

# science fiction news

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

## NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE

### Spectrum

Selected and edited by Robert Conquest and  
Kingsley Amis

(Gollancz 18s; SFBC 5s 9d)

BOTH editors of this very special short story collection have established their own reputations in more orthodox literary genres, one as a novelist and the other as a political writer, both as poets. Yet there are no keener enthusiasts for sf than these two men. They both feel that something important is lacking in conventional fiction, that the idea of literature which has grown up in recent centuries has increasingly impoverished itself by ignoring one whole hemisphere of the imagination. It is this hemisphere which is explored by the writers represented in *Spectrum*.

The editors have been guided in their choice by the belief that sf is not merely 'Gothic' fantasy or adventure fiction brought up to date by being given a superficial coating of technological jargon. On the contrary, they consider it a mode in which new and exciting ideas can be expressed, a vehicle whereby the tendencies of our own society can be thrown into startling relief: a medium in which modern man can be most sharply satirized—and warned of what he may become: a stage as large as space and time, on which he may be seen acting under the stress of undreamed of social, psychological and physical pressures: above all an outlet, both refreshing and necessary for modern man's sense of wonder.

Contributors include Simak, Pohl, Algis Budrys, Robert Heinlein and Robert Sheckley. In the latter's 'Pilgrimage to Earth', an inhabitant of planet Kazanga 4 comes on holiday to Earth in search of love. For Earth, deprived of all her natural resources, now specializes only in extremes, charging her visitors high prices for them to keep going. In this way tourists from the saner planets can buy war, love, murder, beauty—in the circumstances this particular visitor's reactions are natural enough. 'Null P', by William Tenn, is a satire with an even sharper bite. After a nuclear war America elects for its President the Average Man. Under his leadership technology retrogresses, minds are dulled; a quarter of a million years later mankind is taken over by a hardy race of dogs, and finally—but you must read for yourselves and find out.

The editors of this volume have taken immense trouble to get only the best of sf, and their serious interest in the genre is well reflected in its pages.

'They have succeeded in presenting a varied and entertaining collection of quality and solid content, uncluttered by morbidity and shock effects.' *New Worlds*.

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The sixth in our series of readers' stories . . . with a really unexpected ending:

## Transfer

by Norman Sutcliffe

I WAS hired to do the killing. Oh, the idea wasn't mine in the first place, but I was picked to do the dirty work. It was nothing new to me, of course. I'd been rubbing people out regularly: political agitators, men of influence, saboteurs, spies, and in fact anybody who stepped on the Government's toes. Well, anyway, this Centaurian, Gonan Ranoth, had to go—but I'm getting ahead of myself, so I'd better start at the beginning.

Some sixty odd years ago men found a way to cross the great gulf of space many times faster than the speed of light so, progress being progress, we spent no time in getting to Alpha Centauri, one of the nearest stars. Around this sun we discovered eight planets, three of which were inhabited, and their people obviously resented intruders. Man wasted no time in declaring war (a custom which has survived thousands of years and still shows no sign of dying out), and since they were just as advanced technically as ourselves the war lasted some thirty odd years with neither side gaining any advantage whatever. So for the last twenty years or so there has been complete stalemate on both sides with neither being on the offensive.

On the other hand, scientists have been working like hell in the hopes of producing something new which may help to swing the war in our favour, so it was only a matter of time before some bright boy in our scientific department hit on something, and we're ready to start all over again. This time it was brain transference.

I remember being called into the office of the General (who shall be nameless) and given the gen. A good half of what he told me was, of course, way above my head, but I grasped the essentials. This machine took brains from two persons, converted them into energy and beamed them into each other's skulls, thus switching them. That was it, pure and simple. The only snag was that the two subjects must be in space. On a planet it would be too difficult to work out the exact spatial co-ordinates owing to the spin, and secondly there was too big a risk of the subject not being where you have calculated he should be. On a space liner, though, where the subject is strapped in, the co-ordinates are