

science fiction news

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Selectors: Kingsley Amis, John Carnell, Dr J. G. Porter

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE

The Expert Dreamers

Edited by Frederik Pohl

THIS collection of stories is possibly unique in that every one of the fifteen contributors is a scientist, and several scientists of great distinction—O. R. Frisch, the first to identify the uranium-fission effect; Leo Szilard, another outstanding figure in nuclear research; Norbert Wiener, the creator of cybernetics as a new and distinct field of scientific advance; R. S. Richardson, the astronomer, and Fred Hoyle.

It is the pure scientists who, in their contributions to *The Expert Dreamers*, follow the most daring speculations: Fred Hoyle's story, for example, concerns an *intelligent* black cloud; William Morrison's 'A Feast of Demons' deals with the idea of a world in which a physicist has tampered with the 'natural laws' and cannot restore the right balance, so that a process like that of growing older is subject to violent fluctuations—people becoming old and then young again by fits and starts; in R. S. Richardson's 'To Explain Mrs Thompson' a vast human face spreads across Andromeda, the face of Mrs Homer P. Thompson of Indiana, lately dead, and science has no explanation to give for this extraordinary thing!

Other stories show a very pleasant sense of the humour in science: Frisch's 'On the Feasibility of Coal-driven Power Stations' is a delightful 'spoof' report on the possibilities and dangers of utilizing (in 4995) newly discovered resources of coal, since the world is running out of uranium and thorium; in Norbert Wiener's 'The Miracle in the Broom Closet' the arrows which killed Saint Sebastian are incorporated into a research laboratory's equipment, with disastrous results.

Among the best works from the more professional scientist-writers are Willy Ley's 'The Invasion', an account of how space ships from another planet descend upon the earth and begin to drain away our resources of electricity; Isaac Asimov's 'Lenny' is about a robot which, through being wrongly briefed, acquires the characteristics of a human child and is mothered by a childless woman scientist.

Frederik Pohl ends his introduction to *The Expert Dreamers* with these words: '. . . It is not strange, after all, that scientists should write science fiction stories. Here is the evidence to prove it. The stories in this volume are by men who work with science, in one discipline or another, in their daily lives . . . men, some of them, who have themselves advanced to occupy some of the furthest outposts of our present scientific knowledge. . . . Probably no other branch of writing—fiction anyway—has as high a percentage of writers who are entitled to be called "doctor" in some discipline. But these are the ones whose stories have struck me as most interesting, and I hope that this interest will be shared.'

Gollancz 18s; SFBC 6s

Take Three

A Note about the new SFBC Extra, coming in
September

SPECTRUM III

Edited by Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest

THE appearance of a *Spectrum* anthology has become a yearly event in the world of sf, one that is very widely welcomed. *Spectrum III* is intended, like its predecessors, to show just how broad the boundaries of sf are—broad enough to contain the interest of anyone who cares for the written word and for the future of mankind. The two editors have once again prefaced their collection with a vigorous and argumentative introduction, contrasting particularly the work of William Burroughs and J. G. Ballard, and discussing, too, the translation of the Swedish space-epic, *Aniara*, written by Harry Martinson.

Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest make no attempt to