

CONFLUENCE

by **Brian W. Aldiss**

The inhabitants of the planet Myrin have much to endure from Earthmen, inevitably, perhaps, since they represent the only intelligent life we have so far found in the galaxy. The Tenth Research Fleet has already left for Myrin. Meanwhile, some of the fruits of earlier expeditions are ripening. As has already been established, the superior Myrinian culture, the so-called Confluence of Headwaters, is somewhere in the region of eleven million (Earth) years old, and its language, Confluence, has been established even longer. The etymological team of the Seventh Research Fleet was privileged to sit at the feet of two gentlemen of the Oeldrid Stance Academy. They found that Confluence is a language-cum-posture, and that meanings of words can be radically modified or altered entirely by the stance assumed by the speaker. There is, therefore, no possibility of ever compiling a one-to-one dictionary of English-Confluence, Confluence-English words.

Nevertheless, the list of Confluent words that follows disregards the stances involved, which number almost nine thousand and are all named, and merely offers a few definitions, some of which must be regarded as tentative. The definitions are, at this early stage of our knowledge of Myrinian culture, valuable in themselves, not only because they reveal something of the inadequacy of our own language, but because they throw some light on to the mysteries of an alien culture. The romanised phonetic system employed is that suggested by Dr. Rohan Prendermath, one of the members of the etymological team of the Seventh Research Fleet, without whose generous assistance this short list could never have been compiled.

AB WE TEL MIN The sensation that one neither agrees nor disagrees with

what is being said to one, but that one simply wishes to depart from the presence of the speaker

ARN TUTKHAN Having to rise early before anyone else is about; addressing
a machine

BAGI RACK Apologising as a form of attack; a stick resembling a gun

BAG RACK Needless and offensive apologies

BAMAN The span of a man's consciousness BI The name of the mythical

northern cockerel; a reverie that lasts for more than twenty (Earth) years

BI SAN A reverie lasting more than twenty years and of a religious nature

BIT SAN A reverie lasting more than twenty years and of a blasphemous nature

BI TOSI A reverie lasting more than twenty years on cosmological themes

BI TV AS A reverie lasting more than twenty years on geological themes

BIUI TOSI A reverie lasting more than a hundred and forty-two years on cosmological themes; the sound of air in a cavern; long dark hair

BIUT TASH A reverie lasting more than twenty years on Har Daf Ka themes (of)

CANO LEE MIN Things sensed out-of-sight that will return

CA PATA VATUZ The taste of a maternal grandfather

CHAM ON TH ZAM Being witty when nobody else appreciates it

DAR AYRHOH The garments of an ancient crone; the age-old supposition that Myrin is a hypothetical place

EN IO PLAY The deliberate dissolving of the senses into sleep

GEE KUTCH Solar empathy

GE NU The sorrow that overtakes a mother knowing her child will be born
dead

GE NUP DJMU The sorrow that overtakes the child in the womb when it
knows it will be born dead

GOR A Ability to live for eight hundred years

HA ATUZ SHAK EAN Disgrace attending natural death of maternal grandfather

HAR DAR KA The complete understanding that all the soil of Myrin passes
through the bodies of its earthworms every ten years

HAR DI DI KAL A small worm; the hypothetical creator of a hypothetical
sister planet of Myrin

HE YUP The first words the computers spoke, meaning, "The light will not
be necessary"

HOLT CHA The feeling of delight that precedes and precipitates wakening

HOLT CHE The autonomous marshalling of the senses which produces the
feeling of delight that precedes and precipitates wakening

HOZ STAP GURT A writer's attitude to fellow writers

INK TH O Morality used as an offensive weapon

JILY JIP TUP A thinking machine that develops a stammer; the action of
pulling up the trousers while running uphill

JIL JIPY TUP Any machine with something incurable about it; pleasant
laughter that is nevertheless unwelcome; the action of pulling up the trousers while running downhill

KARNAD EES The enjoyment of a day or a year by doing nothing;
fasting

KARNDAL CHESS The waste of a day or a year by doing nothing;
fasting

KARNDOLI YON TOR Mystical state attained through inaction;
feasting; a
learned paper on the poetry of metal

KARNDOL KI REE The waste of a life by doing nothing; a type of
fasting

KUNDULUM To be well and in bed with two pretty sisters

LAHAH SIP Tasting fresh air after one has worked several hours at
one's
desk

LA YUN UN A struggle in which not a word is spoken; the underside
of an
inaccessible boulder; the part of one's life unavailable to other
people

LEE KE MIN Anything or anyone out-of-sight that one senses will
never
return; an apology offered for illness.

LIKI INK TH KUTI The small engine that attends to one after the act
of
excretion

MAL A feeling of being watched from within

MAN NAIZ TH Being aware of electricity in wires concealed in the
walls

MUR ON TIG WON The disagreeable experience of listening to
oneself in
the middle of a long speech and neither understanding what
one is saying nor enjoying the manner in which it is being said; a
foreign accent; a lion breaking wind after the evening repast

NAM ON A The remembrance, in bed, of camp fires

NO LEE LE MUN The love of a wife that becomes especially vivid when she
is almost out-of-sight

NU CROW Dying before strangers

NU DI DIMU Dying in a low place, often of a low fever

NU HIN DER VLAK The invisible stars; forms of death

NUN MUM Dying before either of one's parents; ceasing to fight just because one's enemy is winning

NUT LAP ME Dying of laughing

NUT LA POM Dying laughing

NUT VATO Managing to die standing up

NUTVU BAG RACK To be born dead

NU VALK Dying deliberately in a lonely (high) place

OBI DAKT An obstruction; three or more machines talking together

ORAN MUDA A change of government; an old peasant saying meaning,
"The dirt in the river is different every day"

PAN WOL LE MUDA A certainty that tomorrow will much resemble today; a
line of manufacturing machines

PAT O BANE BAN The ten heartbeats preceding the first heartbeat of
orgasm

PI KI SKAB WE The parasite that afflicts man and Tig Gag in its various larval
stages and, while burrowing in the brain of the Tig Gag, causes it to speak like a man

PI SHAK RACK CHANO The retrogressive dreams of autumn attributed to
the presence in the bloodstream of Pi Ki Skab We

PIT HOR Pig's cheeks, or the droppings of pigs; the act of name-dropping

PLAY The heightening of consciousness that arises when one awakens in a
strange room that one cannot momentarily identify

SHAK ALE MAN The struggle that takes place in the night between the urge
to urinate and the urge to continue sleeping

SHAK LA MAN GRA When the urge to urinate takes precedence over the
urge to continue sleeping

SHAK LO MUN GRAM When the urge to continue sleeping takes precedence over all things

SHEAN DORL Gazing at one's reflection for reasons other than vanity

SHE EAN MIK Performing prohibited postures before a mirror

SHEM A slight cold afflicting only one nostril; the thoughts that pass when
one shakes hands with a politician

SHUK TACK The shortening in life-stature a man incurs from a seemingly
benevolent machine

SOBI A reverie lasting less than twenty years on cosmological themes; a
nickel

SODI DORL One machine making way for another; decadence, particularly
in the Cold Continents

SODI IN PIT Any epithet which does not accurately convey what it

intends,

such as “Sober as a judge”, “Silly nit”, “He swims like a fish”,
“He’s
only half-alive”, and so on

STABNI RACK NUSVIODON Experiencing Staini Rack Nuul and then
realising

that one must continue in the same outworn fashion because
the alternatives are too frightening, or because one is too weak
to change; wearing a suit of clothes at which one sees strangers
looking askance.

STAINI RACK NUUL Introspection (sometimes prompted by
birthdays) that

one is not living as one determined to live when one was very
young; or, on the other hand, realising that one is living in a
mode decided upon when one was very young and which is
now no longer applicable or appropriate

STAIN TOK I The awareness that one is helplessly living a role

STA SODON The worst feelings which do not even lead to suicide

SU SODA VALKUS A sudden realisation that one’s spirit is not pure,
overcoming one on Mount Rinvlak (in the Southern Continent)

TI Civilised aggression

TIG GAG The creature most like man in the Southern Continent
which
smiles as it sleeps

TTPY LAP KIN Laughter that one recognises though the laughter is
unseen;
one’s own laughter in a crisis

TOK AN Suddenly divining the nature and imminence of old age in
one’s
thirty-first year

TUAN BOLO A class of people one only meets at weddings; the
pleasure of
feeling rather pale

TU KI TOK Moments of genuine joy captured in a play or charade about joy;
the experience of youthful delight in old age

TUZ PAT MAIN (Obs.) The determination to eat one's maternal grandfather

U (Obs.) The amount of time it takes for a lizard to turn into a bird;
love

UBI A girl who lifts her skirts at the very moment you wish she would

UDI KAL The clothes of the woman one loves

UDI UKAL The body of the woman one loves

UES WE TEL DA Love between a male and female politician

UGI SLO GU The love that needs a little coaxing

UMI RIN TOSIT The sensations a woman experiences when she does not
know how she feels about a man

UMY RIN RU The new dimensions that take on illusory existence when the
body of the loved woman is first revealed

UNIMGAG BU Love of oneself that passes understanding; a machine's
dream

UNK TAK An out-of-date guide book; the skin shed by the snake that predicts rain

UPANG PLA Consciousness that one's agonised actions undertaken for love
would look rather funny to one's friends

UPANG PLA Consciousness that while one's agonised actions undertaken for love are on the whole rather funny to oneself, they might even look heroic to one's friends; a play with a cast of three or less

U RIRHI Two lovers drunk together

USANA NUTO A novel all about love, written by a computer

USAN I NUT Dying for love

USAN I ZUN BI Living for love; a tropical hurricane arriving from over
the sea, generally at dawn

UZ Two very large people marrying after the prime of life

UZ TO KARDDST The realisation in childhood that one is the issue
of two very large people who married after the prime of life

WE FAAK A park or a college closed for seemingly good reasons; a
city where one wishes one could live

YA GAG Too much education; a digestive upset during travel

YA GAG LEE Apologies offered by a hostess for a bad meal

YA GA TUZ Bad meat; (Obs.) dirty fingernails

YAG ORN A president

YATUZ PATI (Obs.) The ceremony of eating one's maternal
grandfather

YATUZ SHAK SHAK NAPANG HOLI NUN Lying with one's maternal
grandmother; when hens devour their young

YE FLIG TOT A group of men smiling and congratulating each other

YE FLU GAN Philosophical thoughts that don't amount to much;
graffiti in a place of worship

YON TORN A paper tiger; two children with one toy

YON U SAN The hesitation a boy experiences before first kissing his

first girl

YOR KIN BE A house; a circumlocution; a waterproof hat; the smile
of a
slightly imperfect wife

YUP PA A book in which everything is understandable except the
author's
purpose in writing it

YUPPA GA Stomach ache masquerading as eyestrain; a book in
which
nothing is understandable except the author's purpose in writing
it

YUTH MOD The assumed bonhommie of visitors and strangers

ZO ZO CON A woman in another field