



The Complete Stories of Theodore Sturgeon, Volume II: Microcosmic God

Theodore Sturgeon , Paul Williams (Editor) , Samuel R. Delany (Introduction)

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The second of a planned 10 volumes that will reprint all Sturgeon's short fiction covers his prolific output during 1940 and 1941, after which he suffered five years of writer's block. Showcasing Sturgeon's early penchant for fantasy, the first six selections include whimsical ghost stories, such as "Cargo," in which a World War II munitions freighter is commandeered by invisible, peace-loving fairies. With the publication of his enduring SF classic, "Microcosmic God," Sturgeon finally found his voice, combining literate, sharp-edged prose with fascinating speculative science while recounting the power struggle between a brilliant scientist, who creates his own miniature race of gadget makers, and his greedy banker. Voice found or not, every one of the stories here is readable and entertaining today because of Sturgeon's singular gifts for clever turns of phrase and compelling narrative. As Samuel R. Delaney emphasizes in an insightful introduction, Sturgeon was the single most influential SF writer from the 1940s through the 1960s.

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The Complete Stories of Theodore Sturgeon, Volume II: Microcosmic God Details

Date : Published November 12th 1998 by North Atlantic Books (first published December 1995)

ISBN :

Author : Theodore Sturgeon , Paul Williams (Editor) , Samuel R. Delany (Introduction)

Format : Paperback 408 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Short Stories, Fiction, Fantasy

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From Reader Review The Complete Stories of Theodore Sturgeon, Volume II: Microcosmic God for online ebook

Jonas Persson says

I only read the short-story Microcosmic God, and thought it was brilliant, especially considering when it was written. Very innovative, and mind-tickling idea.

Lee Battersby says

That Theodore Sturgeon was one of SF's great stylists, and humanist writers, is without question. But collecting everything he wrote, particularly in the early days when he was churning stories out to make enough to live on, exposes the reader to a lot of sub-standard material, and a lot of work that would be better left where it lay.

There is academic interest in such sub-standard work, undoubtedly, but from a purely reading point of view it's hard to churn your way through such dross as "The Anonymous" or "The Haunt"-- two of the most misogynistic and badly-written works outside of a late-era Heinlein novel-- to get through to minor classics like "Yesterday was Monday" or "Cargo". At times it's simply too hard a job to be enjoyed.

There is nothing in this volume to rival genuinely classic Sturgeon stories like "Slow Sculpture" or "Killdozer!", and whilst that's not necessarily the point of the book, or the series as a whole, it lessens the impact of those good stories which are present to have to deal with so many simply bad ones in between. as an exercise in scholarly archiving it's a worthy project, but as a pure reading experience, it falls short.

Gretchen says

I prefer later Sturgeon, and I want to find the other books in this series.

I think the chronological publishing is very interesting for watching him grow and develop on themes, but it does mean there's a certain sameness to many of the stories.

For me, the standouts are Cargo and Yesterday Was Monday. The latter is one of my favorite stories by him, but I already have it in another collection and we're trying to cut down on our shelf space.

Michael O'Donnell says

This second volume in 'The Complete Stories of Theodore Sturgeon' series covers work written in 1940 and 1941, and is a quantum leap in quality over the stories in the first volume. Sturgeon was now selling stories regularly to John Campbell for publication in Astounding and Unknown magazines, and had ceased writing the formulaic stories for newspaper syndication found in the first volume. All but two of the stories in this volume were published in Astounding and Unknown.

The highlight of the volume is the title story Microcosmic God, about a reclusive scientist who creates microscopic beings with accelerated evolution. The creatures' technology soon overtakes that of humanity and the scientist becomes rich from exploiting their inventions, leading to jealousy and trouble from his banker.

All of the seventeen stories in this volume are readable and entertaining, with not a dud among them. A couple (Cargo and The Jumper) reflect the time they were written, being about refugees from the war in Europe and strange goings on in a prisoner of war camp, respectively. The Purple Light is also notable, as it is basically a re-write of a story from the first volume, with the location changed from a plane to a spaceship.

All in all a worthwhile collection of early Sturgeon works, in which any reader should find something to like.

Laurel says

Review of Yesterday was Monday.

I just love stories like this, with "little people" and a completely different look at life. A different look at time too.

Just imagine if our lives were a stage that someone reset every night while we were asleep. In this story Harry Wright wakes up a little too early, and finds himself on the wrong set! Wednesday, to be precise, instead of Tuesday. He discovers the world to be a pristine stage being "worn" by the various little people at work on the set, with humans like himself the "actors".

This story did take a bit of figuring out initially. I was a bit confused by the actors and times and sets and little fellows, but eventually I figured it all out. And then it was simply delightful.

Andrew says

MG is the second of 13 volumes of Sturgeon's short stories! A prolific writer who actually took 10 yrs off from writing and still accumulated enough material for 13 volumes.! The stories in this 2nd vol. were all written from 1940-41 and TS's experience as a merchant marine is evident in them,,,there are stories like Nightmare Island and Brat and Microcosmic God that are spellbounding and stratospheric in their imaginative brilliance... and starving artist as he was,,, his need to propel himself into the absurd and brilliant boundaries of imaginative fiction(to earn a living,,,he actually lived on bread and milk for weeks)were necessary imagine a three headed venus flytrap surrounded by milky white thistles,, engorging themselves on green manatees.....this is the kind of stuff TS was writing at this time! can't wait to get my paws on vol. 3...

Gabi says

Since I'm always in danger of sounding like hero worship when talking about Theodore Sturgeon, I let somebody else talk:

Samuel R. Delaney from his Foreword to Volume 2

„By the time I was twenty-one, Theodore Sturgeon was my favorite fiction writer of any genre, literary or paraliterary. [...] Sturgeon’s tales had taught me, as much as or more than those of any other writer, the incredible range of effects words could whip up, sharp and electric, in the human psyche.“

While the stories in this second volume (ranging April 1940 – June 1941) are deeply human, but mostly on the mediocre side, with the exception of „Microcosmic God“, the volume itself again is a treasure for Sturgeon fans. In his foreword describes Samuel R. Delany his few meetings with Sturgeon and the impact he had on him and thus brings the author to life. The same goes for the extensive story notes by Paul Williams, mainly compiled from correspondence.

These collections are a labour of love, and I’m looking forward to the years, when Sturgeon was at his literary peak.

Nick says

read this one from hearing about it while reading The Groundswell. Curious book. Short read. Interesting.

Kalin says

This whole collection felt as if it was almost there. Almost moving; almost memorable; almost making me think and rethink.

I almost really liked it.

But I'm *absolutely* looking forward to the next one. Because the direction has been up and up.

My impressions as I read:

~ Recently, in one of my Bulgarian-language groups, we've been discussing which scenes can still scare the life out of us, as grown-up readers.

I've just made a catch: the ending of "Shuttle Bop." It terrified me when I first read it a couple of years ago, and it still does. Probably with its madness and inexorability. You know it's coming, and you have no control to change it.

The funny part is that once I get over the shock, I start laughing. Just like the Wolfmeyer fellow. It's a stress release reaction, and thus another testament to the power of the scene.

Besides, I've generally noticed that the writers who can terrify me the most are also those who can make me laugh the hardest. (Pratchett can be pretty scary, for instance towards the end of The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents; and Beagle's encounters with the primeval elder beings in The Innkeeper's Song give me the creeps.) There must be something here

~ "Yesterday Was Monday" has *obviously* influenced a lot of people in the world of philosophical, tongue-in-cheek speculation. I wonder if David Eagleman read it before writing "Incentive" in Sum: Forty Tales

from the Afterlives.

~ Two things about "Microcosmic God" have swirled in my head since yesterday.

One, the volume of preliminary work--research and idea generation--that Sturgeon put into it. It's staggering. And a stark reminder how little time most of us Bulgarian writers usually invest into germinating a story. (But man, don't we dazzle when it comes to philosophizing. :/) Of course, there're certain justifications for that: most of us write in between their paying jobs, we can't afford to spend the time, etc. However, the fact that writers such as ?????? ?. ?????? or ?????? ?????? exist proves that we *can* do it the Sturgeon way. (Or the Daniel Bensen way. I've had the pleasure and fortune of seeing how Daniel researches his fiction; it's both intimidating and inspiring.) It'll only take us more time--certainly more than the twenty-two years of being alive that were enough for Sturgeon.

(This is more obvious, but here goes: "Microcosmic God" is an early herald of the A-bomb. When you think hard about things, sometimes you stumble upon pretty likely consequences. I'm sure Sturgeon wasn't the first one, but I don't know the early history of SF.)

Two, I was taken aback by the immorality (amorality?) of the characters. *All* of them. Show me one good guy here. I'll show you two terrible things he does, or more. In that respect, I think Sturgeon was right to revile the story (although he says that "nobody is ever and altogether good" in one of his put-downs--does it mean he saw someone good there?). Also, it's full of cardboard characters. And has a distinct men-only feel.

(Kidder may have Asperger Syndrome, judging from his inability to interact with other people, and his *total* inability to empathize with the Neoterics.)

~ "Artnan Process" contains a miraculous mix.

On the one hand, it's still quite amazing for its scientific rationale and plethora of turns and twists. I wish we could put so much time, so many ideas into *each* of our stories. (Incidentally, the scheme that the Martians impose on Earth in order to control it economically felt eerily similar to ?????? ?????'s recent explanation of the scheme behind the conflict in Ukraine.)

On the other hand, an intelligent race without a sense of humor? Same old power struggle brought over into space? Thank you, I don't smoke. (It's my ears.)

You're cracking me up, Mr Sturgeon.

Peter Caldwell says

Very early Sturgeon. Some good writing, some hack work. Worth reading especially if you want to trace his development as one of SF's greatest writers.

Jeff says

In this second volume of Sturgeon's complete stories, we see him developing more as a writer of fantasy and starting to experiment with science fiction, most notably with "Microcosmic God," which I think is one of the best science fiction stories ever written (even though Sturgeon himself didn't care much for it). His best

work was yet to come, but this is still an entertaining collection of stories.

Stephen Dedman says

While it would be unfair to say that this is a better example of Sturgeon's Law than it is of Sturgeon's talent, I will admit that most of the stories in this collection are of interest mainly to to sf historians and Sturgeon completists - and only minor interest, at that. However, the book begins with a gem, 'Cargo', and also features 'Microcosmic God', 'Brat', and 'Yesterday Was Monday', which would justify its place on my limited bookshelf space even if I wasn't a Sturgeon completist, and as those stories are currently difficult to find in any other edition, possibly on your e-reader as well.
