

Trilogy named Best of Decade at Canadian sci-fi awards

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With a trophy case already groaning under the weight of countless awards and accolades, Mississauga author Robert J. Sawyer has added two more including a prestigious prize that's only handed out once every 10 years.

Sawyer's Neanderthal Parallax trilogy was recognized with the Best of the Decade (for novels published between 2001 and 2010) distinction at the Aurora Awards during a ceremony on Sept. 22 in Halifax. His book *Quantum Night* was named Best Novel.

The Neanderthal Parallax trilogy includes 2002's *Hominids* - which won the esteemed Hugo Award for Best Novel - as well as 2003's *Humans*, also nominated for a Hugo, and 2003's *Hybrids*, which was nominated for a Galactic Spectrum Award. The latter, according to the organization's website, honours works in science fiction, fantasy and horror that positively explore gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered characters, themes or issues.

The trilogy is about an alternate reality where Neanderthals survived to become the planet's dominant species while *Homo sapiens* became extinct. In the books, a portal has opened in Sudbury connecting the alternate Earth with one similar to our current world.

Sawyer said that, prior to being named as a member of the Order of Canada last year, winning the Hugo Award - considered arguably the top international prize in science fiction and fantasy that was presented that year by George R.R. Martin - was the biggest thing that had ever happened to him. But, he said that having his trilogy recognized in such a way "meant the world" to him.

"We live in a dystopian world right now, and just about the only science fiction selling well these days - be it to adults or young-adult audiences - is dystopian," he said in an email to the News. "So for my utopian, uplifting Neanderthal Parallax trilogy to be honoured today means a great deal to me. Science fiction shouldn't just point out the futures to avoid, it should also light the way to positive tomorrows.

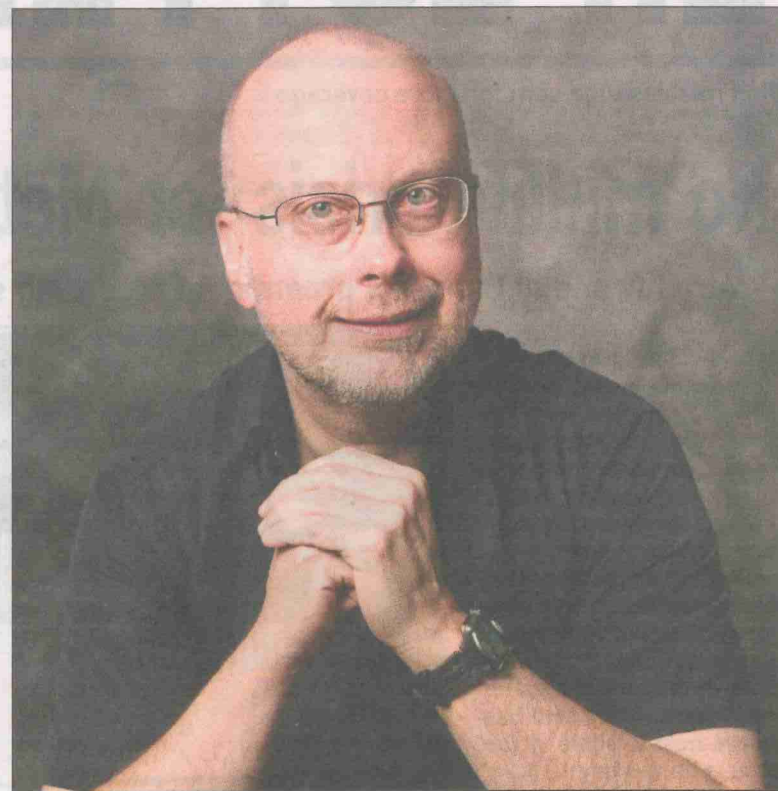
And, my novels strive to do precisely that."

Quantum Night, meanwhile, explores what happens when a far-right psychopath emerges to become the next president of the United States.

The novel is set in 2020 when a fictionalized version of Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi is prime minister of Canada. American president Quinton Carroway isn't pleased with Nenshi being in charge due to his Muslim religion and that leads to confrontation between the two nations.

The author says that Carroway is an amalgamation of Donald Trump, Herman Cain, Ben Carson and Sarah Palin. During a previous interview, Sawyer said he sees a worrying trend in the United States as the Republicans shift further to the right by catering to the fringe aspects of the party.

In addition to the recent accolades, Sawyer is a past winner of the Nebula Award, the Robert A. Heinlein Award and the John W. Campbell Memorial Award. The Aurora Awards are presented by the Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Association.



Bernard Clark photo

Mississauga author Robert J. Sawyer had his Neanderthal Parallax trilogy named Best of the Decade at the recently-held Aurora awards while his book *Quantum Night* received the Best Novel award.