

Review of Peter Watts's book *Echopraxia*

by [Jacob Williams](#) on 2025-03-10
feedback is welcome at jacob@brokensandals.net

Note to self: next time you read a Peter Watts novel, *read* it. Read, not listen to. I kept feeling like I'd missed something, like perhaps my attention had wandered at just the wrong moment to miss some crucial piece of information. I ended up restarting from the beginning when I was about 75% of the way through the book, and while I was less confused the second time, I was still confused.

In my defense, there's evidently supposed to be some ambiguity; the author [said in a Q&A](#):

...I tried... to ensure more than one plausible and internally-consistent explanation for everything the post-humans did... while at the same time leaving open the question of which of those explanations (if any) were really at play...

Notwithstanding my confusion, I liked the book. Some memorable bits:

- Some augmented humans refer to standard humans as “roaches”—the idea being that despite, or because of, our simplicity, we're harder to exterminate than the more intelligent beings.
- Sufficiently smart AIs reach a “Sapience Limit”: a level of intelligence beyond which they are no longer conscious.
- The alien creature (creation?) *Portia* is extremely intelligent but thinks extremely slowly.
- Vampires can coordinate without interacting—each one deduces how the others will behave, accounting for what the others will deduce about themselves.