

Anti-psychiatry and disability in *Flowers for Algernon* and *Clans of the Alphane Moon*

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Abstract: *Clans of the Alphane Moon* (1964) by Philip K. Dick and *Flowers for Algernon* (1966) by Daniel Keyes are contemporaneous with the anti-psychiatry movement of the 1960s. As each novel depicts mentally disordered and/or intellectually disabled characters coming into conflict with the psychiatric institutions which define their conditions and administer their lives, they may both be considered examples of literary anti-psychiatry, akin to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by (1962) Ken Kesey.

This essay places both novels in context, not only of contemporaneous anti-psychiatry theorists but also of J. G. Ballard's concept of 'inner space'. Through this critical prism, the essay explores the novels' relation to present-day concerns of disability studies. The essay demonstrates many shortcomings of Dick's work, especially regarding his novel's depiction of mental illness and treatment of its female characters. However, while *Flowers for Algernon* is the superior novel in almost every other consideration, *Clans for Algernon* creates a conceptually fascinating and radically transgressive 'inner space' which surpasses Keyes' ultimately more conservative work.

Keywords: Anti-psychiatry; Daniel Keyes; Disability; Inner space; Philip K. Dick.

They were laughing at him because he was retarded.

And at first I had been amused along with the rest.

Suddenly, I was furious at myself and all those who were smirking at him. I wanted to pick up the dishes and throw them. I wanted to smash their laughing faces. I jumped up and shouted: "Shut up! Leave him alone! He can't understand. He can't help what he is... but for God's sake, have some respect! He's a human being!" (Keyes, 1966, p. 138)

Charlie Gordon's tirade against the callous patrons of a diner in *Flowers for Algernon* is unsubtle but emphatic. The "Algernon" of the novel's title is a laboratory mouse which has undergone the same intelligence-boosting medical procedure as Charlie, "the novel's [formerly] intellectually-disabled narrator-protagonist," and the experience of de-humanisation is repeatedly demonstrated in the novel via parallels between Charlie and his murine precursor (Sklar, 2013, p. 47). Similarly, *Clans of the Alphane Moon* by Philip K. Dick depicts the dominant "sane" members of society and the marginalised "sick" coming into conceptual and verbal (and eventually quite literal) conflict. Both novels predate the emergence of disability studies as an academic discipline, but the shared themes of disenfranchisement and the distorting effect of social consensus echo across the field, particularly in the famous declaration by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) that 'it is

society which disables [us]. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society' (1975). *Flowers for Algernon* and *Clans of the Alphane Moon*, of course, diverge from the UPIAS in their focus on mental impairment instead of somatic conditions—Charlie Gordon is intellectually disabled, while *Clans of the Alphane Moon* depicts a range of mental disorders including schizophrenia and depression—but the notion of disability as a flawed understanding of impairment which is imposed on the impaired by the unimpaired is clearly evident in these earlier texts. This essay explores the mental landscapes of each novel and how they resist or conform to conventional understandings of psychiatric disorder/disability.

The more immediate theoretical context for these novels is not disability studies but anti-psychiatry, a global intellectual turn by disparate thinkers like

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Michel Foucault, R. D. Laing, and Thomas Szasz towards critiquing the practices and principles of contemporary psychiatric theory. Although I have chosen the word “turn” over “movement” to describe this grouping of thinkers, there is some remarkable continuity to their work despite an absence of professional interaction or official association, or even mere compatriotism. I am therefore content to continue to use the term “anti-psychiatry”—popularly attributed to David Cooper—as a serviceable shorthand for the points of convergence in thought, which I demonstrate and connect to the later disability studies movement in the first section of this essay. The second section makes the case for *Flowers for Algernon* and *Clans of the Alphane Moon* as instances of literary anti-psychiatry (akin to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, the 1962 novel by Ken Kesey which, in concert with the 1975 film adaptation by Miloš Forman, is probably the most celebrated example of anti-psychiatric fiction). I acknowledge that although it is dated by some aspects of its language, *Flowers for Algernon* is far more consonant with contemporary disability studies in the era of social justice and the #MeToo movement than *Clans of the Alphane Moon* is, and it is perhaps reassuring to note that *Flowers for Algernon* has remained a popular novel among both SF fans and the wider community since its publication, while the significantly more problematic *Clans of the Alphane Moon* has not achieved anything like the level of visibility that other novels by Dick such as *The Man in the High Castle* or *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* have enjoyed.

However, while it is important to acknowledge the many ways in which Dick’s novel runs counter to progressive thought, particularly on the issues of feminism and mental illness, I demonstrate in the final part of this essay that *Clans of the Alphane Moon* may be considered to be more continuous with the revolutionary impulse of contemporaneous anti-psychiatry than *Flowers for Algernon*. It is hoped that this essay further demonstrates that while these novels both predate the emergence of disability studies as an academic discipline and

may, to varying degrees, remain problematic for many contemporary readers, their depictions of impaired characters resisting their society’s psychiatric institutions’ conceptualisation and treatment of them warrants their consideration as objects of disability study.

“The Alphanes will guarantee the civil liberties of the clans. No hospitalisation. No therapy.” (Dick, 1964, p. 190)

Although anti-psychiatry was an international phenomenon with major voices from various countries—particularly in Italy, where the work of Franco Basaglia resulted in reform in national policy—it is regrettably necessary here to narrow the field by taking a smaller sample of thinkers. The texts which primarily inform the understanding of anti-psychiatry adopted here are *The Divided Self* by R. D. Laing, *Asylums* by Erving Goffman, *The Myth of Mental Illness* by Thomas Szasz, and *Madness and Civilization* by Michel Foucault. My concern here is not with these authors’ insights into specific medical conditions such as hysteria or schizophrenia, but in their more general consideration of the psychiatric institution(s) which manifest the prevailing contemporaneous thought. There are two main threads of anti-psychiatric theory that I want to draw from these works, the first of which is the idea of the physical institution. Foucault (1961) begins his history of madness with images of the ship of fools and leprosariums which, through the Renaissance to the 20th century, evolve into mental asylums, changing form but consistently reflecting the impulse to segregate those considered “mad” and keep them apart from the “sane” (pp. 3–13). Goffman (1961) describes asylums as “total institutions,” which “disrupt or defile precisely those actions that in civil society have the role of attesting [...] that [the inmate] is a person with “adult” self-determination, autonomy, and freedom of action” (p. 43). We might readily term the process which Goffman (1961) describes ‘dehumanisation’, since it appears to deprive its subjects of essential human rights, but Goffman instead names this process “mortification” (p. 43), suggesting that the in-

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mates of psychiatric institutions are dehumanised to the extent that they are figuratively murdered. One might hope that a process of depersonalisation might be undone—via some rehabilitative process which might well be named “repersonalisation”—but Goffman’s terminology suggests that the effects of the psychiatric institution on the “mad” are so thoroughgoing that the subject is not only no longer a human being but essentially no longer even a being at all.

Secondly, the language of psychotherapy carries out a conceptual estrangement and isolation, identified by Laing and Szasz as well as by Foucault, wherein “the words one has to use are specifically designed to isolate” (Laing, 1960, p. 18). On this point Foucault (1961) may be seen to share Goffman’s apparently bleak view of the potential for reform, as he states in his introduction to *Madness and Civilization* that “modern man no longer communicates with the madman [...] As for a common language, there is no such thing; or rather, there is no such thing any longer” (p. x). In the conversation between mad and sane “the madman” has been silenced by the death of his language, and “[t]he language of psychiatry” is, therefore “a monologue of reason about madness, [which] has been established only on the basis of such a silence” (Foucault, 1961, p. xi). Although Foucault states elsewhere that the purpose of his historical investigation of concepts is to demonstrate that they are contingent and therefore mutable, this first major example of Foucault’s “archaeological” method suggests that psychiatrists and their patients are fated to come into verbal-conceptual conflict indefinitely. Laing (1960) is significantly more optimistic on this point, with much of *The Divided Self* devoted to espousing Laing’s concept of “existential phenomenology” as a method by which “to articulate what the other’s ‘world’ is and his way of being in it” (p. 25). Although the sensationalist title of Szasz’s work has proven predictably and perennially controversial, its subtitle—*Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct*—demonstrates Szasz’s commitment to offering a reformative alternative to the targets of his critique. Szasz (1961)

suggests that mental disorder and resulting distress are ‘more akin to the problem of a person speaking a foreign tongue than it is to that of a person having a bodily disease’ (p. 11), but does not suggest as Foucault does that the foreign tongue in this analogy is a dead one. Szasz (1961) furthermore contrasts psychiatry with other disciplines, and states that “[e]ntity-thinking has always preceded process-thinking. Physics, chemistry, and certain branches of biology have long ago supplemented substantive conceptualisations by process-theories. Psychiatry has not” (p. 1). In Szasz’s view psychiatry has not yet experienced a conceptual revolution which has occurred naturally in all other disciplines, and the language of contemporaneous psychiatry applies a false veneer of scientific detachment which actually undermines any potential therapeutic benefit to the patient; it is possible, Szasz seems to suggest, that once psychiatry undergoes an overdue but possibly inevitable conceptual reconfiguration this linguistic problem may be resolved.

Neither this essay nor the objects of its study are strictly works of psychiatric history—the questions of whether psychiatric reform is possible, or to what extent it may have already occurred, are apposite but not fundamental. The focus here is instead on how *Flowers for Algernon* and *Clans of the Alphan Moon* demonstrate a shared concern with these theorists, about the ways in which the relationship between the disabled and/or disordered subjects and the psychiatric institutions which administer their lives is frequently antagonistic rather than therapeutic. Lennard J. Davis (2017) states that the dominant concept of “normalcy is constructed to create the ‘problem’ of the disabled person” (p.1), and the eponymous clans of Dick’s novel and Keyes’s Charlie Gordon both reflect the dissonance and distress arising from contemporary psychiatry’s hegemonic concept of psychological “normalcy” or mental health.

“No talk of rehabilitation [...] of hope.” (Keyes, 1966, p. 161)

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Both *Clans of the Alphane Moon* and *Flowers for Algernon* are fundamentally emblematic of this central tenet of anti-psychiatry, by virtue of their depictions of conflict between the psychiatric institution and its patients, and the failure of psychiatry to alleviate those patients' distress through or in spite of that conflict. This failure is most vividly presented in *Clans of the Alphane Moon*, which has as its premise a society formed by the patients of a mental hospital after the eponymous moon is abandoned by human settlers. The society is divided into castes according to diagnosis, and its members are segregated into towns which are named after historic figures which supposedly embody those conditions, such as the paranoid "Adolfville" and the manic "Da Vinci Heights" (Dick, 1964, pp. 1, 8). The society that quite literally emerges from the asylum destroys it and refers to the ruined building as a "concentration camp" in conversation with a psychiatrist from Earth who plans to return the population to "enforced hospitalization" (Dick, 1964, pp. 85, 144). Although the physical manifestation of psychiatry on the colony is symbolically destroyed, the linguistic isolation and estrangement are still evident in these dialogues. The psychiatrist, Mary Rittersdorf, insists that the "concentration camp" is a "legitimate hospital," but the rationale for her mission is ironically undermined: she claims that the Alphane society requires intervention on the grounds that "Total isolation [is] the ultimate effect of their entire group activity," but her solution to this is hospitalization—"in other words," as another character points out, "captivity" (Dick, 1964, pp. 84–5, 144). Her perverse solution to a society that has allegedly engaged itself is, as her colleague points out, to place it in a smaller cage. The notion of linguistic dissonance between patient and psychiatrist is also comically demonstrated in an exchange between Mary and Howard Straw, the diplomatic representative of the 'Mans' (the manic caste), who mishears her reference to "assorted patterns of mental illness" as "sordid" and responds to the perceived slight with brief but "dire rage" (Dick, 1964, p. 146). The novel also frequently

highlights similarities between Mary and the manic patients that she comes into conflict with, and ironically she becomes an immensely destructive force once warfare breaks out between the clans and the invaders that she represents. With heavy-handed irony typical of the novel, Dick depicts Mary judgmentally berating the clans for being "out of their minds," even after she herself has "fired at Chuck [Rittersdorf, her estranged husband]" and "killed [a manic caste] soldier as he fled back to his tank" (1964, 182).

Flowers for Algernon, the later of the two novels, lacks the pyrotechnic visual metaphors and action of *Clans*, but shares with it a skeptical view of the psychiatric institution. Its premise is that a neurosurgical technique is developed which enables an intellectually disabled patient to rapidly become a genius whose intellect surpasses his doctors'. However, this being a work of literary anti-psychiatry, the change is temporary and the first-person narration charts both Charlie Gordon's meteoric intellectual evolution and his inevitable decline; the moral seems to be that Charlie would have been spared unnecessary suffering if he had remained ignorant of his affliction and its potential cure. In an echo of *Clans of the Alphane Moon* there is a symbolic misunderstanding between doctor and patient—in this case, Charlie writes in his diary about the "raw shok test," which he later discovers to be the famous Rorschach inkblot test (Keyes, 1966, p. 2; italics original). Keyes develops this further than Dick does and shows Charlie's anger when he takes the test again after the operation and belatedly realises that images are meant to be suggested to him by the shape of the inkblots, rather than literally hidden somewhere in or beneath the ink (Keyes, 1966, pp. 39–41). His doctors assure him that they use the same wording to describe the test each time it's administered, but clearly this isn't a viable language for communicating with Charlie until they've raised his intellect. This recalls Szasz's suggestion that psychiatry is essentially a linguistic problem, and if the analogy is applied to *Flowers for Algernon*, then Charlie's doctors have solved

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the communication problem by simply forcing their patient to speak their own language.

This linguistic barrier between patient and doctor is a recurring theme in the first part of the novel, in which Charlie's understanding of psychiatry changes as his intellect rapidly grows. For example, Charlie's doctor's notes are written in an obscure code—'WF + ADdF-Ad orig. WF – A SF + obj'—which is presumably a practical shorthand for them, but has the effect of further isolating Charlie from his treatment (Keyes, 1966, p. 41). In another scene, earlier in the treatment, Keyes (1966) depicts the communicative barrier between Charlie and his doctors vividly when Charlie's attempts to recall his doctors' words, which are peppered with lacunae: "most people of his low ment** are host** and uncoop** they are usually dull and apathet**" (p. 7). Although the idea that Charlie remembers the first three syllables of "apathetic" and not the last one, yet remembers "contribyushun [sic]" on the very next page, does not withstand much imaginative scrutiny, Keyes's creative typography vividly depicts the doctors' failures to communicate clearly with their patient. Later, when Charlie has been transformed into a superhuman genius by his doctors' experimental surgical techniques, Keyes presents Charlie's enlightened perspective on the physical institution that he anticipates living in once his intellect declines so much that he can no longer look after himself. The Warren State Home fares far better in Keyes's (1966) fictional world than the Alphan asylum does in Dick's, and it is slightly more sympathetically presented as a "deep freeze" (p. 153) for its inmates rather than a concentration camp. The head psychologist there is nevertheless compelled to clarify that the home "isn't a prison," despite the fact that there is no fence around the grounds. The psychologist in this scene would attest that this is evidence of how few of his patients are capable of living outside of the home, but an anti-psychiatric reading—which the novel consistently encourages via Charlie's ironic scrutiny of his doctors and the broader psychiatric institution

in which they operate—may instead interpret this as evidence of the power of the institution as a concept, which keeps inmates "shut out from every human experience" (Keyes, 1966, p. 160) even without physical walls to literally impede them.

"I used to think I was so [...] completely different from my patients. They were sick and I wasn't."

(Dick, 1964, p. 221)

There is a clear sympathy, then, between Keyes' novel and Goffman's critique of the depersonalisation of inmates in asylums. Charlie repeatedly laments that his doctors view him more as a means of professional advancement than as a human being, and when he sees another man with an intellectual disability being mocked by the patrons of a diner, he launches into the passionate tirade against their belittling treatment of him, quoted at the start of this essay. Its not particularly subtle writing and the novel's use of the word "retarded" (Keyes, 1966, p. 138) certainly dates it, but *Flowers for Algernon* arguably transcends the generic conventions of SF in a way that *Clans of the Alphan Moon* does not. *Flowers for Algernon* provides a poignant character-study of tragedy and regret that it simply would not be capable of without its speculative premise. *Clans of the Alphan Moon*, in contrast, features a lot of the genre tropes that put off SF-sceptics—such as aliens, spaceships, and rayguns—and it does not often employ them for any clear purpose. It is, in the pejorative sense, a far more generic SF novel than *Flowers for Algernon*. For example, Dick's novel features a character with the powerful ability to "make time flow backward" (1964, p. 37), whose introduction one might reasonably suspect to foreshadow an instance of timeline-erasure and revision in the novel's explosive climax. Dick, however, defies Anton Chekhov's famous dictum that "[o]ne must never place a loaded rifle on the stage if it isn't going to go off," and although the character is briefly mentioned in the novel's resolution, it is only in reference to her capacity for spying on Chuck Rittersdorf, and not to related to the manipulation of time. The novel add-

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-itionally suffers from the career-long problem of Dick's prose, of which Jonathan Lethem (2005) says that "[h]is sentences routinely fall down and cry 'ouch'" (p. 78). Dick's oeuvre in general also displays a continuous problem of a dehumanising view of female characters, which is particularly pronounced in *Clans of the Alphane Moon*. All of the novel's female characters are presented as potential sexual conquests for the male narrators; most are introduced with those narrators' assessments of their breasts; and one is described with the particularly grotesque phrase, "well-formed gynecologic apparatus" (Dick, 1964, p. 143). In keeping with this dated and uncomfortable aspect of Dick's fiction, the depictions of mental illness in *Clans of the Alphane Moon* are also caricaturistic and problematic—far more so than Keyes's dated terminology. Gabriel Baines, the diplomatic representative of the paranoid caste, is—in addition to a thoroughgoing chauvinist—conniving and manipulative. The manic caste members are simply aggressive and ill-tempered, and the industrial output of their settlement is far more focused on military production than are the works of its namesake polymath, Leonardo Da Vinci. The depressive delegate, Dino Watters, is dour and pessimistic, and Baines complains that "[i]t's [Watters's] own fault he's the way he is; he could change if he wanted. He could believe good things if he made the effort" (Dick, 1964, p. 6). Although this utterance is of course characteristic of the novel in its dramatic irony, Dick does little to deconstruct these dismissive stereotypes or to offer any more sympathetic alternatives.

However, while it is imperative to acknowledge and address Dick's failings, particularly in a contemporary intellectual climate benefiting from both World Mental Health Day and the more recent #Me-Too movement, it is also important to highlight aspects of the novel which succeed in spite of itself. I therefore wish to demonstrate in this last part of the essay that *Clans of the Alphane Moon* is, from a certain perspective, radical and innovative and consistent with the reformative impulse of the con-

temporaneous anti-psychiatry turn. Although *Flowers for Algernon* is undoubtedly a more persuasive and successful work of fiction, it cannot compete with *Clans of the Alphane Moon* in this particular critical consideration, and in order to demonstrate the basis of this approach, a scene from Keyes's novel is instructive. In it, Charlie's two primary doctors, the psychiatrists Professor Nemur and Dr. Strauss, debate their understandings of the concept of an intelligence quotient (IQ). Nemur, who is often in conflict with Charlie and clearly views his patient more as a means of professional advancement than as a charge in need of care, expresses the common idea that IQ is simply a measurement of intelligence—"like a scale in a drugstore weighs pounds" (Keyes, 1966, p. 35). Strauss, the more sympathetic of Charlie's two doctors, argues instead that IQ is a measurement of one's capacity for intelligence, and that the quotient is more akin to "the numbers on the outside of a measuring jug" (Keyes, 1966, p. 35). This image suggests a conceptual evolution from a two-dimensional, linear measure to a three-dimensional or "spatial" understanding of the human mind.

This scene, therefore, calls to mind the term "inner space," coined by Dick's and Keyes's contemporary J. G. Ballard in his 1963 essay "Time, Memory, and Inner Space." The more widely-cited formulation of Ballard's concept appears in a 1968 interview, in which Ballard "define[s] Inner Space as an imaginary realm in which on the one hand the outer world of reality, and on the other the inner the inner world of the mind meet and merge [e.g.] in the landscapes of the surrealist painters' (p. 106). Unfortunately, for all of the novel's many other merits, this concept is only briefly suggested in the above-quoted scene in *Flowers for Algernon*. Instead, the conceptualisation and depiction of the human mind in the novel might fairly be described as otherwise resolutely two-dimensional. Charlie's eventual mental decline is reflected in the written qualities of his first-person narration, like a mirror image of his miraculous development at the start of

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the novel. The narrative describes (in the mathematical sense) a literal arc—Charlie’s intelligence increases over time and then declines back again on a similar trajectory. One might imagine this arc plotted onto a graph, with the axes measuring the two central components of the story: intelligence and the passage of time. The SF conceit of the story offers a kind of fluidity between levels of intelligence that isn’t available in the real world, but Charlie’s existence is nevertheless consistently defined in relation to the two poles of superhuman intelligence and mental degeneracy; indeed, Charlie rhetorically asks ‘Who is better equipped [to complete the psychiatric study]? Who else has lived in both worlds?’ (Keyes, 1966, p. 139), presenting his lived experience as a binary rather than a scale or spectrum. Keyes offers no prospect for Charlie’s recovery, and the narrative arc that continues beyond the novel’s last page is without doubt further mental decline, imminent institutionalisation, and Charlie’s eventual death in the Warren State Home. Howard Sklar (2013) critiques the depiction of Charlie at the start and end of the novel as conforming to “a staple of the stereotypical representation of people with intellectual disabilities,” and the recurrence of Charlie’s disability, therefore, represents a return to conventional understandings (p. 57). Contrary to the reformative impulse of anti-psychiatry thinkers, then, *Flowers for Algernon* not only “consolidates and reinforces conventions of dystopian SF,” but also the psychiatric institution which Charlie’s transformation briefly disturbs (Sklar, 2013, p. 48).

The stereotypes of mental disorder presented in Dick’s novel are generally irredeemable, and Sandra Newman’s (2014) description of the novel as “ridiculous” and “offensive” is largely inarguable. However, Dick’s dated caricatures are contained within a fictional social space which remains conceptually fascinating, in spite of the worst aspects of his writing. Contrary to what one might initially expect given the grouping and segregation of people in different cities based on their diagnoses, fluidity is shown to be fundamental to Alphane society. It

is stated that newborns on the moon are “classified as polymorphous schizophrenic until proved otherwise”; children are “differentiated” at the age of ten, unless no clear symptoms of other disorders appear in which case they are considered “Polys” (Dick, 1964, pp. 5, 213) by essential disposition rather than by default. This is not a definitive classification, however, and the diplomatic representative of the Poly people, Annette Golding, reflects that “theoretically, being a Poly, [she] could become [a Mans]. In fact [she] could become anything” (Dick, 1964, p. 160). Chuck Rittersdorf, therefore, hopes that the clans’ conflation of polymorphous schizophrenia with natural mental health means that the established Poly clan might actually contain “[p]eople who work their way out of their derangements and possibly children who never developed them” (Dick, 1964, p. 213).

One of the hebephrenic characters—a docile people described by Baines as “silly” but demonstrating “some virtue in simplicity”—is shown living in Gandhitown with a wife who seems uncharacteristically aggressive for a hebephrenic:

“I not only have to live with a Heeb – I live with one who has visions, like a Skitz. Are you a Heeb or a Skitz? [...] Make up your mind [...] And you’re as irritable as a Mans [...]” she yelled at him in fury. (Dick, 1964, pp. 3, 66)

It is belatedly revealed that Elsie “had been a Mans for several years and she still retained the arrogant hostility learned at Da Vinci Heights” (Dick, 1964, p. 73), but has now actively chosen to live as a hebephrenic. Such an act of self-determination in defiance of the diagnosis assigned to her as a child would presumably be resisted by Mary Rittersdorf and the contemporary psychiatric institution which she represents, but Elsie’s husband Ignatz approvingly observes that she is “well on her way to becoming a Heeb” (Dick, 1964, p. 69). Elsie’s depiction is, like so many other characters’ in the novel, problematic, and she is not so much a convincing

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demonstration of the mutability of self-conception as a crude amalgam of two offensive stereotypes of mental illness. However, while the glimpses of fluidity which Dick provides while exploring this segregated society are certainly exceptions rather than rules, they become of profound importance at the novel's conclusion.

Lennard J. Davis proposes a historicisation of disability studies which “rethink[s] our assumptions about the universality of the concept of the norm” and recognises that it “enters European culture, or at least the European languages, only in the nineteenth century” (2017, p. 2). “To understand the disabled body,” he states, “one must return to the concept of the norm, the normal body” (Davis, 2017, p. 1). We may, in turn, apply the same logic to mental disability and/or disorder, and their relation to the “normal” or “sane” mind, and see that while we have various definitions of mental illness—such as those provided by the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, or the World Health Organization's *International Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders*—definitions of mental wellbeing are less evident. The ‘norm’—be it in terms of mental or physical ability, race, sexuality, or any other aspect of human identity—often enjoys a form of critical immunity via invisibility; so pervasive is the concept of the norm that the “normal” human—cisgender male, heterosexual, Caucasian, non-disabled and neurotypical—is taken as a given rather than being critiqued and rigorously

defined.

It is significant, then, that Chuck Rittersdorf decides at the conclusion of *Clans of the Alphane Moon* to remain on the titular satellite and found ‘the Norm settlement’:

“That will be Thomas Jeffersonburg [...] So far containing only one person, but with great anticipations for the future.”

[...]

“You're an absolute fool”, Howard Straw said disparagingly. “Nobody'll ever show up and live with you in your settlement [...] six weeks from now you'll be out of your mind; you'll be ready for every other settlement on the moon, except of course this one.”

“Maybe so.” Chuck nodded. But he was not so positive as Straw. He was thinking once more of Annette Golding, for one [...] He would wait it out. For however much time it took. And he would get help in building his settlement; already he had established what appeared to be a solid working relationship with the Pare rep, Gabriel Baines, and that portended some thing. (Dick, 1964, pp. 217-18)

The decision to found his own settlement may be ironically colonialist, given the efforts to which Chuck goes earlier in the novel to avert the military invasion which his wife spearheads. To understand Chuck's cautious optimism in the face of his new compatriot's dismissive pessimism, it is important to place this scene in the context of the novel's overarching plot. The official motive for Mary Rittersdorf's diplomatic mission is the feared “consequences to us [i.e. civilisation on Earth] of a mentally deranged social enclave” which might develop “a paranoiac nationalist state-concept [or] barbaric destructiveness of a manic sort” (Dick, 1964, p. 32). There is of course heavy irony in this scene, with both named threats being familiar to Dick's earth-bound readers from the Second World War and the contemporary Vietnam War. Implicit in Mary's employers' statement is the assumption that Ter-ran civilisation is essentially sane, normal, and that the Alphane moon and its unfamiliar society are Earth's monstrous, threatening “Other.” The novel's climactic conclusion, therefore, depicts the norm of mental wellbeing, no longer divided by the asylum walls, coming into a traumatic and pyrotechnic conflict with its Other which reconfigures the definitions of each.

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Since Mary ironically comes to embody that “barbaric destructiveness” (Dick, 1964, p. 32) in her actions on the moon, it is expected by all of the novel’s characters that she will settle with the manics once she is stranded there. Perversely, she is instead diagnosed via “a full spectrum of psychological profile tests” with depression, and she resignedly prepares to live in the “endless dark gloom” (Dick, 1964, pp. 207, 215) of Cotton Mather Estates. Chuck—despite first being introduced at the start of the novel contemplating suicide—is instead diagnosed as sane, apparently the first of his kind on the moon and therefore alien to the established settlements, unless he were to “choose” a mental disorder and adopt the customs of that clan, as Elsie does. Chuck’s decision to found his own settlement may be read as a reversion to conventional psychiatric theory, a symbol of conceptual and literal barriers set up between the sick and the sane. However, Chuck anticipates that “he would get help in building his settlement” from members of existing clans who might eventually join him there, and he promises to travel from his own settlement to the depressives (Dick, 1964, p. 218) in order to visit Mary. This demonstrates firstly, Chuck’s belief in the fluidity of the Alphane society, and his endorsement of Baines’s assertion that “if we can work together we are not sick” (Dick, 1964, p. 145); the functioning society on the moon embodies mental disorder as a handicap which entails cooperation rather than a disability which prohibits it. Secondly, the founding of Thomas Jeffersonburg does not represent the resurrection of conventional psychiatric theory and the (literal or figurative) asylum walls, but instead suggests that normalcy is constantly under construction, “started out but never finished” like the “hodgepodge of incomplete [...] projects” (Dick, 1964, p. 9) at Da Vinci Heights. The destruction of the asylum walls before the start of the novel allows the inmates and the “norms” to meet, revealing that their fluid identities are the result of symbiotic relation. It is finally in this reconstructed space that Chuck and Mary are able to decide to resume their relationship, despite mu-

tual infidelity and attempts to murder each other over the course of the novel, and they conclude that “there’s not that much difference” (Dick, 1964, p. 221) between their mental states.

“All the barriers were gone. I had [...] found my way out of the labyrinth.” (Keyes, 1966, p. 204)

To read these two novels as instances of literary anti-psychiatry—SF bedfellows to Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1962)—is to situate them in the context of ideas being explored by a wide variety of contemporaneous thinkers from around the world, and is clearly reflected in both novels’ ironic scrutiny of the authority of the psychiatric institution. Although contemporary disability theory attends more to physical impairment than mental disorder, it is nevertheless a valuable lens through which to view these works. Charlie Gordon’s passionate defense of his fellow intellectually-disabled “human being[s]” (Keyes, 1966, p. 138) is a clear tirade against the ableist “norms” of society, while Chuck and Mary Rittersdor’s integration into liberated Alphane society seems to prove Gabriel Baines’s point that “[they] are not sick” (Dick, 1964, p. 145) or disabled. The first-person narrative of *Flowers for Algernon* traces Charlie’s meteoric intellectual development as the beneficiary of psychiatric medicine and, with effective pathos, his inevitable return to intellectual disability as he discovers the shortcomings of his doctors’ work. While Keyes’s novel makes a powerful emotional appeal, rendering Charlie a far more sympathetic and memorable character than anyone in *Clans of the Alphane Moon*, it also appeals to dated conventions of representations of disability (Sklar, 2013, p. 57). Contrary to Charlie’s claim to having transcended the “labyrinth”—an image which recalls the mazes which he and his doctors set for Algernon as medical tests—the narrative of the novel presents only a temporary disruption of conventional psychiatric theory.

In contrast, *Clans of the Alphane Moon* provides a fascinating early example of the Ballardian con-

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cept of “inner space,” wherein “the outer world of reality [and] the inner world of the mind meet and merge” (Ballard, 1968, p. 106). Unlike more famous examples such as *The Dream Master* (1966) by Roger Zelazny, *Mindplayers* (1987) by Pat Cadigan, or Christopher Nolan’s 2010 blockbuster SF-action film *Inception*, Dick’s version of inner space fiction does not revolve around the premise of “dream hacking.” While these later creators’ works craft fantastical physical realms which symbolically represent characters’ minds, Dick’s novel presents a landscape which is, within the novel’s fictional premise, uniformly real; unlike some of his more famous novels such as *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965) or *Ubik* (1969), there is no suggestion that any character’s experience in the novel is a fabrication or hallucination.

Instead, *Clans of the Alphane Moon* qualifies as inner space fiction due to the influence on the landscape of its inhabitants’ minds. The spaces shaped by the disordered minds of the Alphane clans are, like the characterisations of their diplomatic delegates, problematic and potentially uncomfortable for present-day readers, from the paranoid city, Adolfville (“the most solidly-built, sturdy and enduring urban area anywhere”), to “the incredibly degrading hovels of the [hebephrenics]” (Dick, 1964, p. 1) in Gandhitown. However, the reconfiguration of Alphane society prompted by the arrival of “Norms” from Earth results in a world in which the former asylum inmates and their new neighbours live holistically, and in which one may freely move between the mental states manifested by these districts. Charlie Gordon, on the other hand, exists in only two “worlds”—one more than anyone else in *Flowers for Algernon*, of course, but his sublime transformation is short-lived and he is soon restored to his initial intellectual disability and “shut out from every human experience” (Keyes, 1966, p. 160) by the literal and figurative walls of the Warren State Home. While Charlie begins and ends his narrative engaged by the psychiatric institution’s conceptualisation of his disorder, Chuck Rittersdorf embraces

and codifies the radical openness of the Alphane (mental) landscape.

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