



Humans (The Neanderthal Parallax, Book 2)

By Robert J. Sawyer

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Robert J. Sawyer, the award-winning and bestselling writer, hits the peak of his powers in *Humans*, the second book of *The Neanderthal Parallax*, his trilogy about our world and parallel one in which it was the Homo sapiens who died out and the Neanderthals who became the dominant intelligent species. This powerful idea allows Sawyer to examine some of the deeply rooted assumptions of contemporary human civilization dramatically, by confronting us with another civilization, just as morally valid, that has made other choices. In *Humans*, Neanderthal physicist Ponter Boddit, a character you will never forget, returns to our world and to his relationship with geneticist Mary Vaughan, as cultural exchanges between the two Earths begin.

As we see daily life in another present-day world, radically different from ours, in the course of Sawyer's fast-moving story, we experience the bursts of wonder and enlightenment that are the finest pleasures of science fiction. *Humans* is one of the best SF novels of the year, and *The Neanderthal Parallax* is an SF classic in the making.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this solid sequel to *Hominids* (2002), the much-praised first volume in Sawyer's Neanderthal Parallax trilogy, which introduced an alternate Earth where for reasons unknown our species, *Homo sapiens*, went extinct and Neanderthals flourished, Neanderthal physicist Ponder Boddit brings Canadian geneticist Mary Vaughan back to his world to explore the near-utopian civilization of the Neanderthals. Boddit serves as a *Candide* figure, the naive visitor whose ignorance about our society makes him a perfect tool to analyze human tendencies toward violence, over-population and environmental degradation. The Neanderthals have developed a high artistic, ethical and scientific culture without ever inventing farming—they're still hunters and gatherers—and this allows the author to make some interesting and generally unrecognized points about the downside of the discovery of agriculture. Much of the novel is devoted to either the discussion of ideas such as these or to Boddit and Vaughan's developing love affair. Sawyer keeps things moving by throwing in an attempted assassination, his protagonists' confrontation with a rapist and, on a larger scale, the growing danger of what appears to be the imminent reversal of Earth's magnetic field. As the middle volume in a trilogy, this book doesn't entirely stand on its own, but it is extremely well done. When complete, the Neanderthal Parallax should add significantly to Sawyer's reputation.

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From [Booklist](#)

Ponter Boddit, the Neanderthal physicist thrown into the human world in *Hominids* [BKL Je 1&15 02], is relieved to be back in his own safe, unpolluted, thoughtfully governed universe, though he misses his human friend, Mary Vaughn, who in her world has been offered a plum research position. Glad to leave the Canadian university at which she was brutally raped, she misses Ponter and worries that, because she never reported her attacker, other women remain at risk. Both universes' governments can't decide whether to permit travel between them, but Ponter forces the question by assembling a first ambassadorial party, though as it happens, he goes on ahead of it. He then persuades Mary to visit his world, where she faces aspects of Neanderthal culture that disturb her, such as Ponter's male lover, Adikor, and near-total male-female segregation. Then another woman is raped on Mary's former campus. Look for the further volume about Ponter and Mary that disquieting ramifications of the interaction of the alternate worlds and their magnetic fields portends. *Roberta Johnson*

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Review

"The biggest job of science fiction is to portray the Other. To help us imagine the strange and see the familiar in eerie new ways. Nobody explores this territory more boldly than Robert Sawyer."—David Brin on *Humans*

"*Hominids* is anthropological fiction at its best."-- W. Michael Gear & Kathleen O'Neal Gear, *USA Today*-bestselling authors of *Raising Abel*

"A rapidly plotted, anthropologically saturated speculative novel . . . [with] Sawyer-signature wide appeal."—*The Globe & Mail* on *Hominids*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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