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science fiction news

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October 1964

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

THE PROGRAMME

November 1964—April 1965

November

CONDITIONALLY HUMAN

by Walter Miller

New writing from the author of *A Canticle for Leibowitz* has to match the highest expectations, and these three novellas can certainly stand on their own merits; each one of them explores, in a setting in the future, desires and needs which are common to every age, and each of them is, by implication, a comment on our own time. The title story explores the effect on mankind of the mutated animal pets which are substitutes for children, in a society where birth is strictly controlled because of overpopulation; 'The Darfsteller' (a Hugo Award winner) pictures an old 'ham' actor, forced out of work by mechanized theatre, struggling to make a come-back; in the third story, 'Dark Benediction', micro-organisms from meteorites bring a plague to the world in which the victims suffer a peculiarly horrible skin change; at the same time they develop a hypersensitivity which makes them desire to touch the uncontaminated.

'Mr Miller is adept at portraying people fighting not to accept the impossible and then accepting it.' *Daily Telegraph*.

Gollancz 15s; SFBC 6s

December

NINE TOMORROWS

by Isaac Asimov

A collection of short stories by a master of sf—nine uncanny glimpses into the not too distant future of earth people. One of the most astonishing things about Asimov is his ability to move easily from sharp, imaginative humour to the grimmest realism. In 'I'm in Marsport without Hilda', for example, three gangsters suspected of smuggling a vital tranquillizer drug from earth give a hilarious lesson in outer-space 'hipster' slang while their frantic interrogator worries about his rendezvous with Marsport's most female lady; 'All the Troubles of the World' has the chill touch of tragedy, for Multivac, the amazing machine, could solve every problem fed into it—except the problem of its own humanity; 'The Ugly Little Boy' is a subtle study in terror: a young child is suddenly thrust out of the dimness of the past to become the subject of a brutal scientific experiment. To the nine stories Asimov has added two well-pointed satires in verse.

Dobson 15s; SFBC 6s

January 1965

THE AIRS OF EARTH

by Brian W. Aldiss

'To be a science fiction writer is to be a curiosity not only to one's neighbours—all men are curiosities to their neighbours—but also to the national press. Many reviewers do not know how to take science fiction writers. The man who wrote in *Reynolds News* of one of my previous books that "it contained not one important new forecast" was obviously hoping for a cross between Old Moore and the Air Ministry roof. Then there was that delightful concluding sentence to Mr John Coleman's friendly review in the *Spectator*: "Mr Aldiss knows all about chromosomes, but he seems, agreeably enough, to be almost totally uninterested in sex."

'... And so I come to these airs of Earth. Some of them do seem to be about personal relationships—the first one, for instance, centres round them. Yet they are always about something else as well. It's a confusing situation about which a few words might well be said—by someone else. ... I don't think these airs on a G-strain are much like any other writer's, though they show some variety among themselves. The majority of them have not been given benefit of escape velocity, and take place on Earth, though the Earths differ considerably, some being tomorrow's possible Earth, some the Earths of the remote future. Space is a bit *passé* these days, now that the Russian and American tourist season is getting into full swing.' *From the author's introduction to 'The Airs of Earth'*.

'Mr Aldiss displays his usual exuberance in exploring human reactions to new ideas, new advances in technology. ... He has a visionary quality.' *Daily Telegraph*.

Faber 18s; SFBC 6s