



The Last Continent

Terry Pratchett

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'Anything you do in the past changes the future. The tiniest little actions have huge consequences. You might tread on an ant now and it might entirely prevent someone from being born in the future.'

There's nothing like the issue of evolution to get under the skin of academics. Especially when those same academics are by chance or bad judgement deposited at a critical evolutionary turning point when one wrong move could have catastrophic results for the future. Unfortunately in the hands of such an inept and cussed group of individuals, the sensitive issue of causality is sadly only likely to receive the same scant respect that they show to one another...

The Last Continent Details

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ISBN : 9780552154185

Author : Terry Pratchett

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Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Humor



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From Reader Review The Last Continent for online ebook

Sophie Narey (Bookreview- aholic) says

Published: 01/03/1999

Author: Terry Pratchett

Recommended for: fans of fantasy novels

This is another great book in the famous Discworld series, in this book we are transported to the magical, mystical world that Terry Pratchett has created. We meet characters such as: Rincewind, Luggage, The Librarian, DEATH and Mustrum Ridcully.

In the book we go on another great adventure with Rincewind (the wizard who can't quite spell wizard) and his faithful companion Luggage, this book can be read as a stand alone book which is great if you haven't managed to track down all of the series yet. It is full of funny moments that will have you laughing and maybe even crying with laughter, the writing style is done in a way that makes you be able to visualise the conversations that the characters are having with each other as if you are actually there in the room with them. This is a great book for young adults and adults, it is sure to make your imagination stretch and expand. It is one that is also very hard to put down and step away from, you are sure to find yourself back reading it. I love this book!

David Sarkies says

Pratchett Goes to Australia

28 October 2015

I have to say that when I have read books, or seen TV episodes, by people from foreign parts where they try to satirise Australia I have generally been either unimpressed, or downright insulted (as was the case with the Simpsons Episode where the Simpsons come to Australia, act like a bunch of jerks, proceed to insult everybody, leave an infestation of cane toads, and then go home). As such I was approaching Pratchett's book with some trepidation due to this experience (okay, I'm probably exaggerating a bit here because the only episode that actually comes to mind is the Simpsons episode, but I have to say that that one episode was enough to leave a really bad taste in my mouth).

However, to say that I was pleasantly surprised is an understatement. In fact it was not what I anticipated at all. It seems that Terry Pratchett knows more about Australia than I do and I was born and bred here. Mind you that is probably not surprising considering that when we are surrounded by our culture and our people we tend not to see what others consider to be somewhat strange. Sure, I understand that people wonder about this strange substance called vegemite and why it is that Australians not only eat it but actually like it (but then again there are a lot of things about other countries that make me scratch my head – such as octopus tentacles in Hong Kong).

Anyway, Pratchett, in this one book, seems to cover almost everything about Australia, and there are some things that he knew about that really surprised me. Of course we have good old vegemite:

but he also makes a number of mentions of the Pie Floater, which is a pie, covered in sauce, floating in pea soup, which you only really find in Adelaide (though the famous Pie Cart that used to sit outside the railway station has long since gone due to the tram tracks being laid down):

However, the one thing that really surprised me was when Rincewind was picked up by a dwarf named Mad and next thing we know we are suddenly caught up on one of those awesome Mad Max car chases:

Honestly, when I first picked up this book I never expected Rincewind to get caught up in a Mad Max car (or should I say cart) chase. Not only does he pay tribute to Mad Max, but also to the Man from Snowy River, and Priscilla Queen of the Desert. In fact in one section Rincewind discovers that he is standing on a float in the middle of the Gay and Lesbian Mardi-gras.

The reason that I gave this book such a high rating was the very clever, and really amusing, way he painted a picture of Australian culture, however the problem that I had with the book was that there really didn't seem to be a plot. Okay, there was a plot, but it seemed to be some loose thread that tied Rincewind's antics together (which involved him stumbling from one piece of Australiana to another, which included meeting Crocodile Dundee – aka Crocodile Dundee – drinking copious amounts of really good beer, and being mistaken for Waltzing Matilda – the guy in that song that gets busted stealing a sheep and instead of going to gaol throws himself into a billabong and drowns).

He does have a side plot, namely that the Librarian catches a cold, however it is a magical cold which causes him to shapeshift whenever he sneezes. To cure him of the cold the wizards need to find his true name, but he has removed all record of it, so they decide to go and find Rincewind, which results in them landing up on a deserted island ten thousand years in the past. Here they meet the god of evolution (that doesn't actually believe in himself) and proceed to teach him a much better way of causing change in nature than simply creating things from scratch (namely sex). Pratchett, as can be expected, very cleverly ties these two threads together, however I'll let you read the book to find out how he does it.

I'll finish off with a little anecdote that just goes to show how much I don't actually pick up being an Australian (though I have begun to notice some aspects of this when I travel overseas, particularly when I first arrived at Heathrow Airport to discover everybody speaking with an English accent, which I just have to say was really weird). Anyway, Rincewind discovers that there are two words in Australia (or Ecksecksecksecks – Fourecks, which happens to be a brand of beer) that can solve any problem and placate any person – “no worries”. Anyway, I just shrugged and continued about my day until, as I was about to walk into the office, the door suddenly flew open and almost hit me in the face. Coming out from behind the door was one of my mates, who proceeded to look at me and say 'no worries.' I almost burst out laughing. All I can say is that having now read this book I simply cannot look at those two words the same again.

Tfitoby says

In which Rincewind gets sent to my adopted country and encounters every pop culture reference you could think of. Is this how Egyptians react when they read about Djellibeybi in Pyramids?

I remember when I first moved here, middle of Summer, endless days of 40c heat, not even remotely a hint of potential rainfall and then one morning it just hammered down with rain for a few minutes and the roads turned to rivers and everybody seemed to panic a bit. Pratchett nailed it.

The absurdly misplaced affection for the larrikin (at best) and the hardened criminal (at worst) is also put under the spotlight that is the Discworld funhouse mirror thanks to Rinco's penchant for ending up in the worst situation possible at any given time. Priscilla, Abba, Max, Opera, Ned, Vegemite, Gay Pride, Aboriginal culture, Skippy, Crocodile Dundee, it's all to be found in Fourecks. Muddled around a bit with a storyline that turns Ponder Stibbons in to Darwin. It's a lot of fun, nowhere near as offensive as it might have been considering it is a Rincewind book about a different culture, and happily now out of the way so I don't have to dread reading about Rincewind in Australia any longer.

Manny says

"Are we all here?" said Archancellor Ridcully as he surveyed the assembled wizards. "Good. Now let's get our brainstorming session started."

"Ook?" said the Librarian in an uncertain tone. The Archancellor glared at him. "Come on, come on, shouldn't be difficult! We need to reset parameters. Push the envelope. Think out of the box."

"What box?" asked the Dean timidly. The Archancellor gave him a withering look.

"For those who somehow missed yesterday's briefing session," he continued, enunciating every syllable, "we have been given an unusual opportunity. Our Author," (he made a perfunctory sketch of the Holy Sign of Pratchett), "our Author has invited us to help plan his next book. I see it as a witty series of Australia-related parodies. This is our cue to think synergistically and proactively, exploit our first-mover advantage and -"

As he never tired of explaining to the other members of Unseen University, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Wizards* had turned Mustrum Ridcully into a new man. Some people, however, still remembered the old one with a certain wistful nostalgia. But now Ponder Stibbons, the Assistant Under-Nerd, unexpectedly raised his hand.

"Please sir?"

Ridcully stopped, surprised. "Yes?"

"Well sir, I've been thinking about it as well, and I have a few ideas to, er, to toss into the mix." He cleared his throat. "I've been reading about, you know, evolution," (the Professor of Recent Runes looked pointedly at the ceiling) "it's, ah, very interesting, and I thought the book could be, you know, a sort of satire on that. On evolution. Darwin."

"Thank you very much for your valuable contribution," said Ridcully in a tone that clearly indicated the subject was now closed, "but as I was saying, Australia. A wealth of comic material for us to exploit. Kangaroos. Mad Max. Sheep shearing. Beer. Cork hats. Amusing synonyms for 'throwing up' -"

"No, but really, sir, let me explain!" said Stibbons. "Evolution's funnier than you might think! We can arrive at this island where it all happens much faster, new species evolve in hours rather than millennia, there's a

god who's in charge of it all, and, wait sir, here's the punchline, it's a clever reference to J.B.S. Haldane-

"As. I. Was. Saying." interrupted Ridcully. "Australia. Bush rangers. Drop bears. Vegemite. And for those among us who believe our target demographic likes biology, a sequence on how the platypus was created. There. No one can say I'm not willing to compromise."

Stibbons sighed. It was going to be another of those meetings.

Jennifer (Jen/The Tolkien Gal/??????) says

I enjoyed this book. Am I coming up the raw prawn? Nah, mate. I enjoyed it. 'Strewth. Grab your woolly jumpers and a bowl of pie in pea soup and enjoy it.

Last Continent is a fun, Australian-reference fueled Pratchett classic. Recommended for all fans of Rincewind.

No worries.

Melki says

"You call *that* a knife?" The giant unsheathed one that would be called a sword if it had been held in a normal-sized hand. "*This* is what *I* call a knife!"

Mad looked at it. Then he reached his hand around behind his back, and it came back holding something.

"Really? No worries. *This*," he said, "is what I call a crossbow."

I cringed when I saw that this entry in the series was about the wizards. Normally their haughty behavior (which reminds me SO MUCH of my mother-in-law's most annoying trait), makes my skin sizzle, but in this go-round, they are marooned on a tropical isle. Being tossed out of their natural habitat - The Unseen University - they are suddenly vulnerable and insecure. One of them even has even become blushingly smitten by a cleaning lady.

Aaaaa! I *liked* the wizards!

Here is an excellent adventure in a land of kangaroos, boomerangs, odd brown food paste, and the occasional platypus. They'll hang you for stealing a sheep, but turn you into a folk hero if you manage to escape. Seriously. They'll even give you a head start...

From the Librarian's mysterious shape-shifting malady, to more inflammable cows, to the wizard's *interesting* attempts to build a boat (without a how-to manual!), this is one of the better Discworld adventures.

G'day!

Ashley says

I like the Wizards books, I do. The scenes involving them are always a good time in making fun of bureaucracy and tradition and old white men. They are also usually very silly. But I have yet to *love* one of the Wizard books. It's just so hard for them to have an emotional through line like so many of Pratchett's other books do.

Like, this book wasn't really *about* anything. Sure, on the surface it's the Wizards flouncing off accidentally to Not Australia (aka XXXX aka the titular last continent) in search of Rincewind, the terminally inept but strangely effective wizard, who is the only one who might know the Librarian's name, and thus be able to help cure him. The Librarian is sick and things are chaos at Unseen University without him, and he keeps sneezing and turning in to things like deck chairs and fuzzy books, and all the books are going into a magical frenzy without him to tame them. But things DO NOT GO AS PLANNED. And while Rincewind is off having a miserable time on EcksEcksEcksEcks, the other Wizards bumble 30,000 years into the past and mess everything up, as usual.

There's also a running gag with the Wizards being gross to a lady that I did not appreciate (by treating her more like a precious thing than a person, which is admittedly better than other options). I realize this is done on purpose for satirical purposes, but I still didn't like it, and normally Pratchett has awesome lady characters to make up for his idiot men characters but here it's just the Wizards and Rincewind and a magical kangaroo, and Mrs. Whatserface is just there. (See, I can't even remember her name!)

Ponder Stibbons is always a good time, though. I very much appreciate how sensible that character is in the face of all the other wizards, most of whom don't even have proper names, instead going by their titles (the Bursar, the Chair of Indefinite Studies, the Senior Wrangler, etc.) I also liked how into the idea of evolution he was here, and that he got to meet the god of evolution was a real kick.

I'm ready for some GOOD Pratchett, now, though.

[3.5 stars]

Bonnie Jeanne says

Oh gosh, this Discworld has lots of academia jokes, which I love.[return][return]*"I shall endeavor to make study of any primitive grass-skirted peoples hereabouts," added the Dean, with a lawnmower look in his eyes.*[return][return]I've decided that Rincewind, the missing wizard, is another favorite character. He reminds me so much of Bill Bryson, author of *In a Sunburned Country* and many other wonderful books.[return][return]Ponder Stibbons, another of my favorite Discworld characters because he is so logical and reasonable and reminds me of one of my favorite real life people, is trying to explain to other wizards why they can't willy-nilly mess with the past;[return][return]*"You might...tread on an ant now and it might entirely prevent someone from being born in the future!" "Really?" said Ridcully. "Yes, sir!" Ridcully brightened up. "That's not a bad wheeze. There's one or two people history could do without. Any idea how we can find the right ants?" "No, sir!" Ponder struggled to find a crack in his Archchancellor's brain into*

which he could insert the crowbar of understanding, and for a few vain seconds thought he'd found one. "Because...the ant you step on might be your own, sir!" "You mean...I might tread on an ant and this'd affect history and I wouldn't be born?" "Yes! Yes!" That's it! That's right, sir!" "How?" Ridcully looked puzzled. "I'm not descended from ants." [return][return]And the passage goes on to all sorts of tangents which so remind me of life in academia. And how much I miss it. [return][return]I also found another euphemism for someone not quite with it;[return][return]The bursar was, as he would probably be the first to admit, not the most mentally stable of people. He would probably be the first to admit that he was a tea-strainer.[return][return]More quotes for my collection;[return][return]Regarding a book from Ponder's childhood, one that is separated into three sections so you could make many, many creatures by changing the head, torso and leg pages. "The cover promised 'hours of fun' although, after the first three minutes you couldn't help wondering what kind of person could make that kind of fun last hours, and whether suffocating him as kindly as possible now would save the Serial Crimes Squad a lot of trouble in years to come. Ponder, however, had hours of fun." [return][return]A footnote toward the end of the book about meat pie floaters, one of the "indigenous delights" on the Last Continent, goes on and on about how perfectly good food gets mangled by insistence on favoring food that is awful for unknown perverse reasons and Pratchett notes "It's as if Machiavelli had written a cookery book." I love that analogy.[return][return]The Last Continent ranks right up at the top of my favorite Discworld books, though it might be a bit too "inside" in parts so that someone who had limited knowledge of Australian culture would miss the joke. The kangaroo that appears out of nowhere confused the hell out of me and I still don't get its meaning. Could have done with a few less "no worries," too.

Laura says

This was the first Terry Pratchett book I ever read. Formerly, as I have described in my review of *Good Omens*, I believed that Gaiman was the funny one and all of the good bits in *Good Omens* came from him. Then I stopped in Fred Meyer one day to buy a few things before flying home for Thanksgiving, and I saw *The Last Continent*. What the hell, I figured. I picked it up, expecting to confirm my belief that all of the good bits in *Good Omens* came from Gaiman. And how wrong I was!

I read this the next day, on my flight home. I spent the whole flight squirming in my seat, stuffing my hands practically into my mouth in order to stem the uncontrollable laughter. A few times I actually had to close the book and take deep breaths before diving back in. It's *hilarious*. And this isn't even Pratchett's best. I'm giving *The Last Continent* an "Amazing" because I owe my love of Pratchett to it, but there are others I'd recommend before this one. Don't get me wrong, there is lots to love here. I was a little lost at times because I had no background on any of the characters, so it's probably not the best choice for a first Pratchett. Still, it worked for me, right?

I don't have the book in front of me, so I can't quote, but the scene in which Rincewind makes beer soup is hands-down my favorite.

????????? ???????? says

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Crispitina30 says

Ha sido entretenido, pero no me ha llegado tanto como otros libros del Mundodisco.

La trama se me ha hecho algo pausada y en ocasiones me daba la sensación de que **no estaba sucediendo nada**, a parte de pequeñas cosas sin importancia e influencia en el argumento general. Además, hay momentos en que **los diálogos se hacen muy confusos porque no sabes quién está diciendo quién** (aunque a esto ya estoy bastante acostumbrada, pues forma parte del estilo de Pratchett).

Otra cosa negativa es que **se han quedado incógnitas a medio resolver**. (view spoiler)

Eso sí, **me he llegado a reír mucho**. El asunto de los magos y el sexo y la procreación me ha hecho soltar varias carcajadas e incluso llorar de la risa. De igual manera, **he muerto del asco con todo el tema de la comida y las combinaciones imposibles**. (view spoiler). Considero que **el asco es una de las sensaciones más difíciles de transmitir por escrito**, así que a pesar de darle sólo tres estrellas, debo decir una vez más: **Bravo, señor Pratchett**.

Otra cosa positiva es que, de nuevo, **he quedado fascinada con la tremenda imaginación de este fantástico autor**. No hay libro de él que no me sorprenda por sus locuras mágicas y esos diálogos de ingeniosas preguntas y respuestas.

Y os confesaré una cosa. **Estoy perdidamente encariñada de Ponder Stibbons**. Es mi niño precioso e inteligente, y lo adoro. Que nadie se atreva a meterse con él.

Así que eso es todo. **No de los mejores para mí, pero lo he disfrutado a su manera**.

Lyn says

Steve Irwin, Crocodile Dundee, Tasmanian Devil, and Olivia Newton John sit enjoying Vegemite sandwiches and discussing Terry Pratchett's 22nd Discworld novel, The Last Continent.

Steve: Crikey! What a great book, did you all enjoy it as much as I did?

Dundee: Indeed, I did, mate. I spent the arvo tending the barbie and rollin' on me backside laughing at good ole Pratchett.

Devil: Raararragh!

Olivia: Right you are Taz, who knew the Discworld was chockers of good few, heh? Get away from Anhk-Morpork and Quirm and Klatch and far, far away you've got his Last Continent, the one made last, still being created, Ecks Ecks Ecks Ecks, or Down Undah on the Discworld

Devil: Raararraaagh!

Dundee: I nearly finished me slab while reading and I also thought that we got to learn more about Rincewind and what an odd bugger he is, but also a hero in a ripper sort of way.

Steve: Pratchett has the wizards from ole UU go and fetch Rincewind from the far away Ecks Ecks Ecks Ecks and we get an Aussie adventure!

Olivia: Fair Dinkum! I thought Rincewind was similar, sort of, to Piers Anthony's Bink, from A Spell for Chameleon, he might not do proper magic, but he's got sweet as magic to stay in one piece.

Devil: Rarararraaarragh!

Dundee: Right you are Taz, and of course, as always, the real hero here is Sir Terry himself, telling us a whopper of a tale.

Devil: Raararaaagh!

Milou says

3.5*

Nathan says

Complete Discworld Reread

Ring

Hello, Terry?

Ya, it is me, Nathan.

Nathan!

You know, the guy doing the full reread of your Discworld series?

No? Haven't read one review? Not even...

Really? Wow, really thought some of those would have made it your way. But hey I got a few questions for you.

Huh? Well, it is surprisingly easy to get someone's home number these days, the internet is a wonderful place. Anyway, I just finished The Last Continent and I am a bit confused.

Yes, I figured out that it was set in the Discworld version of Australia. Hell my three year old could have figured that out. By the way do you get those Foster's Beer commercials on your TV much?

No? Oh come on, you know the ones. They show something like a guy throwing a boomerang at someone and then say "Instant message," implying that that is how the Australian people would grab someone's attention.

Really? Not ringing a bell? Because honestly they either stole half their jokes from you or vice versa, there were a lot of easy jokes in this book. Honestly did you just get bored? Usually your stuff is more clever than this; you of all people know that just making a reference to Pricilla Queen of the Desert does not automatically make it a joke. Most of Rincewind's page time was spend poking at Australian stereotypes in not so clever ways.

Please don't hang up sir, I am sorry. I know you can't be on fire all the time.

No need to be defensive sir, I know there are tons of people who loved this book. No doubt they have watched Crocodile Dundee six times this week. Nothing, I didn't say anything there, just background noise sir.

What's that? Oh ya, the evolution jokes were better. I loved the god of evolution. I loved the love or beetles. Instant adaption is great. And to be fair everything to do with the university wizards is comedy gold, you have the interplay between them down to an art. It was just Rincewind's story that didn't seem to have any actual comedy in it.

Ok, yes I will stop bring it up and move on. I am sorry.

My favorite part? Oh the scene where everyone takes over and tries to draw a duck. Pure gold. I especially love the Burser's thoughts in the background, a rare look into someone so insane he is down right sane. Plus, I have to say, it was this book that first taught me what a drop bear was when I read it years ago.

You have to go soon? Really? It's almost midnight, where are you going this time of night?

What? Oh, the real reason I was calling? Like I said, I am a bit confused about The Last Continent. Could you answer a plot point question for me? Then I will let you go.

Oh thank you. Let me see, how should I actually phrase this. I mentioned I loved the wizards and found them hilarious as ever. I saw a lot of your genius hidden in some of the jokes, subtle nods to evolutionary theory and perspective in art. And while the Australian clichés got old I admit a few of them made me chuckle. But... ahh, this is hard. How do I ask this? Ok, I got it.

Was there any kind of coherent plot I was supposed to following in this jumble, confused mess of a book?

Hello?

Hello?

Terry?

3 Stars.

Kay says

My Washington Post "Book World" review from May 1999

You Call That a Knife?

British author Terry Pratchett is sometimes referred to as "prolific," a term used almost reproachfully. Not only is he prolific, but he also writes books which for lack of a better description are classed as fantasy. "Surely," the Serious Reader sniffs, "you're joking."

No, mate, I'm not. Welcome to the 22nd novel in Pratchett's Discworld series, *The Last Continent*. A disclaimer on the book's jacket says that the continent in the title, Fourecks (XXXX) is "Not Australia. Honest." Right, pull the other one, it's got bells on.

Pratchett, clearly an admirer of all things Australian, unleashes his perennial anti-hero, the inept wizard Rincewind, on a remarkably similar continent. His arrival has somehow altered events in the past, and now, at the insistence of a magically morphing kangaroo, he must go on a quest to bring the "Wet" back to the parched continent. Oh, and along the way he needs to put other things right by becoming the archetypal Hero of Aussie legend and song: "Champion shearer, road warrior, bush ranger, sheep-stealer, horse rider. . ."

Rincewind will have none of this, and reacts in the way that always serves him best: He runs away. In his flight from enforced heroism, he encounters a dwarf charioteer named Mad, a horse named Snowy, a barman named Crocodile, Petunia the Desert Princess, and . . . oh, you get the picture. Just about every icon from popular Australian culture is trotted out, but it's done with such freshness and geniality that only a real stick-in-the-mud would object.

Pratchett has a keen ear for linguistic absurdity, and he gets great mileage from Australian slang and place names. After leaving the dusty little town of "Dijabringabeeralong" on the way to "Bugarup," Rincewind encounters a group of Ecksians who competitively dredge up one colorful expression after another, reciting a litany of hilarious made-up Aussie expressions: "Isn't that `snagged as a wombat's tonker'?" "No, no, no, that's when you chuck a twister, isn't it?"

While it's not necessary for the American reader to get all the Australian references, it helps to know, for example, the story behind the unofficial national anthem, "Waltzing Matilda," and who Banjo Paterson was.

But many of the scenes, such as the one when a giant unsheathes a huge knife and says, "You call that a knife? This is what I call a knife!" will be instantly familiar. What Pratchett seems to be doing, frequently, is commenting on the essential absurdity of life. He places his characters, who behave in a very 20th-century, everyday way, in the unlikeliest situations, juxtaposing the probable and improbable to provide a view from a new, usually humorous perspective.

Truth, Pratchett seems to be saying, is often stranger than fiction. Rincewind is aghast, for example, when he's served a meat pie covered in green pea puree and then topped with tomato sauce. But of course Pie Floaters are an authentic Australian dish.

A second plot line in *The Last Continent* involves the escapades of certain members of the Unseen University: the Bursar, the Dean, the Senior Wrangler, Mrs. Whitlow, Ponder Stibbons, and the Archchancellor. The last is making a complete nuisance of himself, having picked up a few half-baked ideas from a book entitled "How to Dynamically Manage People for Dynamic Results in a Caring Empowering Way in Quite a Short Time Dynamically."

While it helps to have a bit of Discworld background, the reader unfamiliar with the earlier books will still get the general drift. The Faculty behave like, well, faculty, bickering and backbiting. They set out to find Rincewind, who is on Fourecks, but in doing so end up on a mysterious island after crawling through a window in the study of the Egregious (rhymes with Regius) Professor of Cruel and Unusual Geography.

The island the Faculty are stranded on is populated by only one of each species, though there are, for some reason, an extraordinary number of beetles about. It turns out the island and all its singular creatures are the work of the God of Evolution, only he hasn't quite worked all the details out yet. Furthermore, he seems to have a credibility problem. "Begone from This Place Or I Will Smite Thee!" he declares, but the Faculty are completely unimpressed. In fact, it's up to Ponder Stibbons to explain the theory of evolution to him, while Mrs. Whitlow is the only one uninhibited enough to take him aside and explain the improbable mechanics of sexual reproduction to the incredulous God.

There are very clever, often laugh-out-loud-funny references to everything from Richard Dawkins's *The Selfish Gene* to the Butterfly Effect. At times the reader feels a game of literary "Pictionary" is taking place. Here's the God of Evolution, and he's tinkering with, what, the bill of a bird? Could it be . . . ? Yes! The Beak of the Finch! Behind all the wordplay and sly gags, though, lie philosophical questions: Why are common sense and analytical thinking so often apparently at odds, and what happens when a premise is carried to its logical extreme?

Another theme that runs throughout the book is the serendipity of invention and the pervasiveness of the Law of Unintended Consequences. As he stumbles around Fourecks, Rincewind winds up inventing a dessert called Peach Nellie, thongs, a distinctive type of hat, and Vegemite. Meanwhile, the Faculty, by committee, create the duck-billed platypus. It's like a fantasy version of James Burke's "Connections."

Although the two separate plot lines are maintained with amusing contrasts, when the time comes to bring the two plots together, the wizards and Rincewind meet and resolve their problems rather abruptly. The impression created is similar to that disappointing announcement of game show hosts everywhere: "Oh, but I see our time is up!" In a mere 20 pages or so all the loose ends are neatly tied together, and then the Wizards sail off into the sunset.

Suffice it to say that while this may not be Pratchett's best Discworld novel, it's still an enjoyable one. What, one wonders, will he tackle next? Among other things, he's spoofed religion (*Small Gods*), feminism (*Equal Rites*), Hollywood (*Moving Pictures*), death (in an entire series of books), opera (*Maskerade*), racism (*Jingo*), Christmas (*Hogfather*), ancient Egypt (*Pyramids*), and most of the hoary, shop-worn devices of fantasy. Still, no worries; there are plenty of themes left.

It would be nice, however, if Pratchett's books were released sooner in the United States. *The Last Continent* made its debut in Britain in May 1998 but didn't appear in the United States until this year. Meantime, Pratchett's 23rd Discworld book, *Carpe Jugulum*, appeared in Britain in November 1998 but has yet to make it to the States. Not only that, but Pratchett fans in search of early Discworld novels will have to order the books from the U.K. Odd that the God of Marketing hasn't rushed to fill that particular, um, niche.

Note: This review was subsequently included in an anthology, *Contemporary Literary Criticism*.

Chris says

Quick - what do you know about Australia?

I reckon if you live in Australia, you probably know quite a lot. If you've known someone from Australia or perhaps have visited there, you might know a few things. If your experience is limited to a few "Crocodile Dundee" movies and the Crocodile Hunter, then you could probably stand to know a little more. No matter what your level of Australianism is, though, you probably know at least enough to get a lot of enjoyment out of this book, Terry Pratchett's homage to the strangest continent on Earth.

Now keep in mind, Pratchett does state quite clearly that this is *not* a book about Australia. "It's about somewhere entirely different which happens to be, here and there, a bit... Australian." So that's okay then.

Really, this is Pratchett's homage to Australia, a country that he clearly likes a lot. In reality, Australia is a pretty strange place. It's a giant island, most of which is barren desert. It's been disconnected from the other continents for so long that evolution has given us species unlike any others on Earth. Pretty much anything that you come across, from the lowliest spider to the cutest jellyfish to the weirdest platypus, is deadly. The country is a tribute to Nature, both in its beauty and its danger, and really deserves more attention than it gets.

In one memorable scene, Death asks his Library for a complete list of dangerous animals on the continent known as XXXX, aka Fourecks. He is immediately buried under books, including *Dangerous Mammals*, *Reptiles*, *Amphibians*, *Birds*, *Fish*, *Jellyfish*, *Insects*, *Spiders*, *Crustaceans*, *Grasses*, *Trees*, *Mosses and Lichens of Terror Incognita*, volume 29c, part three. A slight exaggeration? Perhaps. He then asks for a complete list of species that are not deadly, and gets a small leaflet on which is written, "Some of the sheep."

This book isn't about Death, though, as much fun as that may be. This is about the worst wizard on the Disc. The classic inadvertent hero, who had seen so much of the world but only as a blur while he ran from danger. The hero who truly just wants to be left alone, perhaps with a potato - Rincewind.

What you most need to know about Rincewind is that he absolutely does *not* want to be a hero. He craves a boring life, one in which the most he has to worry about is whether to have his potatoes baked, mashed, or deep fried. He does not want to be chased by mad highwaymen, put in prison for sheep theft, or required to completely change the climate of an entire continent. He doesn't want to time travel, be guided by strange, otherworldly kangaroos or fall in with a troupe of suspiciously masculine female performers. He just wants peace and quiet.

The universe, of course, has other ideas. And so it is up to Rincewind to once again save the day. The continent of Fourecks has never seen rain - in fact, they think the very idea of water that falls from the sky is ludicrous. But there are legends of what they call The Wet - the day when water will be found on the surface of the ground, rather than hundreds of feet below it. And while they don't know how it will happen exactly, they do know it will happen. Lucky for Rincewind, the universe has chosen him to make sure that it does.

I really can't list all of the Australia references because there are just too many. From drop bears to Vegemite, *Mad Max* to *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, they're pretty much all there.

This book is, like so many other Discworld books, a lot of fun to read. One of the more interesting sections in the book is one that's not strictly necessary. Exploring a strange window in the University which, for some reason, leads to a beach, the Wizards of the Unseen University find themselves marooned thousands of miles away and thousands of years back in time. On this weird little island, they meet one of the most unusual gods on the Disc - the god of evolution.

This god isn't interested in the normal godly things - lolling about and being worshiped, occasionally smiting a few followers here and there. As Pratchett puts it, "It is a general test of the omnipotence of a god that they can see the fall of a tiny bird. But only one god makes notes, and a few adjustments, so that next time it can fall further and faster." This god of evolution is devoted to making life forms better, often one at a time, and lives on a strange little island where there's only one of everything, but everything yearns to be useful. With him, the wizards are able to explore evolution and natural selection and figure out why sex is just so darn useful.

I say that this section isn't strictly necessary because it just isn't. It's certainly *interesting*, and I suppose the god's island is a nice echo of the real Australia, where evolution has had a long time to tinker and come up with some really weird stuff, but in terms of the story, it's not all that important a plot point. In fact, the wizards in general don't contribute much to the story other than to make it longer and funnier. Their exploration of evolution and Rincewind's unwilling quest to bring rain to the barren land of Fourecks are almost wholly unrelated to each other, up until the very end.

This isn't to say that they're unwelcome - I love watching the wizards explore the world. The combination of personalities whenever all the wizards get together is one that offers endless hours of reading fun, and I think that without them, the book would have been less enjoyable. They're just not essential to the plot, is all, and if that kind of thing is important to you, then you might not enjoy this book so much.

Me, I love science and I love Discworld. While the actual *Science of Discworld* series was kind of dry and boring in the end, I love it when Pratchett explores real-world science through the eyes of his Discworld characters. By looking at science from another perspective, he is able to make it perhaps a little more understandable to people who otherwise might write science off as "too hard."

This book is a trip through time and space and Australia. It's a long, strange trip, to be sure, but an entertaining one.

Phoebe Prince says

This is one of the few Discworld books I hadn't read. It wasn't a favorite, but even okay Pratchett is like 10x better than most authors.

Nigel says

I'm a Pratchett fan and have been for years. In general I love his writing and humour. I find it remarkable that his writing varied SO much between two books about the same character. Having read Colour of Magic not long after it was published I have a soft spot for Rincewind. Not long ago I read Interesting Times and frankly it was pretty poor. This one is vastly different.

EcksEcksEcksEcks - the Last Continent - is loosely about Australia plus all the usual wizard folk and Rincewind. It is very funny at times and has some decent story lines too. Put simply I really enjoyed reading this one. I thought I'd already read it but I think not. I'll continue to explore the "have I read that one" Pratchett books whenever I get the chance.

Phoenix2 says

I've kept reading this book but still, things didn't go better. The story is a mess, maybe I should have started from book one...

YouKneeK says

The Last Continent is the sixth book in the *Rincewind* subseries of *Discworld*. For me, this was one of the more average *Discworld* books. I don't normally fall asleep while reading, but the cat and I took a few short naps while reading this book. :)

Rincewind has accidentally become stranded in a remote area of Austral... I mean, in Ecksecksecksecks. While Rincewind is innocently going about his business of trying not to die of starvation or get poisoned by giant spiders, a talking kangaroo tries to enlist his help to fix a problem. You see, something has happened to stop the rain and apparently Rincewind is the only one who can set things right. No worries.

I liked the story, but it wasn't a page-turner for me. There was plenty of humor as usual, but not as much that really made me laugh out loud. Rincewind is always a fun character though, so it was nice to see him again. Some of the humor went over my head because there were clearly Australian cultural references that were unfamiliar to me. Actually, until reading this book, I didn't even know that "no worries" originated in Australia. I hear it quite a bit here in the U.S. now, but the first time I started noticing the phrase was during discussions with my European colleagues. I had thought maybe it was a UK thing. My Kindle educated me with a relevant Wikipedia entry when I highlighted one of the many, many occurrences of "no worries" in the book. So at least I learned something new!

