APPENDICES

Author’s Biography and Works

Daniel Keyes was born in Brooklyn, New York, on August 9, 1927. He was educated at Brooklyn College, where he received an A.B. degree in 1950. After graduation, Keyes worked briefly as an associate editor for the magazine *Marvel Science Fiction* while pursuing his own writing career; he later taught high school English in Brooklyn. In 1952, he married Aurea Georgina Vazquez, with whom he had three children. Keyes returned to Brooklyn College, received an A.M. degree in 1961, and went on to teach English on the university level, first at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, and then at Ohio University, where in the 1970s he became Professor of English and director of the university's creative writing center.

Daniel Keyes was still teaching high school English when he first published the work that would make his reputation. The original short story version of "Flowers for Algernon" appeared in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* in 1959. After the story won the Hugo Award for best science fiction story of the year and was adapted as a television drama, Keyes expanded the story into a novel, published in 1966. The novel won the Nebula Award of the *Science Fiction Writers of America* (tying with Samuel R. Delany's *Babel-17*) and was filmed in 1968 as *Charlie*. The film was a notable success, earning Cliff Robertson an Academy Award as Best Actor for his portrayal of Charlie Gordon.

Although none of Keyes' other work has achieved the popular and critical success of Flowers for Algernon, he has continued to write while pursuing a full-time
career in English academics. He published two other novels, *The Touch* (1968) and *The Fifth Sally* (1980), and the nonfiction works *The Minds of Billy Milligan* (1981) and *Unveiling Claudia: A True Story of a Serial Murder* (1986). Both *The Minds of Billy Milligan* and *The Fifth Sally* share with *Flowers for Algernon* a concern with extraordinary psychological states, as both books examine the phenomenon of multiple personalities. Indeed, Keyes was able to write his book on Billy Milligan, the first person in the United States ever acquitted of a major felony on the grounds of multiple personalities, only after several of Milligan's selves read *Flowers for Algernon* and agreed to work with the author.

Now retired from Ohio University and living in Boca Raton, Florida, Keyes has recently completed a new novel and seen his work attain tremendous popularity in Japan. *Daniel Keyes Collected Stories* (1993) and *The Daniel Keyes Reader* (1994), and the sequel to *The Minds of Billy Milligan*, *The Milligun Wars* (1993), have all been published in Japan, with *The Milligan Wars* appearing in a U.S. edition in 1996.

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"[An important editor named] Horace came in from the other room and said, 'Dan, this is a good story, but I'm gonna tell you how to make it a great story: Charlie does not lose his intelligence; he remains a super-genius, and he and Alice fall in love, they get married, and live happily ever after.'..."
Going against his editor's advice proved rewarding, for the story of Charlie's mental rise and fall pulled on the public's heartstrings and achieved enduring success. The story came to the small screen in a 1966 televised play, "The Two Worlds of Charlie Gordon," was expanded into a full-length novel in 1966, and inspired the 1968 film, "Charly," for which Cliff Robertson snagged an Oscar for best-actor.

Of his own story, Keyes wrote in the Library Journal:

"Flowers for Algernon is the story of a man's inner journey from a world of retardation to a world of high intelligence. Charlie Gordon lives through comic, sad, and ironic experiences as he emerges from mental darkness, through the various stages of perceiving and understanding levels of knowledge, into the light of complex awareness of the world, of people, and of himself." (Small, 251)

As scholar Robert Scholes notes, Flowers for Algernon transcends the genre of science fiction through its emotional mass appeal. "This tale is beautifully problematic," he says. "It conveys to us the deprivation involved in mental retardation as no amount of reports or exhortations could possibly do it." (57) Echoing Scholes' praise, critic Robert Small, Jr. commends the novel's journalistic style, saying "...the story as told through Charlie's own journal, effectively carries out one of the main qualities that proponents of literature claim for it, immediacy of experience, that is, empathetic power."
Summary of Flower for Algernon

by

Daniel Keyes

Flowers for Algernon is a character study of one man, Charlie Gordon. Charlie is a 32-year-old developmentally disabled man who has the opportunity to undergo a surgical procedure that will dramatically increase his mental capabilities. This procedure had already been performed on a laboratory mouse, Algernon, with remarkable results. Charlie will be the first human subject.

In a series of progress reports, Charlie documents everything that happens to him. As Charlie's intelligence increases to a genius level, the reader not only reads about the changes from Charlie's viewpoint, but also sees the change evidenced in Charlie's writing ability. This jump in intelligence is not necessarily a good thing, however. Charlie is now able to recall past events that shaped his life and analyze past friendships for what they were, or weren't. He also has difficulty making new friendships and establishing new relationships due to a lack of social intelligence that the surgery could neither correct nor anticipate. And, finally, because of his increased intelligence, Charlie is able to discover the experiment's "fatal flaw" and is reduced to watching the end for both Algernon and himself, hoping to salvage something for the future from his brief bout with genius.

Charlie Gordon is about to embark on an unprecedented journey. Born with an unusually low IQ, he has been chosen as the perfect subject for an experimental surgery that researchers hope will increase his intelligence - a procedure that has been highly successful when tested on a lab mouse named Algernon. As the
treatment takes effect, Charlie's intelligence expands until it surpasses that of the
doctors who engineered his. The experiment appears to be a scientific breakthrough
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