

Aurealis Awards 2009
Science Fiction Short Story
Judges' Report

Panel members

Robert Hoge (convenor), Michelle Brown, Glenn Davies, Sharon Dunne, Kira Sampson

Overview of entries

2009 was another strong year for Australian science fiction short stories. There were a large number of entries from a wide range of publications at home and around the world, which is reflected in the list of finalists. Readers were well serviced with a wide selection of science fiction stories in existing magazines and a number of original anthologies that included a large SF contingent. Stories ranged across traditional genre topics with a noticeable spike in the number of homunculi stories this year.

Finalists

Peter M. Ball, 'Clockwork, Patchwork and Ravens', *Apex Magazine May 2009* **WINNER**

Peter M. Ball, 'To Dream of Stars: An Astronomer's Lament', *Apex Magazine*, October 2009

Christopher Green, 'A Hundredth Name', *Abyss & Apex Magazine*, #31

Greg Mellor, 'Defence of the Realm', *Cosmos*, #25

Mike Resnick & Lezli Robyn, 'Soulmates', *Asimov's*, September 2009

Review of finalists

Peter M. Ball, 'Clockwork, Patchwork and Ravens', *Abyss & Apex Magazine May 2009* **WINNER**

This story reveals a fully realised world. The characters are exquisitely drawn and the use of language clever and subtle. The narrative is complete and shows a faith in human nature and a nobility of heart that touches the reader

Peter M. Ball, 'To Dream of Stars: An Astronomer's Lament', *Apex Magazine*, October 2009

This tale weaves the story of one man's rural childhood with his last years in an alternate 'C17th' earth and of a human race conquered and controlled by the alien "other". The contrast between his simple youth and the sheer complexity and alienation of his adult experience is what makes this story memorable and the subtly painted "alternate Earth" adds richness without overpowering the story. A beautifully written story with some poignant phrases.

Christopher Green, 'A Hundredth Name', *Abyss & Apex Magazine*, #31

A strong piece that demonstrates how the old and the new can be brought together to produce a lovely story. Karim is fighting his space station colleagues and losing his faith in Allah following the death of his wife. The language is restrained and the author shows a few subtle but well-placed elements can produce a fully realized world and a story with an emotional punch.

Greg Mellor, 'Defence of the Realm', *Cosmos*, #25

Another strong piece that tells the story of a father and son who have fought in a war against invading aliens but with very different consequences. Mellor does a good job of integrating the highly inventive science fictional elements of the story with the touching elements of a tale about a boy and his father mending their relationship.

Mike Resnick & Lezli Robyn, 'Soulmates', *Asimov's*, September 2009

The authors weave themes of loss and friendship together well in this poignant tale about a man who has lost his wife and finds himself spending time discussing serious issues with a maintenance robot. The story uses dialogue very effectively to advance both plot and characterisation.