

Mars Science Laboratory: The Story Edited by Grotzinger, *et al.* (Springer, 2013)

In the heavy science volume that I received
From Springer, the editors conjure Burroughs
And the pulps from a century ago then publish
Nearly nine hundred careful pages of reports
Glossy and complete with charts and graphs
On the rover Curiosity that is down on Mars.
My son is lead scientist for the project RAD.
He had the book mailed to me, his Dad.

Burroughs and the pulps, I know, have grounded
Many NASA men while the Russians link
Our enterprising moves to space even more
With sentiment. Recently I see Geoffrey Landis
Won the Robert A. Heinlein Award for stories
That most support modern human exploration,
And clearly both my sons have bravely tried
To forge ahead with rigor once their mother died.

You see, my family like the politics of space
Is a blended family, as we say. Sue and I met
And married soon after Diana's early death.
Her daughters, then, and the boys inhabited
Our home together growing up. Our love
Is strong now. Each kid is grown and gone now.
And though we fight when they return as adults,
Turbulence is always part of printing out results.

In fact, we have emerged, each in his or her
Own way, with all wheels down on rocky
Terrain. The radiation is constant danger.
The atmosphere too thin. We feel the distance,
And cannot return. But strangely feel at home again
On Mars. We have our princesses and prince.
Our children grown from grit and wit move on.
The story resonates. No final word is ever said,
And many orbits can be traced among the dead.

— *Donald M. Hassler*