



The Long Way Home

Poul Anderson

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Originally published in 1958 as 'No World of Their Own'. You can't go home again...For home is not merely a place, but a situation - and when that situation changes, home is no more. Captain Edward Langely of the experimental starship Explorer was to learn this truth in an especially bitter way...

The Long Way Home Details

Date :

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Author : Poul Anderson

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From Reader Review The Long Way Home for online ebook

Frank Cavanaugh says

Read 1/13/82 and again 11/23/2013 just as good 31 years later. The technology guesses were off a little, he could not envision the www. Fun to read and introduces ideas about civilization that cause you to think.

Simon says

An average, golden age SF romp.

When a space crew testing hyperdrive technology return to earth, they realise that not only is the device not quite so accurate as they hoped it would be but *far* more time has passed (objectively) than they would ever have guessed.

An enjoyable enough read but not particularly thought provoking or exciting.

Chuck says

This was a surprise; I read it--great adventure, good hard SF extrapolation. I knew it wasn't new because Anderson died about eight years ago, but it was only after I got done that I realized it was more than fifty years old. There's nothing dated about the book, the characters, or the social problems the book looks at.

Anderson was one of those "sociological" science fiction writers, whose book has some solid "futuristic" elements but who also took seriously such questions as what will happen to personal liberty as technological advances enable the state to further control its people.

Good book.

Node says

Terrible book by Poul Anderson

After being impressed by a small anthology of short stories by Poul Anderson, I find this book to be extremely disappointing. The protagonist, Captain Edward Langley, comes off as mentally unstable and unsure and the representatives of the competing factions had absolutely no common sense in what was going on.

Peter says

Ok read..

Nawfal says

Contains the political/sociological concepts that Anderson is known for. However, he is a blunt and, at least in this novel, unimaginative writer. The science fiction sometimes disappears for the sake of the sociology. This is a solid novel, particularly if the reader is interested in the future structure of civilization - generally speaking. Still, it can get boring and tedious because the characters are one-dimensional. For: fans of vintage sci-fi, *Dune*, and philosophers.

Edwin says

Tja, weet niet zo goed wat over dit boek te schrijven. Het is dan ook een wat ouder SF verhaal.

Een ruimteschip verlaat de Aarde, om na een tocht zo'n 5.000 jaar later weer terug te keren. Een reiziger die onderweg opgepikt is, blijkt over bijzondere krachten te beschikken. Diverse groepen willen hem hebben.

De karakters zijn heel erg vlak; geen groei in ze te bekennen. De protagonist, kapitein Edward Langley, komt mentaal onstabiel en onzeker over en de vertegenwoordigers van de concurrerende facties hadden absoluut geen idee wat er gaande was.

Het plot was, in mijn ogen, erg dun, en voorspelbaar.

MB Taylor says

Finished reading *The Long Way Home* (1955) by Poul Anderson tonight. It's a classic science fiction novel from one of science fiction's great writers (SFWA Grand Master Award (1997), Gandalf Grand Master award (1978) and Special Prometheus Award for Lifetime Achievement (2001)). Anderson may be my favorite science fiction author.

The Long Way Home is over fifty years old and it shows its age. But it's still an entertaining read. The basic premise of the novel is pure 1950s: Three spacemen take off in 2047 in spaceship powered by a mostly untested faster than light drive. They explore the galaxy for a year, testing the engine & repairing it on the way. Finally they head back to Earth. When they get there they discover some 5,000 years have passed at home. It turns out that their faster than light drive is only faster for them; since they traveled 5,000 light years it took 5,000 years. We've now finished chapter one (and part of one page in chapter three.)

Although Anderson's 2047 science is on the 1950s side (does anyone still know how to use a slide rule today), he's firmly in his element in the world of the future. Civilizations have fallen and risen and fallen again. Current society is recognizable as a society, but not one we know. People, however, are still people. And Anderson's people like to talk and muse philosophically about their world.

The Long Way Home isn't a book I'd planned to read; I'm pretty sure I've read it before. But I found a copy (a British paperback probably from the 70s) in a box of odds and ends in the basement. I read the blurb on

the back and couldn't resist; not that I tried very hard.

Anderson's been dead now for almost a decade, so I'm not expecting any more novels (a few new post-humus novels have already been published) and most of his older works are no longer in print. This saddens me; I can remember not too long ago when almost all science fiction book sections had at least a full shelf of his work. But some of his work is available Bean Books has been issuing the 'Technic Civilization Saga' (reprinting the Flandry series, the Falkayn & Van Rijn series, and others that take place in the same universe); there've been five volumes so far and there are at least two more to come. And NESFA has released three volumes of "The Collected Short Works of Poul Anderson" so far and they plan on releasing more. IIRC the forward in volume three said they hope to eventually release about half of all of Anderson's short stories; and since Anderson was writing pretty steadily for almost 50 years, there are a lot of stories. The NESFA books are hard to find; locally the University Book Store is the only place I've seen them.

John says

Grade B

Dawn says

This is a great story! Just remember the world was a different place when it was written and enjoy the read.

Brett says

Science Fiction

Mark Johansen says

A spaceship leaves Earth on the first interstellar expedition. When they return, they discover that 5000 years have passed. The crew have picked up an alien they met along the way, who turns out to have some ... psychic powers, you might call them ... that have military potential. The alien and the crew become involved in an interstellar power struggle.

The story was written in 1955, but I don't think it's at all dated. I often read old science fiction stories and get a chuckle at how badly the writer guessed future technology. I recall a story by Asimov set hundreds of years in the future where an important plot point centered on people using film cameras -- no mention of digital photography. Or one by Clark that says that the awesome computer on the star ship had "over 10,000 vacuum tubes". Etc. Not saying I'd do better. :-) But this story, despite being over 50 years old, has no such obvious gaffes.

Anyway, like a lot of good science fiction, this story mixes an action yarn with social commentary. The preface to the edition I have says that the author specifically set out to write a story that would be a

counterpoint to all the SF stories about oppressive dictatorships where the people are just waiting for some outsider to come along and lead them in a rebellion. So he wanted to create a society that was authoritarian, but discuss why the people did not rise up in rebellion. Namely, lots of problems and little freedom, but where lots of people nevertheless have a stake in maintaining the status quo. For example, at one point a slave is given a chance at freedom. She replies, Where would she go? What would she do? As a slave she has no rights, but she lives in a rich man's house, she always has food to eat and clothes to wear, she's not abused, and her life is comfortable. If freed, she would likely end up working at some menial job or becoming a beggar or a prostitute. Would it really be a step up?

On the minus side, some of the "surprise revelations" in the book weren't very surprising. I'm not going to put in any spoilers, but for example: There's an organization of interstellar merchants. Fairly early in the story one of them says that their leaders all remain hidden and anonymous to protect themselves from assassination, etc, and so the rank and file don't know who their real leaders are. Well, I thought it was pretty obvious that that was not just a random fact thrown in, that later it would become very important just who their leaders are. And I thought it was pretty obvious who it would turn out to be, it wasn't much of a surprise when it was revealed. Similarly, there's a scene where a character has mysterious headaches and feels like "someone else is in her mind", and the other characters brush it off as fear and nervousness. Well, you have to realize that that's going somewhere.

Jesús says

Excelente Poul Anderson. Eso sí, no vuelvo a leer un libro traducido en mi vida. Hasta laísmos me he encontrado, y traducciones literales que no tienen sentido en castellano... en fin.
La novela genial, ciencia ficción de manual, culturas alienígenas, viajeros del espacio, heroes y villanos.
Light science fiction pero muy agradable.

David (???) says

3.5 stars

A socio- politico- adventure science fiction story.
An okay story, but otherwise a good description of a possible social structure five thousand years in the future.
It was a pleasant, certainly not boring a read, by trying Poul Anderson's book. I would like to read more of his works for sure. :)
