coaster ride of exploration and discovery with the discovery of a message that is being sent to every being on The Long Earth from the Sagittarius region of space! :D This set the tone of the book with humans, The Next and Trolls and everyone else on the planet but this of course division in ideas and so the complexity of the situation, which would appear initially to be very simple, turns out to be very complicated and this sets the tone for the book with one major discovery after another! :D

The sets things going in a another different direction but at the same time it ties things in with events that have happened way back in the previous books with some very unexpected and clever ties ins! :D There is also some serious pop culture references and in jokes through with Monoliths coming up a lot and not to mention the discovery of The Next's invention of replicators which immediately leads to a command of Tea Earl Grey ! Hot! Which along with everything else will really have your ribs hurting! :D

It would be easy enough for the characters themselves to be completely caught up in all of this but the book takes the time to cover the characters themselves through various means such as Joshua getting dragged all over (literally) The Long Earth with the trolls and Maggie having to deal with her new command and Lobsang being dragged kicking and screaming out of his virtual world! :D

In addition though there are a host of new characters introduced that stand up equal in the limelight from Snacho through to many people across the Long Earth who end us stowing away on the trip to answer the call! :D The eventual trip itself is handled brilliantly but at the same time it opens up even more possibilities even though this is ostensibly the last book in the series possibilities and further books are always possible following the events that take place in it! :D

The characters take another leap in in time and personality in this book that gives everything a different but tone to the previous books in the series but the book is still an incredible ride of exploration and adventure with more revelations and incredible galaxy building revelations that will have you losing sleep in order to find out what on earth (and everywhere else! :D) is happening! :D The book is epic in every sense with each page of the book putting the story on an a scale much like The Long Earth itself and it is the events and characters that the story resolves around but at the same time each of the worlds are described in brilliant detail with environments that are brilliantly worked out but familiar but at the same time very different exploding trees and troll predators come to mind! :D

The book deals with issues all over the place which gives the characters plenty of time between the action to debate these things which informs so many of the decisions that they make that gives the book great substance to the subsequent events which play brilliantly with the humour as when they make their great discoveries and the immediately start playing in the sand which makes a potentially pretentious take on things actually resolve into humourous take and will have you rolling with laughter! :D

The Long Earth is inventive, clever, fast paced and incredibly witty and funny full of unexpected events and plots that are hard to guess at and fantastic pay-offs and the possibilities of more adventures contrary to the marketing! :D Brilliant and highly recommended! :D

Paul Walsh says

30-June-16: Got it a day early (29th), finished it this morning! Gotta love Irish bookshops that don't give a shite about release dates!

The final installment of the 5 part Long Earth series isn't quite as 'final' as one would think. The Long Cosmos follows some of the older and known characters (Joshua, Lobsang, Maggie, Nelson) and introduces a few new characters for us to follow as the entire Long Earth receives a message from the centre of the galaxy: JOIN US. This message arrives in the form of a self-translating beacon, which allows all of humankind to read it, but also all the sentient beings, including the trolls and the Traversers.

If you haven't read the previous books, don't even try this one. Baxter and Pratchett use a lot of what they set up in the other installments and don't go easy on newcomers. The concepts of Stepping are further explored in what I can only imagine was Baxter's input to the story, and the super-intelligent Next are main players in the game this time round.

Joshua takes another Sabbatical, now in his late sixties, after he realises nothing is really left for him in his home. His son is estranged, and he feels The Silence is encroaching on his mind once more. In all the other books, Joshua was my favourite character to follow, but this time round, he stays so far out of the main story for so long that I couldn't keep as interested in him as I wished. By the time he gets word about a final great journey with Lobsang, you begin to think that the authors were just spinning their wheels until the climax of the story to utilise him. Still though, through his travels we get an insight into the trolls that the previous books never attempted, and we find out that they aren't just smart animals, but have a very complex society that is far larger than humanity's.

Another story that seems to be given a detour is Nelson's. No longer a priest, he is contacted by Agnes to be told that Lobsang has left details that he has a son and grandson out in the Long Earth. While his main story is to track them down, he gets sidetracked to also track down Lobsang, who has taken his own sabbatical from humanity. Much like Joshua, these characters aren't utilised greatly until the final act.

All of the new characters are centralised around the Invitation to explore the cosmos. Two workers on the new space station in the Gap are enlisted to aid with The Next in their deciphering of the instructions to build a super-intelligent machine sent with the Invitation. A young boy (growing up in the same Home as Josh did) begins to see patterns in the stories that travellers tell each other, and discovers a secret call for helping The Next in their building of it. Maggie is called back from her travels to oversee the co-operation between The Next and humanity. Through them we find out about the theories that Stepping can be used to not only travel the Long Earth, but to also travel the universe. The concept of travelling 'North', onto other planets light-years away, is looked at.

I guess what was good about this final book was also what was bad. The further exploration of the Long Earth, seeing possible worlds that support a strange life that could technically be Earth, is what I expect of these books. It's always been fun to see what new way life can exist on the planet, given a few changes in Earth's past. But I feel that at this point in the series, it should have been given a backseat to the overall plot. The vast majority of The Long Cosmos doesn't actually deal with the Cosmos. When the machine is finally built, and the crew take that first Step into space, there just isn't enough time to properly explore it. We get a mere glimpse at a couple of planets, and a few hundred words from Lobsang with some theories as to what happened on these planets. There just isn't enough for a book that seems to promise a lot more.

However, it was fun, seeing more alternate earths, and getting a passing look at the greater universe. It would be nice down the line to get some sort of spinoff to explore the cosmos, but without Pratchett's contribution I don't think it would be the same.

4 stars out of 5, because of the fun had, but I still can't help but feel that this could have been better if the promise of space exploration had been better delivered.

22-Apr-16: Looking forward to reading this, the previous four had the right amount of Pratchett and Baxter to make the concepts gel well with the characters' stories. Here's hoping that the final addition to this series is a satisfying end to the tale. Also adds a tinge of sadness knowing that this is more than likely the last Pratchett-related release that can authentically carry his name.

Will add review once it's released.

Gernot1610 says

... ein krönender "Abschluss" einer grandiosen Geschichte. LESEEMPFEHLUNG!

Phil Leader says

The Long Earth sage - and Terry Pratchett's prolific output - come to an end with this fifth volume of the series.

From the intelligent beginning I found the series to gradually slip downhill to the extent that The Long Utopia garnered a mere two star review from me. So it was with mixed feelings that I started to read this. However this was very much a suitable and capable ending of the series, providing some answers but allowing enough freedom at the end for the characters to keep living on in the mind of the reader.

It is not perfect; I found the start rather drawn out with some of the characters showing up seemingly just to provide a valedictory cameo. Some of the writing joining the plot sections together - obviously done by Baxter following Pratchett's death - feels quite forced as well, but really under the circumstances this is to be expected. This must have been such a hard book for Baxter to complete on his own.

However it gets far more right; we get some good new ideas in the Long Earth (the big trees, for example, providing a desperate chase while also being fun and also a neat extension of biological evolution) and even The Next have something to do that justifies their rather 'stuck-on' plot strand that previously wasn't going anywhere.

Great characters abound as well; Joshua is front and centre as would be expected but the supporting cast works well. The adventure through the Long Cosmos is humbling and awe-inspiring, although I could have done without the 'search for grandson' excuse for doing it - surely Joshua and Lobsang would have done this anyway simply because it is there?

Overall a good ending to the series and even if you lost faith with the series as it went on, I would definitely give it a go.

Chris Evans says

No Man's Sky The Book Series

Describes this series, and this book especially, in a nut shell. World after world of nearly identical procedurally generated nothing. Slightly randomized animals that are really just bits of other animals put together, and a plot to get to the center of the galaxy. The book is very empty and comes across as a little depressing.

Look Stephen, just because you reference Contact over and over, doesn't mean you and just rip off it's plot whole sale. Well, not whole sale I guess, Contact had a three-act story structure, and this never managed to escape the Setup.

This book has all the drama of a sightseeing tour through Yellowstone. The primary focus of this book is NOT the "Long Cosmos", instead it's mostly filler of more parallel earth meandering about dealing with unimportant side plots. The story only manages to finally get off earth in the last 1/10th of the book and has them visiting all of 3 alien planets, none of which are very exciting.

(Nice Librarian reference by the way, Suuuuper subtle e_e.)

I'd like to mention again how much I hate the Next, and not in the way the author wants me to. I know, he makes them obnoxious on purpose. My real problem is how he tries to give the impression of how smart they are. Their language and how it evolves over the course of a conversation and everyone talking at once type thing. It comes across more like the author doesn't know how language works or how smart people think rather than that the characters are intelligent.

FYI, an airplane or helicopter wouldn't work while stepping, I wish he'd stop using them. At a high stepping speed, there wouldn't be enough time to build up the pressure difference above and bellow the lifting surfaces to generate the lift to hold it in the air. A rapidly stepping aircraft like that would simply fall out of the sky.

Original Review:

It's really sleazy to use Terry Pratchett's name to sell these books. He died before book 4 was even published, yet his name is the most prominent text on this cover. **Don't be fooled, Pratchett didn't write this, he only contributed with some ideas for the earlier books.** It wouldn't be so bad if these books weren't terrible, stop dragging him down to prop up your mess of a series!\

Update:

There is actually 1 part of this book that was clearly written by Pratchett at some point. Chapter 56. This chapter comes right out of nowhere it's and "Extract from Make Sure You Get This Down Correctly For Once In Your Life, Jocasta: The Authorized Biography of Professor Wotan Ulm". It's got no real consequence to the story and just about the philosophy behind everything. What it really does, though, is to

highlight now non-Pratchett everything else is. It was easily the best part of the book. **If you're a Pratchett fan, just read Chapter 56.**

Eric Allen says

I put off reading this one for a year or so. I'm not really sure why. I enjoy the series, despite it's apparent lack of anything resembling an actual plot. This series is more about exploring ideas, infinite possibilities, and what it means to be human, than it is about telling a story. If you've enjoyed the first four books, this one is pretty much more of the same sort of stuff. I have a very great appreciation for the creativity that goes into these books, and all of the what-ifs and maybes they bring up about the world, and the people living in it. This series is very different from any I've ever read. It's not often that someone comes up with a relatively original idea, and is able to explore it so deeply as this. This book seemed to have a bit more to say on the subject of life, and its inevitable end, than any of the previous books, and that may be due to the untimely death of co-author Sir Terry Pratchett. All in all, it was a pretty decent ending to the series.

Brendon Schrodinger says

I finished this one on holidays too. And my feelings are pretty much the same as the previous - interesting ideas, kinda cool characters, low-key plot. They are a great holiday read.

The last volume is much more of the same, following Joshua and the gang as they age even more. This time there is a message from space across the Long Earth. An invitation. Much like Carl Sagan's 'Contact'. And the authors acknowledge this all the way through the book. A little too much if you ask me, which was a bit of a negative.

But the star-count went up for this volume because of two reasons. One, we're really attached to these characters now, and we get some closure on their stories. Secondly, Joshua's story in here is wonderful. It's emotional and written on a beautiful landscape. The characters that surround him are magnificent, especially Sancho. It really was a highlight sequence of the series.

So, I'm done. On average the series probably deserves three stars. It's not going to blow you out of the water, and it is a slow simmer of a story. But the ideas are great. The authors complimented each other, and I feel that their strengths were still evident, and they toned down each others weaknesses.

Brent says

A decent ending to the series but once again very episodic and a bit disjointed. The fact that Pratchett died during the writing doesn't do much to endear me to it either.

(Sigh)

Tobias Voß says

Goodbye Josua, Lobsang, Sally, Sancho, Maggie and all the others. it was a fine ride. :-)

Kate says

So bittersweet to finish this fantastic, bewitching series, full of characters (some human, some troll, some something else) that I care so deeply for, set on a succession of worlds where anything can and does happen, and it will all be wondrous. And sometimes tragic, sometimes funny, often extraordinary. This final novel did not disappoint, bringing everything together from across the long earths.

Jean says

I'm sad - Although this final book in The Long Earth series was supposedly co-written by both authors, Pratchett's touch is very definitely missing. It feels laboured and disjointed, and my overall feeling is one of being distinctly underwhelmed. Did anything happen? Nothing intrinsic to the long term plot. Many ideas were set up, but not delivered, plot devices proposed but then fizzled out, several concepts borrowed from and referenced to other great sci-fi works, but of no consequence.

I was so eager and excited in June, anticipating it's release.

A step too far?

Nooktastic37 says

Disappointing. Missing the humor and charm of the previous books in the series. I kept waiting for something to happen, like being cast away on a megger-earth.

Sarah Sammis says

Maybe 2.5. I don't know. What I do know is that this photo sums it up perfectly.

<http://pussreboots.com/blog/2017/comm...>

Sarah says

****EDITED NOW I'VE ACTUALLY READ IT****

Thoughts before reading:

Thank goodness for that...finishing The Long Utopia left me feeling bereft and unsatisfied as I thought it was the final book. Looking forward to a conclusion.

Thoughts After (SPOILER FREE!!)

I actually really loved this final part of the series. It's been an odd series and I can see why it has been so divisive and had poor reviews...The books are difficult to get in to at times and follow so many different characters doing different things with very little in a way of actual *story* but that is also the beauty of these books! The storyline is people exploring the Long Earth and what that means for humanity. There were several different events and short story lines throughout the series and I enjoyed just listening to (I did the audios) the descriptions of the works unfolding, imagining the amazing creatures and scapes described. I loved the characters - flawed, imperfect, usually old, rarely attractive. All just normal human beings (well...except the ones that aren't) who are learning how to be part of this next phase for humanity.

What people have to consider is that the way these stories are told - with snippets of different characters lives, brief shots of different worlds - is representative of the disjointed nature of the Long Earth itself. Humanity is spread across the innumerable iterations of Earth (and Mars...), disjointed, lacking a sense of self as a cohesive whole and all far removed from each other so it as perfect sense to me that the stories should be told in a different way, with characters lives occasionally intersecting as the worlds do stepwise and through soft places. How can you tell a linear story in a non linear universe?

I think, to enjoy these books you need to be happy to just let them wash over you, to revel in the descriptions and to fall in love with the characters and I was satisfied with the way the book ended and I felt all the questions which could be answered were answered.

Further thoughts (SPOILERS! SPOILERS! SPOILERS!)

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The ending was beautifully written and I must admit I did have a bit of a tear in my eye - some of them for Sir T and the sadness of this being one of his last stories. I was happy to see Joshua and Rod reconciled and the scene with the baby was very touching, as was the scene between Joshua and Lobsang when they discuss Agnes. It was also good to see Maggie again, but I must admit I was secretly hoping Sally would miraculously reappear, I missed her acerbic wit and cutting comments, bringing Joshua down to size on a regular basis. Loved seeing more of Troll society and Sancho was a brilliant character. His survival blanket being used to cradle baby Helen at the end was a nice touch. I could go on, but I'll end here. I enjoyed it even if many didn't and I shall miss the characters and the wonderful endless worlds.
