
brg 97

A fanzine for the October 2017 mailing of ANZAPA (Australian and New Zealand Amateur Publishing Association) and almost nobody else.

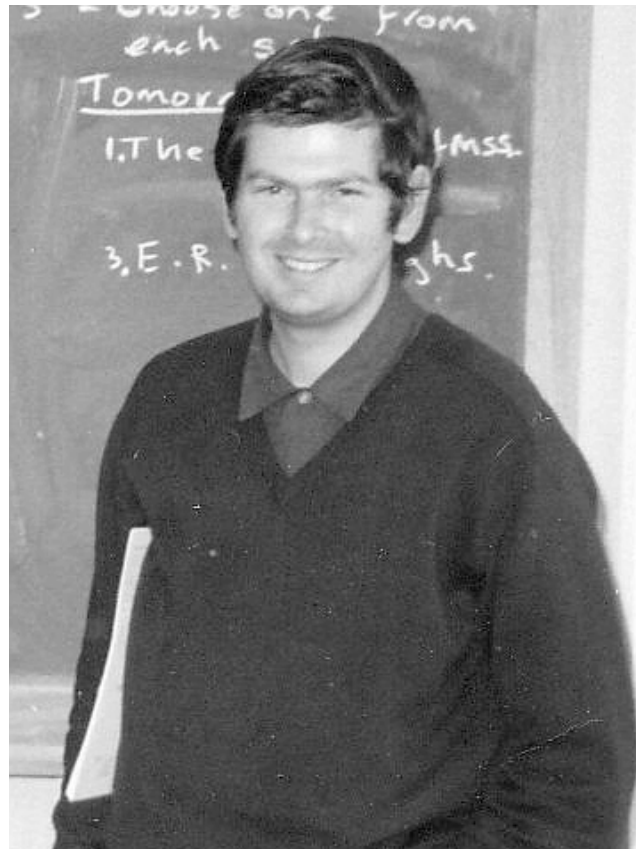
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**Only 46 years ago
Gelaticon, New Year
1971**

Thanks to **Leigh Edmonds**. As a result of his recent researches, he resurrected and sent me these photos from **Boys Own Convention** (later called **Gelaticon**), New Year, 1971. *Top:* **Bruce Gillespie** as you might not remember him. (Photographer: unknown.) *Below:* **Bruce Gillespie**, bearing one of the famous gelatis; **Donna Runic**; **Ron Clarke**; and in the background **David Grigg**, **Alan Sandercock**, and many others.

**Brian Aldiss
tribute:
See page 4**



So where did 2017 go?

So where have I been for the last three mailings? Hoping to finish *SF Commentary* 95, now nine months late, and hoping to write mailing comments, and much else besides, for ANZAPA.

Did I say ... ? Oh well, I can't remember what I wrote last in **bfg**. When last I wrote, it seemed that I had at last retired, because I had received no paying work for three months. This left me with a rapidly declining bank account, and no hope of printing my magazines and sending them out by mail, especially not by airmail. (Our airmail rate will be exactly three times that of America's, as of 1 October 2017.) Hence I've told everybody that I will be merely posting my magazines as files on efanzines.com.

After the disaster, the deluge

At the beginning of June I received the offer of two indexing jobs from my usual client. I protested to her that I thought I had fallen off the end of the twig. 'No,' she said. 'It's just that authors have been doing their own indexes.' How dare they! In my experience, authors of textbooks would rather commit seppuku than prepare their own indexes.

As soon as I had finished the indexes for that client, I received a commission from a new client. He is an academic at Melbourne University, but has written a history textbook to be published in America. He more or less told me that I could charge him whatever I asked, and that he could pay me immediately. (I still don't know who recommended me.) The book itself is very interesting, but I won't discuss it until it appears. I wore myself out with that one, especially as it took 10 hours long than I had quoted for. Warning: don't do freelance work for independent academics, only for well-stashed large companies. I knew that; I have known that since the seventies. Suddenly I discovered that he wasn't going to pay me immediately. He was going to put the invoice through the university system! It turns out he did not have the cash sitting there to pay me; he was depending on a research grant from the university. In the end, I escaped lightly. The University took more than 30 days to pay, but not more than 60 days.

While I was finishing the academic index, I received an email from a client from whom I had not heard for three years. Just out of the blue. No explanation for the silence or the unexpected call. To index a Chemistry textbook. A week after that, the same client emailed that one of her indexers had dropped out, and would I like three more in a row? 'Er, yes please.' 'Could you arrange your schedule so that it's possible to do four indexes in the time allowed for three?'

I'm coming to the end of that stretch of work. I've been paid for hardly any of it so far, and I haven't looked at *SFC* 95 for over three months.

When in March it looked as if I was going to be forced

to retire on very little, I arranged to be paid \$1000 per month from my superannuation kitty rather than \$300 a month. 'You'd better inform CentreLink,' said my superannuation manager. This I did. But we hadn't sent in any tax returns to CentreLink for the last five years! We didn't know that we were supposed to have done so. Our tax accountant had told us that CentreLink monitored all our bank accounts, and would make any adjustments based on those bank accounts. He was wrong. We had been supposed to submit our Gillespie and Cochrane statements all that time. The net result of dredging up the old accounts and submitting them is that I have had to pay back \$12,000 of pension money sent to me over the last five years, and my total pension amount per month has suddenly been reduced from \$800 a month to less than \$600 a month. I couldn't have paid back the \$12,000, of course, except that Elaine has lent me the money against the unlikely day I might have a windfall. But the main business of CentreLink under the current government is persecuting the poor, so I shouldn't have been surprised when a month or so later my monthly pension was reduced even further.

Despite having hit 70, no retirement for me. I need to keep working as long and often as possible. Fortunately I don't feel any less able to do indexes than I ever did, but I have managed to give up book editing (which Elaine still does). Over the years freelance editing has been turned into a branch of the typesetting/design industry, and I do not want to 'upskill' for anyone.

So financially it's been a kick-in-the-teeth year, but my health has held up, and so has Elaine's. I can still go for a long walk every day, and read the books, watch the films, and listen to the music that I enjoy, but I'm not writing or publishing much.

Elaine has had plenty of work over the year, with some relaxation time in which she can do a lot of embroidery and knitting and cat sitting.

There have been awful lot of deaths this year, including innumerable people killed by guns and bombs fired by their fellow human beings. However, there are some people whose loss can persuade you that the human race is worth continuing with.

Various rock stars have dropped off the twig, but I don't seem to have noted their names in my diary. Most missed is today's casualty: **Tom Petty**. I remember hearing his wonderful ballad 'Magnolia' in 1977 or 1978 on 3RMIT (as 3RRR was then) or 3CR. He and his group the Heartbreakers sounded a lot like Roger McGuinn and the Byrds, at a time when I was just discovering the Byrds for the first time and buying all their albums on American cutout pressings as they appeared in stores like Discurio. Tom Petty's first two albums had a punk swagger to them, but he was definitely a rock-and-roller. And there was very little rock and roll on the radio in 1977 and 1978.

His third album, *Damn the Torpedos*, was something else altogether: luminous West Coast rock from a powerful band, and a voice you just knew could fill stadiums. It sold millions. Its best track was 'Louisiana Rain', one of the greatest ballads ever recorded. *Hard Promises* followed, with Tom Petty's famous duet with Stevie Nicks, 'Stop Dragging My Heart Around'. Then followed a double live album, *Shootout at the Plantation*, which has never been re-released on CD. It featured Tom Petty's version of the Byrds' 'So You Want to be a Rock and Roll Star'. By now, Tom Petty had done what nobody could have thought possible in the late seventies: made good solid tuneful rock and roll fashionable again. So then he nearly ruined his career by making a great rock and roll record: *Let Me Up (I've Had Enough)*. The main influence here was the Rolling Stones rather than the Byrds.

After that one failure, Tom Petty had learned his lesson. Rock and roll was all right in its place, but it had to sound good on commercial radio. Guided by Jeff Lynne (from ELO) he fashioned a slightly softer sound. From then on, even his less interesting LPs were rescued only by the quality of the songs themselves. Every album since then has been graced, or even rescued, by at least

three or four classic songs. He went solo for awhile, rejoined the Heartbreakers, and even (for two albums) reassembled his original band, Mudcrutch. Both *Mudcrutch* and *Mudcrutch II* are superb albums, showing off Petty's song-writing skills.

Two of Tom Petty's most successful singles, though, were those he contributed to the *Travelin Wilburys* albums, thirty years ago. In the last ten years I have seen Peter Bodgdanovich's four-hour documentary *Runnin' Down a Dream*, about the band, and *The Live Anthology*, a four-CD set of classic live performances. A few weeks ago Tom and the Heartbreakers finished what they expected to be their final huge American tour. And it was.

Milt Stevens, my *SF Commentary* correspondent for some years, and all-round fannish good guy, died the same day. (A very good tribute to him has appeared on the *File 770* site.)

The following pages are in tribute to **Brian Aldiss**.

— **Bruce Gillespie**, 4 October 2017

Favourite books read so far this year

These books are listed in the order in which I read them. Thanks to **Jenny Blackford**, for sending me her superb book of poems; **William Breiding**, for sending me his wonderful book of essays, **Race Mathews**, for sending me his illuminating history; **David Grigg**, for giving me the two books of George Orwell essays.:

- Laura Thomson: TAKE SIX GIRLS! THE LIVES OF THE MITFORD SISTERS (2015)
- Michael Chabon: MOONGLOW: A NOVEL (2016)
- Tarjei Vesaas: THE ICE PALACE (1963)
- Karen Lamb: THEA ASTLEY: INVENTING HER OWN WEATHER (2015)
- Michael Dirda: AN OPEN BOOK: COMING OF AGE IN THE HEARTLAND (2003)
- Gordon Van Gelder (ed): THE VERY BEST OF FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION: SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY ANTHOLOGY (2009)
- Ellery Queen (ed): ELLERY QUEEN'S BOOK OF MYSTERY STORIES BY 25 FAMOUS WRITERS (THE LITERATURE OF CRIME) (1964)
- John Litchen: EPHEMERON: A MEMOIR (2017)
- Nicholas Shakespeare: THE HIGH FLYER (1993)
- Cat Sparks: LOTUS BLUE (2017)
- Harry Harrison: HARRY HARRISON! HARRY HARRISON! (2014)
- Robin Sloane: MR PENUMBRA'S 24-HOUR BOOK STORE (2012)
- Lawrence Block (ed): IN SUNLIGHT OR IN

- SHADOW: STORIES INSPIRED BY THE PAINTINGS OF EDWARD HOPPER (2016)
 - Elan Mastai: ALL OUR WRONG TODAYS: A NOVEL (2017)
 - Claire North: THE END OF THE DAY (2017)
 - Jenny Blackford: THE LOYALTY OF CHICKENS: POETRY (2017)
 - John Crowley: THE TRANSLATOR (2002)
 - William M. Breiding: ROSE MOTEL: FANZINE PIECES 2080-2014 (2017)
 - Diane Wynne Jones: REFLECTIONS ON THE MAGIC OF WRITING (2012)
 - Michael Robotham: THE NIGHT FERRY (2007)
 - Nikolai Leskov: SELECTED TALES (1962)
 - Race Mathews: OF LABOUR AND LIBERTY: DISTRIBUTISM IN VICTORIA 1891-1966 (2017)
 - Dan Simmons: DARWIN'S BLADE (2000)
 - Frank M. Robinson: NOT SO GOOD A GAY MAN: A MEMOIR (2017)
 - Virginia Woolf: MRS DALLOWAY (1925)
 - Garry Disher: HER (2017)
 - Virginia Woolf: NIGHT AND DAY (1919)
 - George Orwell: INSIDE THE WHALE AND OTHER ESSAYS (1957)
 - John Le Carre: A LEGACY OF SPIES (2017)
 - George Orwell: DEATH OF THE ENGLISH MURDER AND OTHER ESSAYS (1965)
 - Ellen Datlow (ed): BLACK FEATHERS: DARK AVIAN TALES: AN ANTHOLOGY (2017)
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Memories of Brian Aldiss (1925–2017)

It's hard to imagine a life without Brian Aldiss

Bruce Gillespie

It's very hard to imagine life in a world without Brian Aldiss. I hadn't read anything much I'd liked of his when I first met Lee Harding and John Bangsund in late 1967, but Lee pointed me toward the *Saliva Tree* collection and the new hardback edition of *Hothouse* (renamed in USA as *The Long Afternoon of the Earth*). Both, of course, made me a lifelong fan of Brian's writing immediately. Then came the Colin Charteris 'Acid Head War' stories in the new quarto-sized *New Worlds*, eventually appearing as *Barefoot in the Head*. And *An Age* (*Cryptozoic!* in America), and ever onward, especially *The Malacia Tapestry* and *Frankenstein Unbound*, while I was seeking out all of Brian's earlier work, especially *Greybeard* and the great early short stories. *Hothouse* remains my favourite SF novel, reread several times in order to write reviews (most recently for Damien Broderick's *Earth Is But a Star* collection in 2000).

When I began publishing *SF Commentary* in 1969, I got in touch with Brian, and he sent a wonderful letter of comment. He kept sending them, every few years, until about 10 years ago.

In January 1974, when I was visiting London, I was invited to a dinner he had organised for Clive, his son from his first marriage, at an Indian restaurant. That was very enjoyable. On my last day in England, the last day of my five-month pilgrimage, he rang the home of Chris Priest, where I was staying. 'Is Bruce still there?' said Brian. 'Well, bring him up to Oxford for the day!' And off we went in Chris' mini-Cooper to Brian and Margaret's famous Heath House near Oxford. We transferred to Brian's somewhat larger car, then went on a pilgrimage to Stonehenge, via several pubs on the way. It was dry when we set out, but as we wandered around Stonehenge, as you were allowed to do in those days, a magnificent storm blew in, so we went back to Oxford,

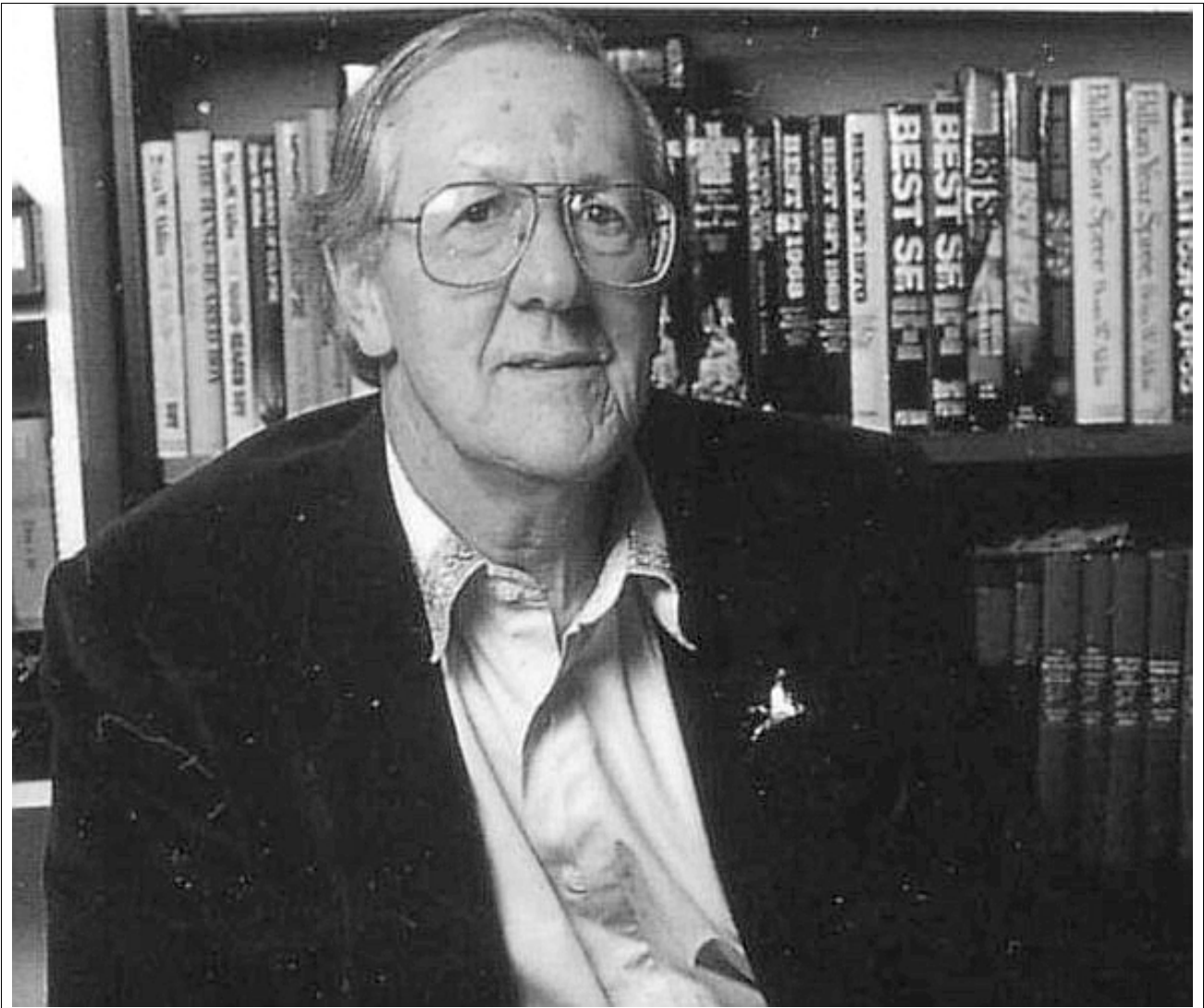
to a wonderful meal prepared by Margaret (the only time I met her), then back to London. One of the very best days of my life.

The next (and last) time we met was at the 1978 Melbourne Eastercon, in much more awkward circumstances. The convention organisers had managed to invite both Brian Aldiss and Roger Zelazny as guests of honour to the same convention. They barely spoke to each other, and I suspect each was equally annoyed with the convention committee. However, we did all go off to King Wah on the Sunday morning for the first dim sum brunch I had ever been to. Brian gave a magnificent guest of honour speech during the convention. In the middle he began throwing out sheets from his script, as if he were sparing his audience unnecessary verbiage. When we picked up the sheets from the floor, they were, of course, empty.

It would have been wonderful to be in London for the celebration of Brian's 89th birthday at the 2014 Worldcon, but meanwhile (thanks mainly to John Litchen) I've been able to read all of Brian's later novels, many of which are very good. *Walcot* seems to have been published by Britain's tiniest, most obscure publisher, but a copy did reach Australia. *The Cretan Teat* was a return by Aldiss to his most exuberant style, but his two last SF novels, especially *Finches of Mars*, were preachy and tedious. I was looking forward to Brian's proposed Tolstoyan novel, especially as I had rediscovered Tolstoy only the year before he announced this project.

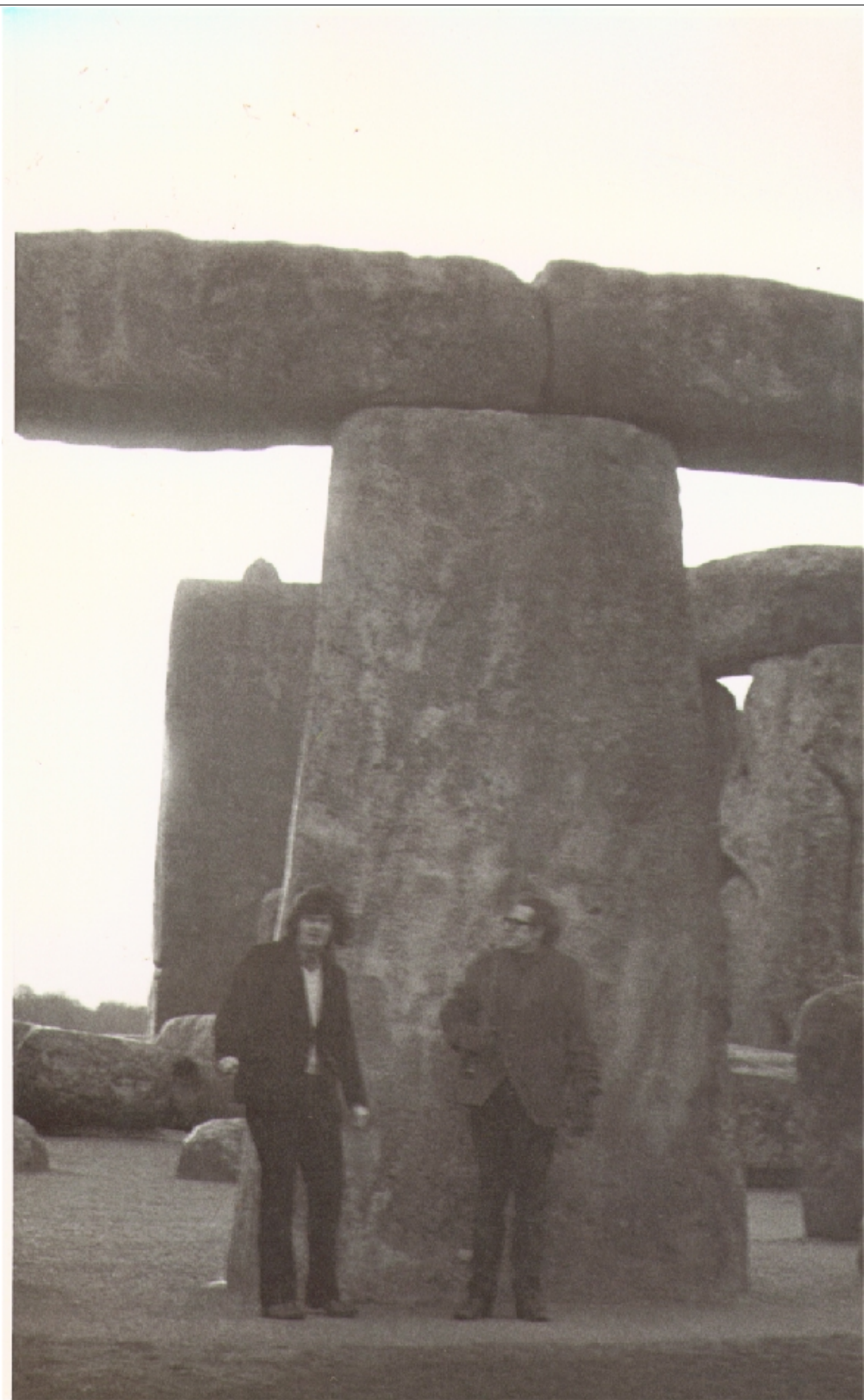
What a wonderful way to go, and how pure Brian Aldiss! He enjoyed his 92nd birthday, then just disappeared from this world. Who's going to cheer us up now?

— **Bruce Gillespie**, Facebook, 23 August 2017; and the special *Ansible Brian Aldiss Supplement*.



Brian W. Aldiss (1925–2017). Above: Brian Aldiss 1990 (photo: Mark Gerson). Below: Brian and Margaret Aldiss, and Bruce Gillespie, Heath House, Oxford, January 1974. (Photo: Christopher Priest.)





Bruce Gillespie and Brian Aldiss, Stonehenge, 1974. (Photo: Christopher Priest.)



Christopher Priest, Charles Monteith, Brian Aldiss, 1970. (Photo: Margaret Aldiss.)

Here it began, here it ends

by Christopher Priest

In 1962 I was working in the City of London as the world's worst trainee accountant. I hated the job, and they hated me too. They should have fired me, but they couldn't because we had signed articles (a binding agreement for five years) that meant I could not leave and they could not fire me. (In 1965, the articles came to an end. They fired me.)

However, early in 1962 I was still there, and a teenage passion for science fiction had suddenly made life more interesting. One of the writers I most admired was Brian Aldiss, who had written several intriguingly unusual short stories, and two or three novels which I thought were pretty good. One of them, *Non-Stop*, a brilliantly mad and inventive subversion of a trad American science fiction theme (a big spaceship lost in space), had so enthralled me that it had convinced me I should one day like to become a writer too. It took a while to get there, but I never forgot the epiphany of realizing that writing was a human activity that was achievable. Brian Aldiss had also published an anthology called *Penguin Science Fiction*.

(Published by Penguin Books, and full of science fiction, of course.) In the short biography of the editor it mentioned that Mr Aldiss was the president of something called the British Science Fiction Association — I imagined it to be a place where people with mighty minds and vivid imaginations would meet in conclave.

One evening I read a review in the *London Evening News* of a new novel by John Christopher called *The World in Winter*. The review gave extravagant praise to this book, but ruined everything by going on to complain that the novel had been marketed as science fiction, which the idiot reviewer described (but not in so many words) as a despicable commercial genre that of course no one could take seriously. This is a customary put-down of science fiction (still in use, no sign yet of its fall from usefulness) deployed by inexperienced reviewers who are trying to impress readers they assume to be even more stupid than themselves. Although I was only 18 I had already spotted this type. I felt weary contempt for whoever it was. Didn't know what to say.

Not Brian Aldiss, who had also seen this annoying review, and as president of the BSFA wrote a witty letter of complaint to the newspaper, pointing out what a dullard their reviewer was. They published his address at the end of his letter.

I therefore wrote to Mr Aldiss, complimented him on his letter, and timidly asked if it was possible for nonentities like me to join the BSFA, or was it only for writers? Brian Aldiss responded at once, complimented *me* on having the right attitude, said that of course the BSFA was open to anyone (and passed on the contact address) and went on to urge me to attend the annual science fiction convention, where he would love to meet me and have a good conversation.

It was a marvellous letter for an insecure and bookish teenager to receive. I treasured it and kept it, and to this day it remains the first item in my huge archive of correspondence.

In fact, I was too hard up and too shy to go the SF convention, and did not meet Brian Aldiss in person until about 1965. Then, when he found out my name, he said, 'I remember you — you wrote me that intelligent letter! Come and have a drink!' It was the first moment of a friendship that was to last, with the usual ups and downs of any friendship between two difficult men, for

more than half a century.

The photograph in the previous page, was taken in June 1970 by Margaret, Brian Aldiss's second wife. Brian had generously invited me down to their house in Oxfordshire to celebrate the publication of my first novel *Indoctrinaire*. Also there was Charles Monteith, who was not only my editor at the publishers Faber & Faber, he was Brian's too. He had been responsible for buying and publishing all the early Aldiss books, including those short stories I had admired so much, and the fabulous bravura of *Non-Stop*.

Today I learned that Brian had died, one day after his 92nd birthday. When someone has had such a long life, living to a great age, the end will not come as a surprise to those around, but none the less this news came as a profound and upsetting shock. I was privileged to write a long , but a formal article is not the appropriate place to express fondness and gratitude for everything. His work shines out as an example to us all, a standard to strive to equal. His professionalism was legendary. His conversation was something to stay up all night for, and his sense of fun was marvellous. He is irreplaceable.

— Christopher Priest, 21 August 2017, in his online journal

Brian Aldiss at the Bodleian Library:

Contents of Aldiss's diaries kept secret from family

by Eloise Wood

Brian Aldiss' family will first discover the 'revelations' of the late writer's diaries at the same time as the rest of the world when they are revealed at a Bodleian Library exhibition.

Aldiss died at his home in Oxford on Saturday 19 August, hours after celebrating his 92nd birthday, with many in the literary community paying tribute to the 'extraordinary' man.

He recorded his experiences in diaries filling more than 80 hardback books. Now his son has revealed that the science fiction author's family will discover the contents of his diaries at the same time as the rest of the world when they go on display at the Bodleian Library. **Tim Aldiss** told *The Bookseller* that his family 'weren't allowed' to read the diaries in the writer's lifetime so he expected 'some revelations' when they finally go on display, at a date which is yet to be confirmed.

Tim Aldiss said that his father remained active until the very end. He said: 'In the last year of his life, his agent, Gordon Wise, had sent on work to be considered for publication. He remained political. He kept doing his

journals of which he was very proud and even recorded a journal entry on his birthday.

'The journals will be kept and displayed by the Bodleian Library so friends and family can discover them at the same time as members of the public. We weren't allowed to look at them before so there'll be some revelations.'

Chris Fletcher, keeper of special collections at the Bodleian, told *The Bookseller* that the *Helliconia Trilogy* author regularly donated his work to the library.

Fletcher said: 'Oxford was his city and he was a long-time friend to and supporter of the Bodleian, to which he regularly donated his manuscripts.

'[He] was a master of prose who did much to advance science fiction as a serious genre. But that was not his only form of expression: he was a journalist, poet, critic and artist. He was endlessly inventive and surprising: only he could write the story "Better Morphosis", in which a cockroach awakens to find himself Franz Kafka.'

Aldiss was formerly a literary editor at the *Oxford Mail* and described his journals going to the Bodleian, one of

the oldest libraries in Europe, in an interview with the *Telegraph* two years ago, saying the faculty ‘couldn’t wait’ to access the volumes. He also described their potential legacy in a YouTube video earlier this year and said: ‘When I’m dead and gone this thing will still exist as a kind of phantom life.’

A spokesperson for the library, which features more than 12 million printed items, said that more details about the display of the journals would be released shortly and they still had to be catalogued.

Author **Neil Gaiman** was one of many who paid tributes to the writer, saying on Twitter that Aldiss’ death ‘just hit me like a meteor to the heart’.

The author of *Non-stop*, *Hothouse* and *Greybeard* (all originally published Faber), Aldiss’s writing is seen by many as bridging the gap between classic science fiction and contemporary literature. He wrote about his experiences as a young sales assistant in a bookshop for *The Bookseller*, the columns of which inspired his first novel, *The Brightfount Diaries* (1955, Faber).

Malcolm Edwards, who met Aldiss as an undergraduate in 1969 and went on to be his editor at

Gollancz, described him as a ‘great man’. Edwards told *The Bookseller*: ‘He’d come to give a talk at my university. I was travelling down to London the next day, and spotted him on the station platform. After the talk he had gone off to stay with Kingsley Amis, and a long evening ensued. I’m sure the last thing he wanted that morning was to be accosted by an enthusiastic young student, but — being Brian — he was welcoming, and we travelled together. By the time we reached London he had promised me a short story — commissioned by the *TLS* but then rejected for an amateur magazine I was planning. Two days later, the story arrived.’

Edwards said that the author even wrote a follow-up letter to check the story had been received.

He said: ‘Over the years I came to see this whole episode as typical of Brian: hugely welcoming, enormously generous, but with a smidgen of writerly insecurity.’

‘He was — and I don’t say this lightly — a great man.’

— **Eloise Wood, Bodleian Library, 23 August 217**

A valediction forbidding melancholy: Aldiss and the far future

by Bruce Gillespie

To peer into the far future points us back to science fiction’s past. H. G. Wells and Olaf Stapledon, SF’s two British pioneers, make most later writers seem redundant.

Join Wells’s Time Traveller (*The Time Machine*, 1895) as he hurtles forward in time, covering hundreds, then thousands, then millions of years:

At last a steady twilight brooded over the earth, a twilight only broken now and then when a comet glared across the darkling sky. The band of light that had indicated the sun had long since disappeared; for the sun had ceased to set—it simply rose and fell in the west, and grew ever broader and more red . . . At last, some time before I stopped, the sun, red and very large, halted motionless upon the horizon, a vast dome glowing with a dull heat . . . The earth had come to rest with one face to the sun.’¹

On a beach many millions of years in future he encounters the world’s last living creature and probably humanity’s remote descendant: ‘a monstrous crab-like creature . . . as large as yonder table, with its many legs moving slowly and uncertainly, its big claws swaying, its

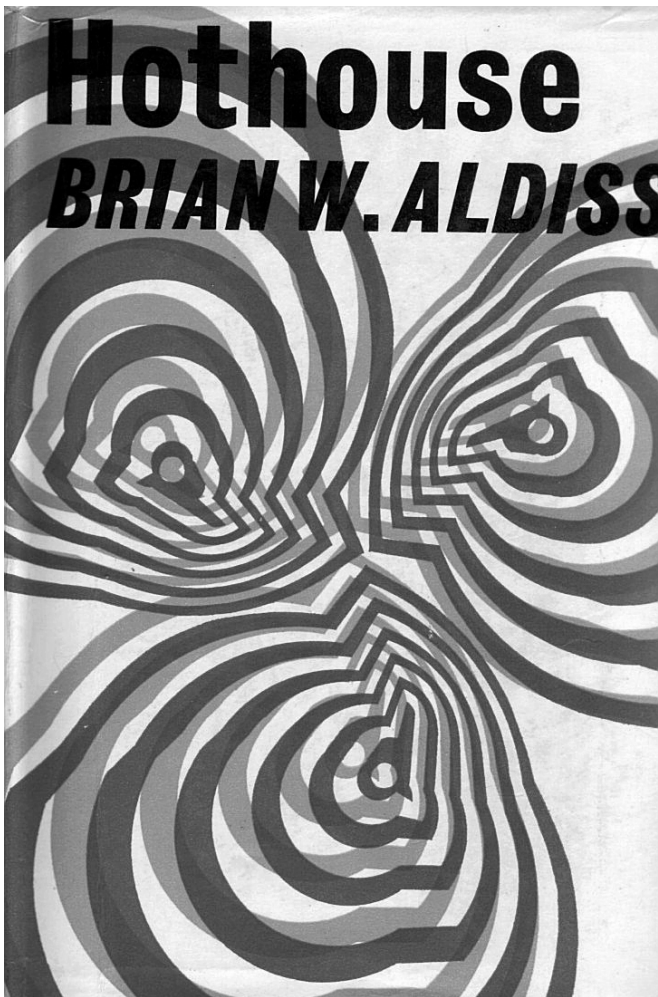
long antennae . . . and its stalked eyes gleaming at you on either side of its metallic front’²

The beach itself shows few signs of life apart from its crab-like inhabitants: ‘There were no breakers and no waves, for not a breath of wind was stirring. Only a slight oily swell rose and fell like a gentle breathing.’³

Here we see Wells’s genius for destroying, with spectacular images and clear prose, pious nineteenth-century ideas of the Last Days, those potent Biblical images of spectacular retribution and reward that people had traditionally learned from the Book of Revelation. In the final pages of *The Time Machine*, he dramatises for his 1895 public new ideas about Earth’s vastly elongated future, the expansion and decay of the dying sun, and the devolution and eventual disappearance of life itself.

The mood we derive from Wells’s final days, however, is still Biblical: ‘Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.’⁴ It matches that mood of dying fall at the end of the nineteenth century, the failure of optimism that is most noticeable in the music of the time — Mahler’s mocking *Landlers* and Vaughan Williams’ revival of medieval modes — and culminates in World War I, Proust, and all that.

Thirty million years of future, however, offer us a



Edition of *Hothouse* referred to in this article: London, Faber & Faber, 1962.

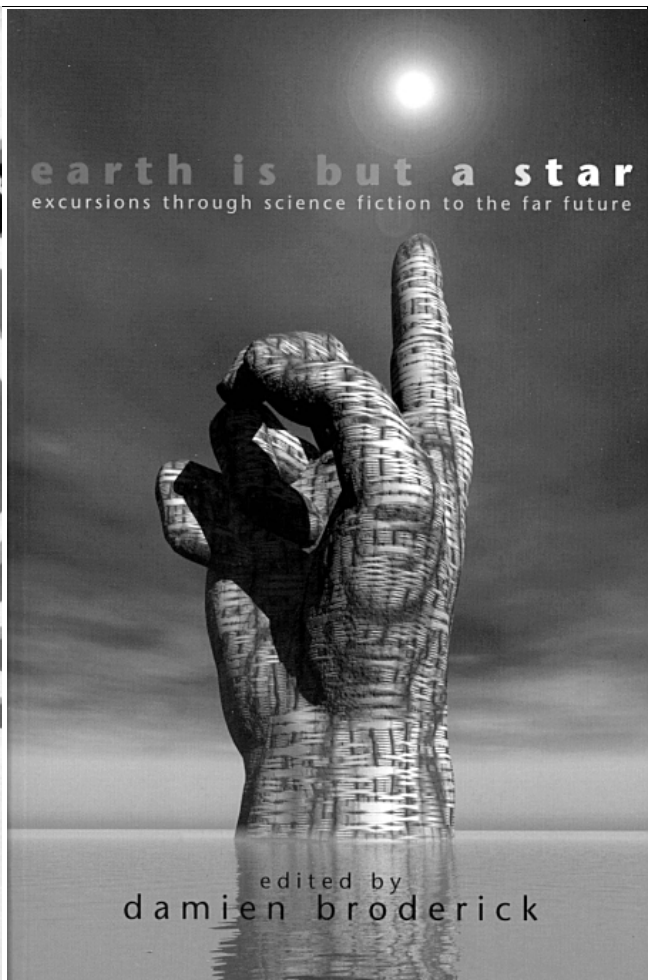
good long time before all human endeavour, and life itself, expires on a cold beach under an immense red sun. In 1930, Olaf Stapledon takes up Wells's challenge in *Last and First Men*, lengthening the range of human life considerably, to two billion years.⁵

Like Wells, Stapledon faced the problem of sending back information from the future to we observers in the dim past. Wells solved the problem by allowing his Time Traveller to ride his time machine back from the far future to deliver his message. Stapledon's far-future inhabitant sends back the story of humanity's future as a message implanted directly in the mind of the writer. Convenient, but this hardly solves the problem that would bedevil all far-future fiction from 1930 onward: how can any information from the far future make any sense to a person from our own time?

Wells solved the problem by making it redundant. In *The Time Machine*, we only know that part of future events that his Time Traveller can observe or reasonably guess.

Stapledon's observer, transmits what he believes we make sense to the people of 1930. Stapledon pretends not to be writing fiction, but documented fact. So successful was his ploy that when in 1937 Penguin printed the first paperback edition of *Last and First Men*, the firm published it as a Pelican Book (reference book), not a Penguin Book (fiction).

Last and First Men follows the many stages of human



This article was first published in *Earth Is But a Star: Excursions through Science Fiction to the Far Future*, edited by Damien Broderick (University of Western Australia Press, 2001, 466 pp.), an anthology of science fiction stories and essays about SF literature.

existence, as humans try various social experiments, conduct disastrous wars, almost disappear from the earth, rebuild civilisation, then take off for Venus, then the outer planets, as the sun begins to cool and grow. Humanity's final stage is living on Neptune, just before the sun begins the final paroxysm that will destroy the solar system.

You would think that after two billion years, humanity would have grown a bit sick of life in general. But no, the urge to cling onto life remains at the end: 'Great are the stars, and man is of no account to them. But man is a fair spirit, whom a star conceived and a star kills. He is greater than those bright blind companies. For though in them there is incalculable potentiality, in him there is achievement, small, but actual.'⁶ Brave words indeed, and melancholy, since at the beginning of *Last and First Men* Stapledon successfully predicts the pattern of human ignobility of humanity that would dominate the 1930s and 1940s.

II

The scale and implications of Wells's and Stapledon's work are too immense to be taken on directly. From time to time, British SF writers return to elements of their

work as sources of inspiration. Brian W. Aldiss was the next British SF writer to take up the challenges presented by Wells and Stapledon. He did this in several short stories published in the 1960s,⁷ and in the series of novelettes that were collected and expanded into the novel *Hothouse* (1962, issued in the USA as *The Long Afternoon of Earth*).⁸

Most of the stories that Aldiss wrote within a few years of the *Hothouse* pieces share a deep poetic melancholy and pessimism that was to gradually dissipate in his later work. 'Old Hundredth'⁹ is a condensed fable about humanity's failing itself. Having found a way to become immortal, humans abdicate from a never-quite-decaying world. The last conscious creature, a giant sloth, offers a small, but significant challenge to the assumptions of this world.

Much the same pattern can be found in 'The Source'¹⁰ and 'The Worm That Flies',¹¹ in which one man seeks humanity's vital origins in far futures from which all vitality has been leached. The tone of these stories perhaps owes more to Don A. Stuart's (John W. Campbell's) 'Twilight' and 'Forgetfulness' (genre classics from the late 1930s) than Wells and Stapledon, but Aldiss adds many original notions and his own yearnings to the mood of late Victorian poetry.

At first glance, *Hothouse* seems to echo the melancholy sonority of stories like 'Old Hundredth' and the last pages of Wells's *Time Machine*. Several million years in the future, the sun is slowly expanding as it approaches the final stages of its life. The earth presents only one face to the sun, as the moon presents one face to earth: 'They were locked face to face, and so would be, until the sands of time ceased to run, or the sun ceased to shine.'¹² The side of earth that faces the sun is a fevered jungle dominated by one continent-covering tree, a distant descendant of the banyan. At the edges of this jungle, during the final sections of the novel, the sun appears to slip below the horizon:

Just for a moment the sun still shone on them. They had a last glimpse of a world with gold in the dull air, a floor of black foliage . . . the shoulder of the hill shrugged upwards, and down they jolted into the world of night. With one voice they gave forth a cry: a cry that echoed into the unseen wastes about them, dying as it fled.¹³

The overall impression of the decay of the earth and entropic loss of dynamism throughout the solar system is reinforced by the travels of the traversers, 'gross vegetable equivalent[s] of a spider', as they play their way between earth and moon:

the multitudinous strands of cable floated across the gap between them, uniting the worlds. Back and forth the traversers could shuttle at will, vegetable astronauts huge and insensible, with Earth and Luna both enmeshed in their indifferent net.

With surprising suitability, the old age of the Earth was snared about with cobwebs.¹⁴

Much that we take for granted has changed radically. Animal life, including humanity, has almost disappeared

from the world. Plants have changed greatly, becoming mobile vegetable hunters and hunted, weaving their way through the branches of the gigantic tree that dominates the world. They include the trappersnapper, a 'horny caselike affair, just a pair of square jaws',¹⁵ and the leapy-creeper, whose 'roots and stems were also tongues and lashes'.¹⁶

Humanity is now reduced to a few isolated tribes of child-like people, resembling Wells's Eloi more than his Morlocks, but facing moment-to-moment difficulties that threaten at any moment to destroy the species:

A section of the bark gaped wide, revealing a pale deadly mouth. An oystermaw . . . had dug itself into the tree. Jabbing swiftly, Flor thrust her stick into trap. As the jaws closed, she pulled with all her might, Lily-yo steadying her. The oystermaw, taken by surprise, was wrenched from its socket. Opening its maw in shock, it sailed outward through the air. A rayplane took it without trying.¹⁷

As with the Greene tribe in Aldiss's first novel, *Non-Stop*, these primitive people retain only fragments of earlier languages and culture. They try to retain a social organisation, despite staying constantly on the move. Other creatures met during the novel, such as the morel and the sodal, are scarcely recognisable remnants of creatures alive in our own time. In a Wellsian time stream, they would be the very last stage before Earth's history disintegrates and begins that inevitable decline that ends with that final crab on the last shore of the last ocean. In a Stapledonian time stream, Aldiss's people would be the merest footnotes to humanity's greater story, one flickering downturn in humanity's fortunes before its story begins again.

III

In catching and grasping the baton of the long view handed on by Wells and Stapledon, what has Aldiss actually done with it? On the description of *Hothouse* I've given so far, he seems to be taking us on a journey that is at the tag end of all things, an era when everything we value from our own time is about to be extinguished. Yet as soon as we begin reading the book, the mood of melancholy disappears. Within the first few pages of the novel, the members of the child-like tribe defeat several of the jungle's dangerous creatures, lose several of their number of to a few others, and suffer a split in the group, as a result of which several members decide to take a ride on a traverser up one of the cables of the web towards the moon. The moon, we find, has become a paradise, a planet more congenial to humans than the banyan-covered earth. The members of the tribe who stay behind on earth, forever being caught by and escaping from the many creatures of the jungle, begin a pilgrimage that takes them out to sea and on a voyage towards the sun-bereft section of the planet.

All, then, is full of life, adventure, peril — and for the reader, a great deal of fun. *Hothouse* is one of Aldiss's 'comic infernoes', a series of pratfalls as well as adventures. Gren, the tribesman who becomes separated from the rest of the group, teams up with Yattmur, from one

of the very few other groups of humans on Earth. They take with them the tummy-bellies, ridiculous fat little creatures who had been physically connected to a tree on the shore until Gren cut off their 'tails'. Aldiss makes them into the Fools of his adventure, like Lear's fool a way by which the author can express, in continual childish whingeing nonsense, truths that Gren will not acknowledge:

they came scampering forward, seizing Gren's and Yattmur's hands. 'O mighty master and sandwich-makers!' they cried. 'All this mighty watery world sailing is too much badness, too much badness, for we have sailed away and lost all the world. The world has gone by bad sailing and we must quickly good-sail to get it back.'¹⁸

Another memorable comic invention found in *Hothouse* is the 'heckler': a small flying machine, an artifact from the twenty-first century found in a cave. When the travellers activate it by accident, it can still bleat out its propaganda messages. They call it 'Beauty':

With scarcely a murmur, Beauty rose from the ground, hovered before their eyes, rose above their heads. They cried with astonishment, they fell backwards, breaking the yellow container. It made no difference to Beauty. Superb in powered flight, it wheeled above them, glowing richly in the sun.

When it had gained sufficient altitude, it spoke.

'Make the world safe for democracy!' it cried. Its voice was not loud but piercing . . . 'Who rigged the disastrous dock strike of '31?' Beauty demanded rhetorically. 'The same men who would put a ring through your noses today. Think of yourselves, friends and vote for SRH—vote for freedom!'¹⁹

Aldiss makes Beauty into one of the most memorable 'characters' from the novel, and also takes a neat swipe at the pretensions of our own civilisation.

If *Hothouse* has grandeur and enormous verbal energy, what then gives it weight? And if most critics don't place it as highly as Wells's or Stapledon's best works, why would I want to claim Aldiss as their direct literary descendant?

What at first seems a great weakness of *Hothouse* is in fact one of its strengths. Aldiss makes no pretence to be writing a realistic novel. This is not a documentary sent back from the future. 'Nobody cared any more', writes Aldiss in the book's second paragraph, 'for the big questions that begin "How long . . .?" or "Why . . .?"' It was no longer a place for mind. It was a place for growth, for vegetables. It was like a hothouse.'²⁰ None of the author's observations could have been made by anybody living in the era in which this book takes place. This is god's-viewpoint writing at its most unapologetic.

What literary powers, then, does Aldiss give his narrator that were unavailable to Wells's Time Traveller or Stapledon's Last Man? Characterisation, in a word. No matter how vast this future world, how teeming in life, that world can only become conscious in the minds of self-aware observers. In such a world, then, it becomes Aldiss's task to inject personal consciousness into his

world, and show us the effect of that reintroduction.

In this whole vast world, two small humans, Gren and Yattmur, occupy our point of view. The threat to them comes not from outside monsters, but from a morel — an intelligent fungus that slides from a tree onto Gren's back and becomes a parasite of his mind and body. Aldiss's Jungian morel, who develops into the third main character of the novel, finds that Gren's mind contains the ancestral memory of all human history, including scenes from the world as it was before the earth became a hothouse. The morel invades Gren's nervous system and increasingly 'Like a dusty harp, it [the morel's voice] seemed to twang in some lost attic of his head'.²¹ Gren becomes cut off from his surroundings by the experiences that the morel finds hidden in his mind. Yattmur is left to guide the action and feel anguish at the way Gren become detached from her and the tummy-bellies, for whom they have taken on responsibility. She follows Gren because she loves him and there is no one else left in the world for her. Twice during the novel, Gren and Yattmur find pleasant places where they could have settled and spent the rest of their lives. Each time, the morel drives Gren on, and Yattmur follows. The morel wants to reproduce itself, by attaching its new second half to Laren, the baby born to Gren and Yattmur. Gren is so befuddled that he becomes a willing partner of the morel's scheme to trick Yattmur into handing over the baby. The scene where the baby just manages to escape its fate is a masterpiece of horror, yet has a comic outcome, by which the morel finds a new host in a traverser, which sets off for the moon. Gren feels that he has woken from a dream:

It was over. The parasite was defeated. He would never again hear the inner voice of the morel twanging through his brain.

At that, loneliness more than triumph filled him. But he searched wildly along the corridors of his memory and thought, He has left me something good: I can evaluate, I can order my mind, I can remember what he taught me — and he knew so much.²²

The vastness of Aldiss's vision, then, is given poignancy because of his belief in the importance of individual characters. But this very richness, this capacity of Gren and Yattmur to grow in humanity and eventually take responsibility for a world that had seemed to be destroying them, makes us reevaluate the book's more obvious and extravagant ideas.

Aldiss, as godlike author, asserts that this world is hurtling towards devolution. During the book's last few pages, an unexpectedly bright burst of the sun's energy warns that the earth is about to undergo further great change. The sodal, a Lewis Carroll-like giant fish carried around by servants, the last creature to have direct memories of Earth's past, asserts:

'not only does nature have to be wound up to wind down, it has to wind down to be wound up. . . . So nature is devolving. Again the forms are blurring! They never ceased to be anything but inter-dependent — the one always living off the other — and now

they merge together once more. Were the tummy-bellies vegetable or human? Are the sharp-furs human or animal?²³

Do we find here the sigh of melancholy that we find in Wells when his traveller was faced with the same process of devolution at the end of *The Time Machine*? Do we find here the ‘vanity of vanities’ feeling that overcomes us when we read in Stapledon of humanity’s endless declines and falls and hollow triumphs? Not a bit of it.

Aldiss’s tone is so mercurial, so committed to simultaneous joy, struggle, and ferocity, that I and other readers have often speculated about its origins. In his autobiography, *The Twinkling of an Eye*, Aldiss suggests the origin of a major element in the novel:

In those gardens, we came to the Biggest Tree in the World, an old banyan. It crept across the park in all directions, as if setting out to conquer the whole globe. . . . Thanks to its longevity — not least in the imagination — the Calcutta banyan eventually reached England, entered one of my books, and filled the whole globe.²⁴

The Hothouse world itself is based more on Aldiss’s experiences in Burma during World War II than on any fiction he had ever read. The first 200 pages of *The Twinkling of an Eye* are saturated in Aldiss’s excitement at remembering his escape from Britain, being stripped down to bare essentials, including the shedding all of his childhood and teenage doubts and assumptions — and glorying in the tropical sunlight:

I would lie basking, a strange part-coloured fish, buttocks and legs white, torso deep brown, in the shallow water . . . We could see nothing but the clear blue sky overhead, the clear water below, flowing over its gravel bed, and the grassy banks of the canal . . .²⁵

This could be almost a quotation from a quiet moment in *Hothouse*.

If the emotional tone of *Hothouse* is given much of its sombre anchoring strength by its movement from light into darkness, so the book probably owes much to Aldiss’s pilgrimage back from Burma and Sumatra to a sun-starved, ungrateful, joyless Britain in the years after World War II. He says little in his autobiography about his failed first marriage, but in a speech in 1978 in Melbourne Aldiss told of the circumstances under which *Hothouse* was written. Cut off from his first wife and his first two children, he lived a hand-to-mouth existence for some years, in a flat above a commercial bath house, from which the steam rose continually through his floor. What more appropriate inspiration for a novel called *Hothouse*?

The process of writing *Hothouse* gave Aldiss a new life, a vigorously independent spirit and the basis of his later success (his only Hugo Award). It allowed him to leap free from the limitations of post-war Britain. Irrepressible hope enlivens every line of *Hothouse*. While humanity remains, consciousness remains, and while consciousness remains, ferocious intellectual energy remains a

possibility. Devolution is not something to be sighed about. Devolution is seen not as simplification, but merely the other side of evolution. Both are continuous adaptations to change. In *An Age*, five years later²⁶ (*Cryptozoic!* in all later editions), Aldiss takes the idea one step further, proposing that the vast sweep of our ‘evolutionary’ past is merely a prediction of our devolutionary future, and that what we think of as our future is in fact our constantly forgotten past. We adapt, not devolve; Aldiss celebrates life, not mourns its changes. The visions of Wells and Stapledon have not failed, but are constantly renewed.

Notes

- 1 H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine: An Invention, and Other Stories*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1946, pp. 90–1.
- 2 Ibid., p. 93.
- 3 Ibid., p. 92.
- 4 Ecclesiastes 1.2.
- 5 Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men: A Story of the Near and Far Future*, London: Methuen, Fountain Library edition, 1934.
- 6 Ibid., p. 354.
- 7 Particularly ‘Old Hundredth’ (1960), ‘The Source’ (1965) and ‘The Worm That Flies’ (1968), reprinted in Brian Aldiss, *A Romance of the Equator: Best Fantasy Stories*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1989.
- 8 Brian W. Aldiss, *Hothouse*, London, Faber & Faber, 1962; *The Long Afternoon of Earth*, New York: New American Library, 1962.
- 9 Aldiss, *A Romance of the Equator*, pp. 5–16.
- 10 Aldiss, *Hothouse*, pp. 31–44.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 56–78.
- 12 Ibid., p. 22.
- 13 Ibid., p. 185.
- 14 Ibid., p. 22.
- 15 Ibid., p. 11.
- 16 Ibid., p. 16.
- 17 Ibid., p. 18.
- 18 Ibid., p. 156.
- 19 Ibid., p. 170.
- 20 Ibid., p. 9.
- 21 Ibid., p. 86.
- 22 Ibid., p. 221.
- 23 Ibid., p. 251.
- 24 Brian Aldiss, *The Twinkling of an Eye: My Life as an Englishman*, Little, Brown, 1998, pp. 190–1.
- 25 Ibid., pp. 171–2
- 26 Brian W. Aldiss, *An Age*, London: Faber & Faber, 1967

Editions used

Brian W. Aldiss, *Hothouse*, London: Faber & Faber, 1962
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H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine and Other Stories*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1946

Other items of interest

Brian Aldiss, *The Twinkling of an Eye: My Life as an Englishman*, London: Little, Brown, 1998
Brian W. Aldiss, *An Age*, London: Faber & Faber, 1967
Brian W. Aldiss, *A Romance of the Equator: Best Fantasy Stories*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1989
Brian W. Aldiss. Foreword to Robert Crossley, *Olaf Stapledon*:

Speaking for the Future, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994

Brian W. Aldiss and David Wingrove, *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1986 (entries on H. G. Wells and Olaf Stapledon)

Bruce Gillespie, 'Literature Which Awakens Us: The Science

Fiction of Brian W. Aldiss', in Michael J. Tolley and Kirpal Singh (eds), *The Stellar Gauge: Essays on Science Fiction Writers*, Melbourne: Norstrilia Press, 1980

— Bruce Gillespie, 5 August 2000

Li'l ol' *brg* receives letters of comment

Bruce sez: These days I don't send out many copies of *brg* other than those appearing in ANZAPA. But every now and again even those few copies spark off letters of comment.

LEIGH EDMONDS Ballarat East VIC 3350

I enjoyed your write-up of the February Birthday Bash. You are right: there should be further regular Bashes if for no other reason that if we don't get together that way we will only be seeing each other at funerals. Not a happy thought.

I dipped into the mailing comments, but there is so much that is interesting there that I'm refraining from getting involved. If they were to provide more hours in the day, perhaps ... but life is too busy as it is. Earlier this week we put the finishing touches the second volume of the Australian civil aviation history, and I'm now working on a paper that I'm to deliver at a conference in Sydney next week. Since the history is being published as an ebook, we are also getting some DVDs printed this time to distribute to those who helped out in getting this volume done, as review copies and also for sale if there are any left over. They should be ready on Monday so I will have copies to give to people at the conference on Thursday. What an amazing world! It's not the same as paper copies but, like most of our friends who have had a go at publishing, the people publishing this history have rooms full of unsold books and we're looking for a way out of this trap. After that, the deck is more or less clear until Continuum, but I'm getting behind in my trawling scheduled for the history of fandom.

I cannot, however, refrain from commenting on your comment to Christina Lake about listening to music while travelling. These days I usually travel with two devices capable of playing music, an iPod and my tablet, to which I've added a memory chip loaded with 'classical' music. I find these indispensable when travelling so I can do things like read books. I call putting in earbuds and playing something my 'cone of silence' because, even though it's not very silent, it has the effect of blotting out outside noise, particularly on trains when people start talking to each other loudly about things I'd rather not hear about, or in libraries or archives where people like to chatter these days. Of course, I have to chose music that is not too distracting in itself, usually late romantic lushness, which is not my favorite listening, but covers the frequency spectrum nicely. Thus equipped aurally, I am able to concentrate on what I want to read.

Your cover is, as usual, very nice. Is it expensive to

publish fanzines with the extra expense of these full colour covers? I guess, in comparison to the cost of postage, it doesn't work out too bad.

(22 April 2017)

YVONNE ROUSSEAU Reservoir VIC 3073

Thank you for splendid mail that arrived on the same day as my visit to Heidelberg to keep my appointment with the neurologist. The colour print of seventieth-birthday celebrators is dazzling — as are the colourful covers of *brg* 95 and its engrossing contents as well. Thank you, too, for forwarding *Quoz* 35.

I've been meaning to send you a proper comment on these zines (much enjoyed) — but even now unexpected jobs continue here — like the instalment of a wall oven and the arrival (today) of yet another book case. Thus, in order to send anything at all, I'll have to restrict myself to commenting (in response to your response to Kim Huett) that the Milly-Molly-Mandy stories are not by Enid Blyton but by Joyce Lankester Brisley. They were first published in the 1920s, but were also available in the 1950s when I was a child. Living on an Australian dairy farm, I felt scornful of Milly-Molly-Mandy's pink-and-white striped dress, her Little Friend Susan, and her snug white cottage with a thatched roof, which was shared with Muvver, Farver, Granddad, Grandma, Aunt and Uncle. Sharing a bedroom with my two younger sisters, I used to tell bedtime stories of Milly-Molly-Mandy being trampled by bulls or suffering other rural mishaps. We found these travesties hilarious.

(26 April 2017)

DAVID L. RUSSELL 196 Russell Street, Dennington VIC 3280

Thanks for sending me *brg* 95, and the cover of the 296th mailing of ANZAPA, which unexpectedly featured a photograph of me taken by LynC. I was most surprised and pleased to make the cover.

The back cover of *brg* 95, featuring your 70th birthday card from Jo and Carey Handfield, has a mouse sitting on a bookshelf looking all cute and innocent.

But mousy appearances can be deceptive, Bruce.

I lent Stephen Campbell a copy of *Harry Harrison! Harry Harrison!* It seemed like a good idea at the time — a memoir by Harry Harrison in hard cover. Stephen finished the book while lying in bed and put the book down on the floor.

Stephen has a live-and-let-live policy towards creatures that choose to invade his home, so the fact that he has a mouse or mice isn't of much concern to him. However, the mice, as mice do, needed to bite on something hard to help with its constantly growing teeth, and a convenient hardcover book was just what the mouse dentist ordered.

Sigh! However, I bought for you a copy of the same book from the Book Grocer when I was in Melbourne (the one in Russell Street has closed but there's still one open in Elizabeth Street for the moment), since you had mentioned you wanted to find a copy.

Now I'm sending you the moused/foxed copy of the book with this letter. But! If you remember to bring it with you to LynC's place at the next Foundation Committee meeting on 21 May, I'll swap you the unbiten version for the chewed-up once. I'm counting on your forgetfulness, Bruce!

(26 April 2017)

STEPHEN CAMPBELL
52 Aitkins Road, Warrnambool VIC 3280

*brg*95 received with thanks.

Some mailing comments on your comments to Roman Orszanski: 'The individual bits of creative activity only make sense in terms of the whole'; 'The whole enterprise is science fiction'. Bruce, you hold the staff of a trufan in my opinion, but modern man seems to revel in the trivia instead of the germinating seed of it, which holds the true potency of its thought and feeling. Sensation genre is a poor echo for true sense-of-wonder science fiction. Even films find it hard to keep up with words. Eye candy is no satisfaction to the imagination that words conjure. Reading of the words is the transaction between writer and the inner mind of the reader, and props have little to do with that.

What I miss about reading good science fiction is its ability to explore the unknown, which seems to be replaced these days by the exploration of minutiae for the purpose of profit. The 'unknown' is now shown in all of its realistic detail, which makes it quite well known by then. The true sense of wonder is sacrificed to the explication of tricks, and their rigidity and complexity for the sake of realism instead of poetry. The unknown is infinite, and science fiction had the ability to show that. Does it do so now? Do we wonder, or have we been convinced that we know, so it doesn't matter any more? Where is the literature that provokes that sensation on its 'real' level, and does not merely mine its surface.

I suppose I should read more.

I did manage to acquire a book printed 1892 with *Australasia Illustrated* embossed in gold (volume 1), and ribbed printed spine with some lovely patterns. I've been reading this large volume (written in 1886) published by the Picturesque Atlas Publishing Company in Great Britain. The preface begins, 'Australia has no part in the

early history of the human race or in the development of its civilisation'. Captain Cook is engraved on the first page.

My mum is well for a 92-year-old, but does grow fragile and forgetful, which bothers her almost as not being able to do the washing. Her husband Peter is a good man, and looks after her well.

I've been painting pictures rabidly and discovering more difficulties in the pursuit of this art that I thought could be possible to somebody who has been doing it for so long.

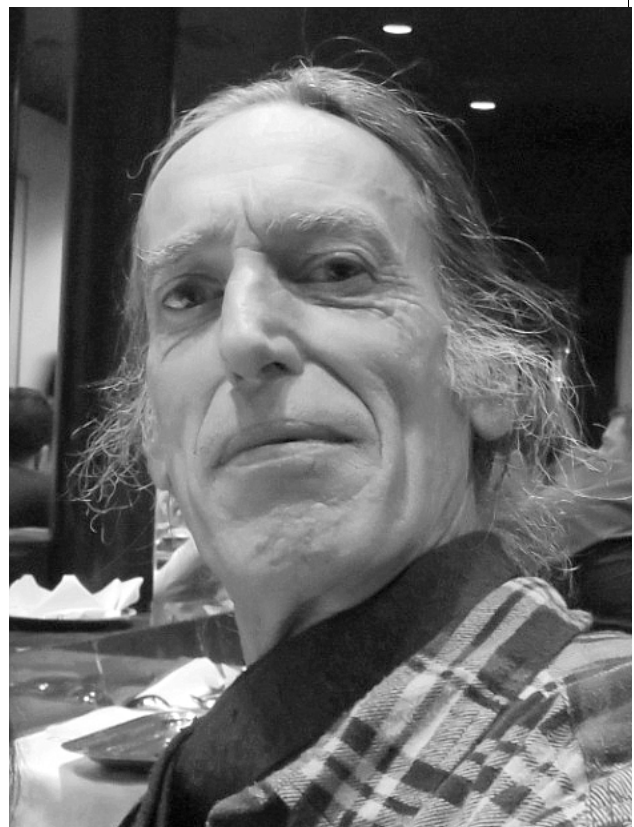
My 'graphic stories' continue to take me to enchanting places, are probably science fiction more than anything else, and I have fun with them.

Thanks for the printing the birthday card I gave you; a shame we couldn't see the gold of the laurel. I thoroughly enjoyed the birthday celebrations at the Mail Exchange Hotel, and felt as if I were at a convention 20 ... no, 40 ... years ago, and I realised I was among people who are friends have likemindedness.

I particularly enjoyed a conversation with Eric and Roman, and it was good to see Lee and Leigh. Lucy Sussex doesn't age, and was much as I remember her. I won't write a con report, but have vivid sensations of the evening. Thanks for inviting me. (I did not realise it was Lee Harding's celebration, either, or I would have done a card for him.)

I decided that, despite a very active mouse in the house, I would not acquire another cat. I have no wish to go through again the anguish of losing it, which also happened to a cat of mine 30 years ago. The sense of loss is different from and more poignant than the passing of

Stephen Campbell, February 2017.
(Photo: Jeanette Gillespie.)



a human, and the blame of oneself as a carer who has failed in hi duty does not sit well with my conscience. Will I become a hermit without even a pet companion? What I do need is a beautiful muse whose presence alone will fire my creative activity.

I've begun preparations at the Warrnambool Art Gallery (WAG) with the new curator there (Ren), who was appointed because the new curator (Vanessa) is on maternity leave after a couple of years here. The sea air

does it, I think. Ren, the new curator, is keen for me to exhibit, so I am preparing a submission to the committee with the assistance of my sister Kate, who knows how these things work. There may be up to 60 paintings, depending on space, and if this exhibition occurs I would very much like for you and Elaine to attend the opening. You are warned.

(27 April 2017)

End of an era Gillespie fanzines go all-electronic

SF Commentary 94 is now available only in two formats of PDF files:

Portrait edition (magazine style): <http://efanzines.com/SFC/SFC94P.pdf>

Landscape edition (widescreen): <http://efanzines.com/SFC/SFC94L.pdf>

Ever since postage prices, especially overseas postage, began rising steeply ten years ago, I've had increasing difficulty in supporting the print publication of *SF Commentary*, *Treasure*, and my other magazines, such as *Steam Engine Time*. However, I have received regular freelance indexing work during the last five years, so have been able to print a small number of copies for major contributors, subscribers, and fanzine publishers who have sent me paper magazines or books.

Suddenly at the end of February this flow of regular work stopped, so I find myself with no spare income to print and post any fanzines other than a few copies of **brg**. This is embarrassing, because some people have sent me \$100 subscriptions in the expectation of receiving print copies. If I receive any unexpected income over the next year or so, I will meet those expectations. Your names are in my card index. The trouble with miracles, however (as Tom Disch once said) is that, although they happen, they cannot be relied upon.

Please do not send me further subscriptions. I can't meet your expectations.

The same goes for those people who have no way of downloading *SF Commentary* from Bill Burns' eFanzines.com. I also know your names, and will print copies for these few people if a miracle turns up. (Miracles have been in short supply during 2017.)

Those people who send me print fanzines and do not themselves post to eFanzines.com will have to decide whether they still want to keep me on their files. I certainly don't want to miss out on such eminent fanzines as *Banana Wings* and *Trap Door*.

Bruce Gillespie, May 2017

Randy Byers:
'Cannon Beach'

