

Review Article(None)

On Reading ``The Janitor on Mars'' by Martin Amis

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Abstract

``The Janitor on Mars'' by Martin Amis, a British novelist, appeared in The New Yorker at Halloween, 1998, recalling the broadcast of another Martian story sixty years before. But unlike the earlier story, this story is a satire on or caricature of ourselves, like Gulliver's Travels. The main part of the story takes place on the day of a live TV interview with a robot left behind as the janitor on Mars after all the Martians perished long, long ago. He had been trip-wired to get in touch with Earth at the appropriate time, which was in September 2048. A human delegation was organized and arrived as the studio audience the following June. They are not told what had tripped the wire until the very end of the broadcast when it comes as a great shock about the Earth's damaged atmosphere. The Martian history that the Janitor tells his human audience deals with other serious problems that we have on Earth. We watch the TV broadcast in the company of the janitor of an orphanage who is facing not the problem of saving the Earth but of saving one abused child.
