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BRIAN ALDISS AND HIS APPROACHES TO

THE SCIENCE-FICTION TRADITION

BY

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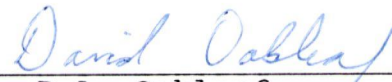

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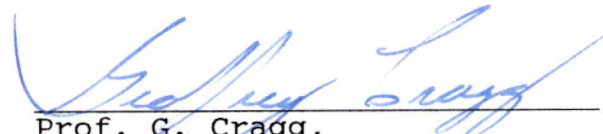
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Brian Aldiss and his Approaches to the Science-Fiction Tradition" submitted by Roger Francis Bakes in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Brian Aldiss is a stylist whose use of aesthetic con-
texts permits him to explore a number of philosophical
stances. His artistic self-consciousness has facilitated
his attempts to increase the SF genre's critical self-
awareness and to extend its parameters. His involvement in
the English New Wave Movement of the 1960's produced works
of radical experimentation and an increased movement away
from the hegemony of formulaic American SF.

Chapter I studies selected works that contain modern-
ist, postmodernist, and psychoanalytical perspectives and
reveals Aldiss's rejection of traditional SF conventions
while implicitly affirming the vitality of these conven-
tions. Aldiss's perception of an emerging SF tradition and
his relationship to it are examined.

Chapter II examines Aldiss's relationship with Mary
Shelley's Frankenstein and his use of the gothic fantasy,
the Romantic tradition, and his theories about the origins
of SF. The philosophical premises of Shelley's novel are
re-examined as well as its mythic and psychological frame-
work. Aldiss's increasingly mythopoeic sensibility counters
the secular, material, de-spiritualized myth of the Franken-
stein theme. This secular myth is woven throughout Aldiss's
work and is balanced by Aldiss's movement towards fantasy.

Chapter III looks at Aldiss's acknowledgement of H.G. Wells as a major influence on SF and his re-working of Wells's techniques and themes. His novella, "The Saliva Tree," captures the essential ideas and structure of the scientific romances. Moreau's Other Island re-works The Island of Dr. Moreau and examines the evolutionary concerns of Wells's novel. Aldiss further develops his interest in myth to balance the realistic, scientific framework of both novels.

Chapter IV assesses Aldiss's comprehension of the literary conventions and ideation of the utopian model in Enemies of the System. His own concepts of human consciousness are skillfully integrated into more traditional images and perspectives. By examining Aldiss's literary precursors and his use of SF themes, the literate, self-reflexive nature of his own fiction, critical thinking and utopian speculations are illustrated as well as the protean possibilities of the SF genre.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

For my mother and father.

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Chapter One:

Aldiss and the New Wave Influence

While Brian Aldiss can be perceived categorically as a Science-Fiction (hereafter SF) writer in that his fiction deals with space travel, future worlds, alternate universes, time travel and so on, he is also a contemporary modernist writer in his search for style and preoccupation with form. One finds in Aldiss the essential modernist problem in art: the tension between the awareness of complexity and the commitment to unity. This is further complicated by the postmodern element in much of Aldiss's work. His preoccupation with psychological fragmentation, entropic disorder, the relativity of perception and the indeterminancy of meaning is further evidence of his status as a self-conscious artist. Aldiss's body of work is so replete with shifting directions and multiple, often contradictory, perspectives that classification is virtually impossible. Aldiss works within various modes of writing, developing his stylistic proficiency in each mode. He states that "with every novel I write, I grasp something, and then don't wish to repeat it; there's always something else to do" (Shape 109). What remains fundamentally true of Aldiss is that his most enduring concern has been with SF as a genre and his own capacity to work within the boundaries while simultan-

eously seeking to extend them.

Aldiss has attempted to examine SF as a genre in both
his creative and critical writings. "Criticism and creation
always went hand-in-hand as far as I was concerned"
(Cartographers 170), Aldiss has stated, and his critical
pieces, including his literary history of SF, Billion Year
Spree (1973), employ image and metaphor more readily than
any particular critical methodology. Furthermore, his
fiction is frequently a form of criticism as it adopts and
often parodies S-F conventions and formulas, deliberately
re-works earlier SF (including his own work), and self-
reflexively comments on its own relationship to SF.

While Aldiss has had, in his native England, major
critical and commercial success with his mainstream fiction,
he has continued to work in the SF field. Aldiss is one of
an increasing number of SF writers who are self-conscious
stylists, aware of SF's literary tradition and equally
attuned to contemporary thought and writing; he is, there-
fore, both a creator and a reflector of the SF tradition and
SF's relationship to more mainstream writing. Aldiss's
early involvement in SF criticism and literary journals--he
founded SF Horizons in 1964 and is on the editorial boards
of other journals dedicated to SF criticism--is further
evidence of his intention to create a highly self-reflexive
genre. Aldiss's literary self-consciousness is also reveal-
ed in his extensive work as editor and anthologist: his

purpose in this work was to depict characteristic SF themes, concerns, formulas and motifs and, as well, to help establish a canon of exemplary SF. It is quite evident from Aldiss's critical writing and interviews that he perceives the relationship between mainstream writing--the term 'mainstream' comes from the tendency of SF to perceive itself as a self-contained genre and refers to any writing other than SF--and SF as dialectical: SF's capacity to revitalize mainstream writing is balanced by SF's need to adopt formal literary standards and techniques.

In his article, "The Influence of Science Fiction in the Contemporary American Novel," Kenneth Mathieson has written about the interpenetration of SF and mainstream writing. Mathieson notes that writers such as Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, Walker Percy and others were occasionally utilizing SF while simultaneously "a number of avowedly SF writers . . . consciously began to extend the traditional boundaries of their genre, aware as they were of developments in the wider literary culture around them" (22). While Mathieson restricts his observations to American writers and their fiction, his comments are germane to Aldiss. The mixture of influences, styles, techniques and modes in Aldiss's writing reflects SF's increasing self-consciousness and the impact of mainstream literature. Mathieson acknowledges the emerging change when he writes:

Genre boundaries, always less than sharp anyway, are
increasingly confused in their novels; and this demol-
ishes the never very useful distinction between SF and
other forms in terms of content. "SF" themes, plots,
and characteristic images began to emerge in other
places just when writers defining themselves as SF
authors turned increasingly away from stock formulas
and fictions which could be comfortably discussed in
terms of "extrapolation." These writers shared common
assumptions about literature, language and existence;
they were self-conscious and stylistically innovative,
fascinated by the fluid merging of "reality" and "illu-
sion," and attracted to parody and the transformation
of literary and mythic models. Their work, as has
become apparent, belongs to a wider shift in contem-
porary writing and sensibility, and cannot be easily
divided into generic archetypes. (22)

The movement in Aldiss's work in the late 1960's reflected
modernism's rejection of art as imitation for art as an
autonomous activity. His work of this period recalls
Tzvetan Todorov's view that all literary works are ulti-
mately self-reflexive, about themselves: "Every work, every
novel, tells through its fabric of events the story of its
own creation, its own history. . . . The meaning of a work
lies in its telling itself, its speaking of its own exis-
tence" (qtd. in Hawkes 100). The critic Mark Rose sees a

similar development in SF. Rose's concern is with SF as a genre and he states that "because the range of any genre is limited, writers are always in danger of exhausting the form's potential" (15). In response to this possibility "there is characteristically a movement toward interior-ization, a strategy that allows for a temporary revitaliza-tion of the whole generic field as spiritual or psycholo-gical correlatives replace physical action" (15). Rose concludes that "the kinds of radical displacements and transformations that have appeared in current SF should be considered a . . . phase in the genre's development. . . . The generic boundaries become increasingly problematic as the genre's quest for new material leads into this . . . phase" (17).

Aldiss has always avoided the merely formulaic in SF; to him "formula is the enemy within, the hardening of the arteries. . . . The whole point of formula is that it first teases and then satisfies expectations, one hundred percent of the time" (This World 94). While his own fiction has avoided formula, Aldiss also has confidence that SF general-ly has a dynamic, self-renewing quality: "My own faith in SF as a medium lies in the belief that it can never become entirely formularized; that by its nature it keeps breaking out of its shell, that it challenges us, enlarges us" (This World 94).

Aldiss's faith in SF's capacity for renewal, Rose's

perception of SF's revitalization through "interiorization" and, as well, the breakdown of generic demarcation that Mathieson writes of may be perhaps most fully appreciated in terms of the 'New Wave' (hereafter NW) movement of the late 1960's. Aldiss states that "the vital history of sf in the sixties lies precisely in its taking itself more seriously . . . as science fiction" (Shape 120). Patrick Parrinder has observed that the NW movement combined a "literary sophistication with an almost obligatory commitment to formal experiment" (Science Fiction 17). Certainly the NW movement was a new departure from more conventional SF, an effort at stylistic experimentation and a movement towards psychologically oriented fiction or inner space. As Colin Greenland notes, the NW movement "asserted remarkable formal resourcefulness and an energy of expression so compelling we may call it exhibitionist" (18). A contemporary editorial by Michael Moorcock reflects the movement's concern with generic exhaustion and SF's capacity for renewal:

> In its concern for discovering new techniques, new sub-
> ject matter and so on, SF may well have made the great-
> est contribution to the development of the novel in the
> 20th century. . . . SF is a genre form. Like all genre
> forms it has certain restrictions which we have spent
> some years exploring. At present we seem close to
> discovering the limits of those conventions. (qtd. in
> Greenland 202)

The NW movement continued the modernist critique of tradi-
tional realism but discarded modernism's belief in a meaning
or meanings--whatever meaningful patterns are discerned are
wholly illusory, comforting fictions. In effect, the NW
movement was an exercise in both modern and--perhaps more
importantly--postmodern experimentation. As Greenland
remarks:

> the distinctive themes of NW writers--ontological inse-
> curity, alienation, the hidden and hostile dimensions
> of media and machines, the disintegration of objectiv-
> ity into subjective worlds of inner space, the danger-
> ous exhilarating multiplication of 'possibilities'--are
> all primary concerns of their times. (201)

Christopher Priest remarks that the NW movement was "an
essentially British phenomenon because there was a genuine
spirit of revolt within it, and the revolution was against
the axioms of the American school" (199). Certainly it had
a tremendous impact on Aldiss. Not only is he identified as
one of its central writers but the radical stylistic experi-
mentation of Aldiss's fiction in the late 1960's is both a
response to NW acceptance of such experimentation and a
reflection of SF's response to the full impact of modernist
and postmodernist thinking.

David Lodge's assessment of the arts' response to the
cultural movement of the late 1960's contrasts the arts'
response with the energy that SF and Aldiss's work were

manifesting:

>we seem, indeed, to be living through a period of
>unprecedented cultural pluralism which allows, in all
>the arts, an astonishing variety of styles to flourish
>simultaneously. Though they are in many cases radi-
>cally opposed on aesthetic and epistemological grounds,
>no one style has managed to become dominant. . . . We
>should not be surprised that many contemporary writers
>manifest symptoms of extreme insecurity, nervous self-
>consciousness and even at times a kind of schizo-
>phrenia. (qtd. in Greenland 59)

NW writing was a self-conscious rejection of the dominant
forms and themes of traditional SF and, as such, manifested
the variety of styles and aesthetic and epistemological pre-
mises that Lodge speaks of. Aldiss is very much a case in
point; his concern with genre and literary and aesthetic
theory is evident throughout his work of the late 1960's.
What is remarkable is the formal control and the capacity to
explore radically different modes of writing evident in
Aldiss's work. However, Aldiss's catholic range of perspec-
tives should not be too surprising when one notes that an
early issue of SF Horizons, edited by Aldiss, could draw
together in a single issue a range of thought from the
avant-garde William Burroughs to the conservative C.S.
Lewis.

Overall, Aldiss's criticism is relatively modest in

scope, though in <u>The Shape of Further Things</u> generic bound-aries become blurred. In this work his critical thinking becomes imaginative and metaphorical as well as, at times, empirical and analytic: the two modes of thinking co-exist. The entire book is a deliberate post-structuralist exercise in blurring identity, language and literary form. <u>Billion Year Spree</u>, on the other hand, always remains subsidiary in importance to his SF because his SF's form and content are consistently linked to and influenced by a particular aesthetic perspective. The following observation of M.H. Abrams is especially relevant to Aldiss's fiction:

> In modern times, new departures in literature almost invariably have been accompanied by novel critical pro-nouncements whose very inadequacies sometimes help to form the characteristic qualities of the correlated literary achievement. . . . Any well-grounded critical theory in some degree alters the aesthetic perception it purports to discover. (23)

In Aldiss's case, one finds a stylist whose style is deeply influenced by ideation: style is a philosophical perspec-tive, a statement about reality. This aspect of Aldiss's work links him further with modernism because modernist works are often remarkable for, as Malcolm Bradbury has observed,

> their high degree of self-signature, their quality of sustaining each work with a structure appropriate only

to that work. . . . Each work is a once-and-for-all
creation subsisting less for its referential than its
autotelic constituents, the order and rhythm made for
itself and submerged by itself. (29)

Aldiss's work in the late 1960's shows an increased self-
reflexivity, an expansion of generic parameters and the
deliberate exploration of a range of aesthetic and literary
premises. Aldiss's fiction is a manifestation of the NW
movement's sense of literary experimentation and of how a
self-conscious artist can work within a specific genre while
revealing the manner in which, as Mathieson notes,

once peripheral genre models can become central to the
major preoccupations of the times, at whatever remove
from the strict confines of the genre in which they
began and however dislocated from the history and soci-
ety they reflect. (31)

Aldiss's literary and artistic development can be perceived
in the following works: 1965's short story, "Girl and Robot
with Flowers," 1964's The Dark Light Years, 1968's Report on
Probability A and 1969's Barefoot in the Head. These works
illustrate Aldiss's movement from traditional SF forms to a
high degree of self-reflexivity resulting from his awareness
of meta-fiction, modernist and postmodernist influences,
myth and various modes of consciousness.

"Girl and Robot with Flowers" appeared in New Worlds,
the heart of the English NW movement. Modest in scope,

unconventional in terms of traditional SF, it manages to reject customary SF subjects and narrative structure while simultaneously acknowledging the ongoing power of traditional SF. Typically, Aldiss has it both ways: even as he works against outmoded concepts and forms he is paying tribute to the literary tradition of SF. While the story comments on the demise of the robot story as outmoded, the story within the story, "Robot with Flowers," is both ironic and moving. Overall, the story is an exercise in metafiction: a commentary on other fiction in fictional form. This aspect of Aldiss's work would be developed even further in the 1970's.

The story is a thinly-disguised autobiographical reflection on psychological renewal. The narrator and his wife comment on the work he is producing and SF generally but the main concern of the narrator is the classic modernist problem of creating unity in art while capturing the complexity of the experience. The story deals with disintegrating generic boundaries: it attempts to merge life and art while, ironically, adopting a postmodern stance that furthers this separation by its increasing sense of artifice and literary self-referentiality. The narrator's primary concern is with his own emotional state and psyche and the nature of art. He asks, "why can't I get the fridge into an SF story, and this wonderful sunlight, and you, instead of just a bunch of artless robots?" (<u>Saliva</u> 232) Earlier he

speculates on his psychological state, the nature of SF and how his use of the genre was a product of psychological projection:

> . . . Was not science fiction a product of man's divided and warring nature? I thought it was, a reflection of the unhappiness that had haunted my own life until Marion entered it. But this too was not a declaration lightly to be made.
>
> The idea of robots gathering flowers, I suddenly thought, was a message from my psyche telling me to reverse the trend of my armed apprehensions, to turn about that line of Shakespeare's:
>
> And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies;
>
> Now thrive the armourers . . .
>
> It was a time for me to bankrupt my fictional armourers and get out the dalliance. My psyche wanted to do away with armed men—but my fearful ego had to complete the story by making the robots merely prepare for a harsher time to come. All fiction was a similar rationalization of internal battles. (230-1)

This was a transitional story for Aldiss, capturing the multiple aspects of his fiction while indicating its increasingly experimental nature. It is essentially meta-fiction: fiction about other fiction and the process of writing; that is, it contains an increasingly postmodern self-referentiality. Interestingly, it is also modernist in its attempt

to deal with the problem of form and human experience.
Similarly, its literary self-consciousness and psychological
orientation anticipate the energy of the NW movement's con-
cern with inner space and a self-reflexive approach to SF.
Certainly the form and subject of the story are unconven-
tional by traditional SF standards and a harbinger of what
was to come in Aldiss's work.

The Dark Light Years's chiaroscuro title contains a
strong visual element, punning and connecting word and image
and cleverly echoing Aldiss's preoccupation with perception,
with 'seeing' that is essential for self-knowledge. The
novel is prefaced by a quotation from T.S. Eliot's "East
Coker":

> O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark,
> The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into
>   the vacant,
> The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men
>   of letters,
> The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and
>   the rulers . . .

While Aldiss is acknowledging his roots in modernism and his
own literary self-awareness, Eliot's words anticipate the
sense of spiritual emptiness, the lack of human connection,
the sense of loss and preoccupation with death found in the
novel. The ontological uncertainty that is characteristic
of NW writing and Aldiss's later works is evident in this

novel. One of the main characters discusses the relation-
ship between perception and knowledge:

> And, indeed, what is the external world? Since we can
> only know it through our senses, we can never know it
> undiluted; we can only know it as external-world-plus-
> senses. What is a street? To a small boy, a whole
> world of mystery. To a military strategist, a series
> of strong points and exposed positions; to a lover, his
> beloved's dwelling place; to an urban historian, a
> series of watermarks in time. . . . (55)

Indeed, most of the novel's cast of characters are highly
cerebral, capable of extensive ratiocination and well arti-
culated points of view. As the quotation would indicate,
the novel contains numerous perspectives as it shifts from
alien to human. In fact, it is a Utod, the more spiritually
evolved alien, who observes that "frequently there are
several versions of the truth" (11). At the same time, in a
novel dealing with communication between radically different
cultures there is a fundamental, almost Swiftian sense of
the limits of communication: both the aliens and human
remain trapped and limited by their physical forms and cul-
tural systems.

The novel rests on the physical and cultural diffe-
rences between the human and the alien Utods. Despite its
futuristic setting the humans of the novel have tradi-
tional, easily identifiable emotions and motivations.

In fact, the pessimism of the novel stems from the perceptual limits of the humans: war is an ongoing political, economic necessity; generational conflict is omnipresent; human motivation is presented as instinctual; and man's ethnocentrism blinds him to the alien creatures' cultural and spiritual development. The Utods, on the other hand, are an exercise in culture shock: physically huge and grotesque to the human eye, with six limbs and two heads, capable of living to over one thousand years and possessing a complex system of oral communication that employs eight orifices, they are spiritually more evolved than man and live in cultural harmony. Incapable of pain and, hence, fearless, they live in a harmonious relationship with the natural, physical world, as is implicit in their wallowing in their own feces. Their acceptance of their own excrement is fundamental and necessary for their well-being and their spiritual view of the world. Their multi-generational racial memories produce a view of life that is purposeful, connected and harmonious; their spiritual evolution has created social unity.

Aldiss has written on the excremental aspect of his novel:

"Civilization is the distance man has placed between himself and his excreta." That was the epigraph I used in my 1964 novel, The Dark Light Years. Every now and again, civilization to a younger generation suddenly

looks more like a psychosis than an achievement.
That's when I think of my epigraph, because there is
something sick in the way mankind tries to forget or
ignore its animal nature. The most expensive invention
in history is not the internal combustion engine, get-
ting such a bad press these days, but the flush toilet,
which has propelled us further from Mother Nature than
rockets ever took us from Mother Earth. It is the most
basic discontinuity of all ecological cycles. That
which was of the soil is returned not to the soil but
to a sewage plant and thus to the sea--while nine-
tenths of our domestic water is expended launching it
on its voyage. . . . The Dark Light Years thought
along these lines, comparing the hygiene-phobias of
mankind with the mysticism of a gentle race of
creatures, the Utods, who accepted their own excrement
without revulsion. (This World 87)

The view that Aldiss is espousing here and in the novel is
itself the most clinical that any of his fiction assumes.
In the later fiction especially, there is an increasingly
Jungian perspective that is compatible with what Mark Rose
has characterized as the "interiorization" of the SF genre
and with the NW movement's interest in inner space. How-
ever, Aldiss's portrayal of the relationship between psych-
ological states and social environment in this novel is
analogous to one developed by Norman O. Brown in his classic

Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History

(1959). While Aldiss does not develop a fully Freudian view

of man in this novel, his pessimistic vision and sense of

man's irrational, material outlook are very similar to

Freud's. Brown states that

> . . . the later Freud . . . is moving toward the posi-
> tion that man is the animal which represses himself and
> which creates culture or society to repress himself.
> Even the formula that society imposes repression poses
> a problem rather than solves it; but the problem it
> poses is large. For if society imposes repression, and
> repression causes the universal neurosis of mankind, it
> follows that there is an intrinsic connection between
> social organization and neurosis. Or, as Freud puts
> it, man's superiority over the other animals is his
> capacity for neurosis, and his capacity for neurosis is
> merely the obverse of his capacity for cultural
> development. (9-10)

While The Dark Light Years is modest in scope and intent,

lacking the experimentation with narrative, structure and

technique that subsequent works show, it does illustrate

Aldiss's ability to avoid the merely formulaic "alien

encounter" SF story. Primarily a novel of ideas reminiscent

of Aldous Huxley's fiction, it uses Freudian insight to pro-

vide an essential aesthetic perspective. Freud's vision of

man is primarily imaginative and apocalyptic--hence its

appeal to artists. Aldiss's belief that "ideas or ideologies always arise which cushion us from clear perceptions of our own cruelty" (This World 23) shares Freud's insight into man's capacity for self-delusion.

In their work, Modernism, Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane describe the nature of modernism:

> . . . It is the one art that responds to the scenario of our chaos. It is the art consequent on Heisenberg's 'Uncertainty principle' . . . of the world changed and reinterpreted by Marx, Freud and Darwin, of capitalism and constant industrial acceleration, of the existential exposure to meaninglessness or absurdity. It is the literature of technology. It is the art consequent on the disestablishment of communal reality and conventional notions of the wholeness of individual character, on the linguistic chaos that ensues when public notions of language have been discredited, and when all realities have become subjective fictions. (27)

Brian Aldiss's Barefoot in the Head is a characteristic modernist text that fully portrays the "scenario of our chaos." By depicting a world in social, linguistic and intellectual disorder, Aldiss adheres to the modernist "conventions of Plight, Alienation, and Nihilism; the idea of the modern is bound up with consciousness of disorder, despair, and anarchy" (Bradbury and McFarlane 41). The novel is perhaps Aldiss's most experimental, most ambitious work and the one

that most fully extends the parameters of SF. Barefoot
reveals Aldiss's mastery of the characteristics of modernist
writing with its formal experimentation, dislocation of
conventional syntax, disturbance of chronology and spatial
order, ambiguity, polysemy, obscurity, mythopoeic allusion,
irrationalism and structuring by symbol and motif rather
than by narrative or argument. Aldiss has said of the novel
that

> . . . it took over three years to put all the pieces
> together. I used up all I knew about fiction or
> science fiction, about scientific reasoning, and men
> and women. I shot my bolt, and for a while believed I
> would never be able to write SF again. (This World 89)

With its sustained metaphors, Joycean language, schizoid
mindscape, cinematic juxtaposition of images, personal dis-
location, and eroding social cohesion, Barefoot pays minimal
attention to the trappings of SF. A world disoriented by
psychedelic warfare is the novel's premise; normal mental
states and social relations are undermined by indeterminate
hallucinogenic states. The novel's protagonist, Colin
Charteris--his name is a self-mocking pun on "The Saint" of
popular fiction--is a Christ figure who is shaped by, rather
than a shaper of, historical and social forces. The world
of the novel with its increasing tribalism, search for
spiritual leadership, linguistic chaos, loss of community
and increasing sense of absurdity is one in which a new

reality is emerging. Aldiss is again employing a modernist sensibility, the contemporary world's own sense of historical change. Bradbury and McFarlane describe this aspect of modernism:

> . . . the historicist feeling that we live in totally
> novel times, that contemporary history is the source
> of our significance, that we are derivatives not of the
> past but of the surrounding and enfolding environment
> or scenario, that modernity is a new consciousness, a
> fresh condition of the human mind--a condition which
> modern art has explored, felt through, sometimes
> reacted against. (22)

Proclamation of the advent of a new sensibility, or a new kind of human being, is a traditional topos in the history of modernism. Aldiss creates this sensibility within a broad SF framework. Barefoot is a novel in which, paradoxically yet typically of Aldiss, uncertainty is the only certainty: entropic breakdown and indetermincy are the prevailing characteristics. It is a skillful exercise in modernist conventions combined with an equally skillful use of the English SF disaster novel; however, it is the modernist aesthetic framework--that philosophical outlook and particular mode of consciousness--that gives the novel its depth, strength and special quality.

Report on Probability A contains alternate worlds and scientific observers; the outward forms of SF are casually

adhered to. More accurately, though, the novel is another

of Aldiss's stylistic exercises. Report adopts Alain Robbe-

Grillet's nouveau roman form, style and technique in a post-

modern aesthetic framework. In opposition to Barefoot's

sustained use of metaphor, Report employs metonymic unity:

character, action and background are knitted together by

physical contiguity. The immensely detailed, scientifically

exact and metaphor-free descriptions of persons, objects and

events prevent us from visualizing them. By presenting the

reader with more data than he can synthesize, the discourse

affirms the resistance of the world to interpretation. A

purely phenomenal world is portrayed--a world of data and

surfaces. The depths and significances are present but

unknowable.

The following passage is typical of the novel:

. . . the window on the left belonged to Mr. Mary's

wife's bedroom. It had red curtains. Above these win-

dows on the first floor, which were each of the same

size and smaller than the two windows on the ground

floor, was the line of the roof. The angles of the

roof were capped by carved stone, as was the roof tree,

which bore a weathered stone urn at each end. The roof

was covered by blue-grey slates. In the middle of it

was a small dormer window; this window belonged to the

attic; projecting from the woodwork immediately above

this small window was a white flag-pole no more than a

metre in length, which bore no flag. G. had never seen

.it bear a flag. (30)

. In this novel Aldiss adopts a postmodern stance that resists

interpretation and meaning. Barefoot and Report are

Aldiss's most radical, most experimental works. Both novels

illustrate his capacity to employ movements in contemporary

thought and letters in his own chosen genre of SF and, as a

result, extend the traditional boundaries of the genre.

Mark Rose states that

A literary genre is not a pigeonhole but a context for

writing and reading--or, in Claudio Guillen's sugges-

tive phrase, "an invitation to form." Instead of

thinking of science fiction as a thing, a kind of

object to be described, it is perhaps more useful to

think of it as a tradition, a developing complex of

themes, attitudes, and formal strategies that, taken

together, constitute a general set of expectations.

(4)

Aldiss's avoidance of formula and his exploration of style,

form and various aesthetic premises undermines and expands

any static set of expectations. As a writer of SF Aldiss is

keenly aware of what Rose characterizes as the "tradition"

of SF. To appreciate Aldiss's SF it is necessary to under-

stand his relationship with this tradition. Aldiss must be

perceived as an English SF writer. The NW movement was, in

part, an attempt by English SF writers to rid themselves of

a pervasive American (and highly formulaic) influence.
Aldiss believes that the English SF writer is more self-con-
sciously literary, one who is "conscious of being part of a
literary tradition which is not outcast, and so we sometimes
manage to write freshly" (This World 95). As a stylist
Aldiss is sensitively attuned to language; his relationship
with English SF is fundamentally linked with the English
language itself. The rhythms, tones, images, poetic and
connotative qualities of language are what Aldiss responds
to as he seeks to integrate his own writing into a greater
body of work; he describes this body of work metaphorically:

> The English language has been growing like a great
> forest for over a thousand years. The first leaves of
> that forest survive from the sixth century. Among
> those leaves are such poems as Widsith, Beowulf, and
> The Wanderer, which convey a kind of awe for the world
> and its strangeness, which we can recognize as the
> spirit which, at least in part, informs contemporary
> science fiction.

> As the forest has developed in response to chan-
> ging conditions, so has the response to the wonderful,
> but that response is present in some of our greatest
> writers. The language of Piers Plowman, Chaucer,
> Marlowe, Shakespeare, Bunyan, Milton, Thomas Browne,
> Johnson, Pope, the Romantics such as Shelley and Byron,
> and the novelists and poets of last century--all in

this long and illustrious line preserve a vision that escapes from the dull appearance of everyday. (<u>This World</u> 96)

Aldiss identifies strongly with this body of work, stating that "this tremendous green bank balance of the imagination is something on which British science fiction writers draw" (<u>This World</u> 96). If <u>Report</u> and <u>Barefoot</u> can be accurately seen as twin exercises in metaphor and metonymy, it is worth noting that Aldiss sees these properties as indigenous to language itself: "Our language is so much one of metaphor and metonym" (<u>This World</u> 96). Christopher Priest sees Aldiss as part of an essential English SF tradition in which "the work is in general literate and fresh, displaying qualities of landscape, irony, language and subtlety that any other nation, English-speaking or otherwise, would find hard to match" (20).

Aldiss gives a brief account of the English SF tradition that is also an account of his own identity, influences and literary sources:

Turn to the first novel in our language which is unmistakably science fiction, Mary Shelley's <u>Franken-stein</u> (1818). We can see an imaginative tradition behind it, in particular the translation of the Bible, Milton's <u>Paradise Lost,</u> and Mary's father's novel, <u>Caleb Williams</u>. The text makes specific reference to <u>Paradise Lost</u>, just as Kingsley Amis's <u>The Alteration</u>

> scrupulously makes reference to Philip Dick's <u>The Man
> in the High Castle</u>.
>
> After <u>Frankenstein</u>, it is easy to trace that
> imaginative tradition forward. H.G. Wells, an inno-
> vator of thematic material, belongs to the tradition
> which includes Defoe, Swift, and Mary Shelley. . . .
> All British SF writers write within this tradition
> . . . . (<u>This World</u> 97)

Another essential perspective on Aldiss is related to the
perception of him as part of an English SF and literary tra-
dition. It is a perception that divides modern or contempo-
rary SF into 'hard' and 'soft' divisions. 'Hard' SF is very
much an American form stemming from the pulp fiction of the
1920's, 1930's and 1940's; its roots go back to the influ-
ence of Hugh Gernsback as a seminal SF editor and his use of
the SF movement to promote science and technology. The
influence of John W. Campbell was similar. It is a form
that is highly conventional in narrative, characterization
and plot structure and it is particularly distinguished by
its emphasis on short-term prediction or extrapolation and,
most importantly, by its concern with technology, the
engineering sciences, and scientific 'facts.' First
priority is given to scientific authenticity and to
technological progress. Generally speaking, minimal stand-
ards for literary style, plot, and psychological development
or insight are acceptable as long as, in the words of

Parrinder,

> the SF writer looks for new and unfamiliar scientific
> theories and discoveries which could provide the occa-
> sion for a story, and, at its more didactic extreme,
> the story is only a framework for introducing the
> scientific concept to the reader. (_Science Fiction_ 15)

Aldiss belongs to the category of 'soft' SF. This tradition
or mode of writing is attuned to language and literary
history, as is evident from Aldiss's commentary as well as
the inherent literary qualities of his own fiction. As
well, 'soft' SF is concerned with psychological insight, in
part, because of the interiorization of the genre in the NW
movement. 'Soft' SF is significantly and fundamentally
different from 'hard' SF because of its "scepticism about
man's supremacy over nature and the benefits of unremitting
technology" (_This World_ 89).

Apart from its sensitivity to language, style and
literary technique, 'soft' SF is deeply humanistic--empha-
sizing interpersonal relationships and feelings--and, his-
torically, it has anticipated the NW's questioning and radi-
cal re-examination of ordinary modes of thought and societal
institutions. Aldiss's characters struggle for self-know-
ledge and moral insight. Psychological and spiritual growth
akin to the Jungian process of individuation is inherent in
much of Aldiss's characterization. The deadening effects of
society and its self-serving ideologies with the resulting

need for psychic rebirth and integration are constant con-
cerns.

While Aldiss's more radical literary experimentation
ended with the demise of the NW movement, Aldiss continued
to produce intelligent, literate SF. The balance of this
thesis will now examine specific and representative SF works
by Aldiss from the 1970's and assess his continuing literary
development.

Chapter Two:

Aldiss and Mary Shelley

The early 1970's were a transitional period for Brian
Aldiss. The NW movement began to subside with the demise
of New Worlds magazine, and some of the emotional intensity
surrounding the movement began to diminish. In his literary
history of SF, Billion Year Spree, Aldiss could refer to it
as a phenomenon that had completed the first phase of its
influence on contemporary SF. Aldiss's more radical liter-
ary experimentation with prose style and narrative technique
also ceased. A time of re-evaluation and new direction
began. Aldiss enjoyed commercial success in England with
his more conventional non-SF writing, particularly the first
two volumes of his Horatio Stubbs trilogy, The Hand-Reared
Boy and A Soldier Erect. Although he did not write any SF
novels for a number of years, Aldiss's thinking about SF
found an outlet in non-fiction prose. The complexity and
ingenuity of Aldiss's intellectual life is captured in his
autobiographical and philosophical work, The Shape of
Further Things: Speculation on Change (1970). It is both a
coda to the previous decade and a precursor of Aldiss's
persistent concerns in the ensuing decade.

Inevitably perhaps, much of the book is a philosophical
and speculative response to the previous year's lunar land-

ing:

> Throughout this book, I took it for granted that I was
> writing in the year that men would set foot on the
> moon. They did so in the middle of July (a month ago,
> as I write this). It is one thing to anticipate an
> event, another to anticipate one's response to it--the
> swirl of adrenalin flushes some strange emotions. (159)

An acute emotional response is to be expected from a SF
writer. Space travel is, to Aldiss, less related to extra-
polation about technological advances than it is an emblem
of imaginative expansion and man's capacity for spiritual
transcendence. With the lunar landing SF has moved from the
metaphorical to the literal. Aldiss captures this sense of
transition when he reflects:

> As we stared at that ashen face, for so many ages and
> climates the property of mankind's fancies, we experi-
> enced the rare, rare frisson that comes when entire
> systems of imagination come together, match velocities,
> and coalesce into something new: when what was fantasy
> becomes subject to the rigours of a return ticket.
> (160)

Aldiss's response is characteristically complex, with a
marked sense of estrangement and a Darwinian perspective
that are necessary to see the lunar landing in its proper
context. This context is one that Aldiss sees in terms of
time and cultural change: man is a "neotenic ape" (161)

whose immense technological achievement is still an aspect of essentially tribal power politics and whose very nature is essentially schizoid: "It is the neocortex that has powered man's evolutionary rise to domination. . . . Beneath the neocortex lies, unslumbering, the old animal brain" (161). While Aldiss applauds the advent of space travel and possible colonization and acknowledges that "mankind must grow in stature to meet the challenge of his new environment" (163), whether as an empirical reality or as a powerful metaphor, his consistent preoccupation is with psychological and existential reality and he concludes that "we shall discover the most meaningful truths of the Universe within ourselves" (164). Aldiss's concern is what can be characterized as inner space--the subject of 'soft' SF. Aldiss's fiction throughout the 1970's maintains its preoccupation with man's inner life, moral choice and his capacity to cope with accelerated social and intellectual change.

Aldiss's preoccupation with time, human consciousness, and the writing of SF and his ambivalence towards technology are encapsulated in his response to the lunar landing. Shape reflects the range of Aldiss's thinking and his increasing concern with the relationships between inner and outer worlds, the depths of human consciousness and the empirical world of social order and change. An idiosyncratic, highly personal work, Shape defies categorization,

combining midnight reveries, chapters on the history of SF, reflections on the nature of dreams and various hypotheses about the future. The book is a portrait of what could be characterized as a SF sensibility. Aldiss himself states that

> this book is . . . a maze of themes; it is difficult not to respond with incoherence to the incoherent situation in which we find ourselves. We must accept that the complex world is a model of our own internal dynamisms (164).

It reveals Aldiss's modernist concern with a disintegrating moral, social and intellectual order. Certainly the image of the insulated astronauts is a powerful one for Aldiss. Their self-contained world is one of "autism brought to perfection" (165). Aldiss's response to this image typically raises ontological questions: "Where . . . was reality?" (165) These ontological concerns resurface in Aldiss' next work of fiction, Frankenstein Unbound (1973).

In Spree Aldiss brings his acute sensibility to the history of SF, concentrating "on the origins of science fiction in the last century and on its emergence as a genre in this century" (2). In his Introduction Aldiss states that

> the central contention of my book, supported by evidence, is that science fiction was born in the heart and crucible of the English Romantic movement in exile in Switzerland, when the wife of the poet Percy Bysshe

Shelley wrote <u>Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus</u>.
And I seek to show how the elements of the novel are
still being explored in fiction, because they are still
of seminal interest to our technological society. I
seek to show that those elements were combined as they
were, when they were, because Shelley's generation was
the first to enjoy that enlarged vision of time--to
this day still expanding--without which science fiction
is perspectiveless, and less itself. (3)

What is implicit in this passage is that Aldiss sees SF as
possessing the self-consciousness, self-absorption and self-
awareness that his own fiction manifests. As well, Aldiss
reveals his modernist interest in myth and man's psycholog-
ical complexity when he says of SF that "when it concerns
itself not only with technological problems but with the
affairs of man's inwardness . . . then it can approach the
permanence of myth" (3).

The opening chapter of <u>Spree</u> is about the writings of
Mary Shelley, primarily <u>Frankenstein</u>, and is entitled "The
Origins of the Species: Mary Shelley". The title refers to
Darwin and, indirectly, the enormous expanse of time
required for the evolutionary process. It draws attention
to Aldiss's persistent, overwhelming sense of time--a
personal preoccupation. Aldiss's approach to Shelley is to
"investigate the brilliant context--literary, scientific,
and social--from which she drew life and inspiratation" (8).

It is an expansive approach that sees the text within a specific historical context--a multi-faceted perspective. The bold sweep of Aldiss's ideas continues with his definition of SF--a definition that attempts to combine ideational content with epistemological concerns and specific literary forms:

> Science fiction is the search for a definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mould" (8).

Aldiss is not a purist about SF as he sees it as easily separating into science fantasy and, at times, as not readily distinguishable from fantasy. In any case he sees both SF and science fantasy as "part of fantasy" (8). He also acknowledges that "in its wide sense, fantasy clearly embraces all science fiction" (8). As well, "fantasy in a narrower sense, as <u>opposed</u> to science fiction, generally implies a fiction leaning more towards myth or the mythopoeic than towards an assumed realism" (8). Aldiss's novels of the 1970's often contain a tension between their mythopoeic orientation and a realistic framework. <u>Frankenstein Unbound</u> can be perceived as an exploration of the boundaries of fantasy and realism.

The central hypothesis of <u>Spree</u> is that "science fiction was born from the gothic mode" (18) and that

Frankenstein is the first example of SF, the "first great myth of the industrial age" (23), the "first real novel of science fiction" (29). To buttress his case Aldiss states that

> the methods of the Gothic writers are those of many
> science fiction authors. . . . Science fiction writers
> have brought the principle of horrid revelation to a
> fine art, while the distant and unearthly are frequent-
> ly part of the same package. . . . Again, for both
> Gothic and science fiction writers, distance lent
> enchantment to the view. (19)

As well, Aldiss sees "terror, mystery, and that delightful horror which Burke connected with the sublime . . . in science fiction to this day" (20). But Aldiss is not merely concerned with gothic writing as escapism. To Aldiss the gothic, like SF, is a source of ideas, containing certain perspectives on and interpretations of reality.

As Aldiss later acknowledged in a revised edition of Spree, his connection of the origins of SF with gothic and Romantic writing met with critical resistance. Certainly the idea of a relationship between SF and the gothic, between a late eighteenth-century and primarily a twentieth-century genre, is intriguing. However, Aldiss's assertion that SF is, in effect, a neo-gothic form is actually somewhat commonplace in SF criticism today. Thomas H. Keeling notes that "critical histories of science fiction

usually link the development of this genre with that of the gothic novel" (107). According to Keeling, this view of SF states that "the themes and motifs of science fiction are merely a futuristic displacement of the gothic" (108). But Keeling does not share such an interpretation and he presents a carefully reasoned argument that "science fiction is not, in fact, an updated and disguised form of gothicism" (109).

Keeling summarizes his case for distinguishing and segregating SF from the gothic as follows:

> the three essential elements of the gothic's generic
> paradigm--demonic agency, pandeterministic causation,
> and a clear Manichaean moral perspective--are, at best,
> accidental characteristics of science fiction. Pande-
> terminism, in fact, is actually incompatible with sci-
> ence fiction's conceptual and rhetorical premises. The
> gothic novel is an ideal form for the exploration of
> individual psychology, especially aberrant psychology,
> as well as of aesthetic concepts such as the sublime
> and the grotesque. However, the same structural ele-
> ments that define the genre and that make gothic
> fiction such an effective means of examining the inter-
> ior landscape also limit the genre, making it generally
> inadequate as a means of social criticism or of
> cultural, political, philosophical, or scientific spec-
> ulation. These, of course, are the areas in which

science fiction excels. Unhampered by the gothic's
necessary moral perspective and unrestricted by its
fairly narrow range of narrative assumptions and aes-
thetic premises, science fiction can move freely
through a greater range of subjects and points of view
and employ a greater variety of narrative structures
than the gothic can. (116)

Aldiss's approach is radically different from Keeling's. To
some degree, this is because Aldiss is working from the per-
spective of an artist as well as that of critic. His under-
standing of the gothic is not limited to the theoretical.
As a writer consistently involved with formulas and conven-
tions, Aldiss has always been concerned not only with the
limits of genre but with expanding the genre's boundaries.
Still, to some degree, Aldiss would agree with Keeling's
assertion that "science fiction's vision extends outward,
away from the interior man, exploring instead man's rela-
tionship with his natural and artificial environments"
(116). Aldiss would see those environments, as manifested
in his fiction, in social, ideological and philosophical
terms: they are as much internal as external. "Environ-
mental fiction," SF "which deals with man in relation to his
changing surroundings and abilities" (11), is a concern of
Aldiss's. What Keeling characterizes as "the interior man"
is to Aldiss precisely what matters in SF and the special
stength of Shelley's own gothic novel:

>The Outwardness of science and society is balanced, in
>the novel, by an Inwardness which Mary's dream helped
>her to accommodate. This particular balance is perhaps
>one of <u>Frankenstein</u>'s greatest merits: that its tale of
>exterior adventure and misfortune is always accompanied
>by a psychological depth. (25)

In fact, the gothic mode provides precisely the orientation that Aldiss wishes to explore in his own neo-gothic novel, <u>Frankenstein Unbound</u>--one concerned with man's inner mind-scape, moral uncertainty, and a world in which scientific rationalism is either inadequate or irrelevant. In his novels of the 1970's Aldiss skillfully uses traditional gothic motifs in SF narratives. Clearly in both his critical writings and his fictional output, Aldiss is not concerned with generic exclusion. While Keeling's bias is clearly towards Campbellian, 'hard' SF that is concerned with technology and short-term prophecy, Aldiss, in both his criticism and his fiction, exercises an approach that exploits the gothic as a mode of writing compatible with a modernist sensibility. While this might give an initial impression that Aldiss's writing is not generically "pure," it expands the range of possibilities in his fiction. It is the refusal to exercise restraint or strictly adhere to a defined set of arbitrary literary expectations that makes Aldiss's work so consistently varied and interesting.

    <u>Frankenstein Unbound</u> (1973) was Brian Aldiss's first SF

novel after a four-year hiatus. The radical literary
experimentation of the 1960's produced a self-admitted ex-
haustion in Aldiss and a period of silence in his SF novel
writing. 1973 was also the year that Aldiss's literary
history of SF, Billion Year Spree, was published. Unbound
reflects Aldiss's thinking in Spree quite closely, and
Unbound is Aldiss's most self-referential book. As
previously noted, he presents a strong case for the
emergence of SF in the midst of the Romantic movement, the
strong influence of the gothic mode and the seminal
importance of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein as the first true
SF novel. His informed appreciation of Romanticism,
gothicism and Shelley's novel itself permeates his own
novel. Unbound is the first of the three novels of the
1970's, the other two being Moreau's Other Island (1980) and
The Eighty Minute Hour (1975), in which Aldiss undertakes
specific exercises in stylistic experimentation. While
Aldiss is always consistent in his own ideation and
modernist perspective, in these novels he consciously adopts
much of the structure, techniques, style and themes of three
other writers: Mary Shelley, H.G. Wells, and Philip K. Dick.
In his re-workings of these novelists Aldiss further reveals
his stylistic ability and his capacity to explore central SF
concepts introduced by these writers. The re-workings of
Shelley and Wells show a special sensitivity to the funda-
mental concerns of these writers. Aldiss is not interested

in merely mimicking or adopting his precursors' styles
because this could easily lead to parody; rather, he is
interested in the relationship between technique and ideas:
Aldiss explores ideas as much as style and the final result
reveals the continuing viability of the concerns and
preoccupations of these writers. Part of the appeal of
Unbound comes in the recognition that, beyond its modernist
concerns with myth, form and consciousness, there is a
profound appreciation of what Mary Shelley accomplished in
Frankenstein and a deliberate reformulation of her use of
genre and philosophical speculations.

Unbound is a highly literary work--a fiction about
other fictions, a novel about the writing of a novel and the
relationships between literature and social change. In it,
Mary Shelley, Byron, Victor Frankenstein and other histor-
ical and literary figures coexist with equal authority.
Shelley's Frankenstein is at the heart of the work as, in
the central chapters, Mary Shelley narrates its conception
and development. Furthermore, Percy Shelley and Lord Byron
quote their own poetry to one another and, at one point, Joe
Bodenland, the narrator, gives a short account of the devel-
opment of the modern novel.

Collectively these aspects of the book reflect Aldiss's
contemporary sensibility and his experimentation with and
expansion of the form of the SF novel. In terms of stylis-
tic experimentation, Unbound is a continuation of the work

of the late 1960's. Its own high degree of literary self-consciousness reflects that of Shelley's book. <u>Frankenstein</u> was deeply influenced by Mary's husband, Percy Shelley, and her father, William Godwin. Milton's <u>Paradise Lost</u> is another influence and the novel skillfully utilizes the gothic mode. In his own innovative way, then, Aldiss is actually being consistent with Shelley's of literary self-consciousness as well as his own. Furthermore, in a subtle way Aldiss is allowing his novel to appear to be quite removed from the original work when in fact it is very closely attuned to it. The diversity of purpose found in Aldiss's novel is also consistent with Shelley and the romantic novel. According to Robert Kiely, in romantic novels of that time "aesthetic aims, literary styles, narrative patterns, and themes of utterly different sorts are placed in juxtaposition . . . and their primary tendency is to destroy (or, at the very least, undermine) particular narrative conventions" (3). Both Aldiss and Shelley demonstrate a dissatisfaction with narrative conventions.

A synopsis of Aldiss's novel shows the degree of his adherence to Shelley's narrative technique of multiple first-person narrations. Similar psychological motivations are also evident in this brief overview. It should also give some indication of the manner in which Aldiss skill-fully merges it with the plot and narration of <u>Frankenstein</u> to produce a metafictional exercise while simultaneously

exploring the Frankenstein myth in philosophy, history and human consciousness.

In the year 2020 Joseph Bodenland, a retired statesman, is experiencing, along with the rest of the planet, ruptures in the space/time continuum. A limited nuclear war that may be responsible for the breakdown of the space/time continuum is clearly related to man's folly. A report in The Times on the breakdown of "the sane sequence of temporal progression" (12) states that "the Intellect has made our planet unsafe for intellect. We are suffering from the curse that was Baron Frankenstein's in Mary Shelley's novel: by seeking too control to much, we have lost control of ourselves" (12-3).

The first section of Aldiss's novel recounts its story in an epistolary style similar to the beginning and conclud- ing sections of Shelley's novel. The second and main part of the novel is a first-person tape-journal of Bodenland's story. In his second letter to his wife, Bodenland recounts his experience of a "timeslip," a profoundly disturbing experience: "It is an absolute shock. The supreme shock outside death" (14). Unbound is a novel with an increasing sense of apocalyptic horror--uncertainty and discontinuity are the fundamental processes of the novel.

The first timeslip lasts thirty-five hours and Bodenland remains safely in his house. But there is a second, brief timeslip during which Bodenland drives away from the house to explore the landscape and becomes a time-

traveller. He finds himself abandoned in the early Nineteenth Century in Switzerland.

Seeking shelter at a local inn, he finds himself drawn to the company of a "lean-visaged but elegant . . . solitary man" (26), engages him in conversation, and finds himself compelled to follow the man. He subsequently discovers from one of the villagers that the stranger is the Victor Frankenstein whom Bodenland associates with Mary Shelley's novel. Following Victor into the Swiss mountains in a storm-filled night, this suspicion is confirmed when Bodenland witnesses an encounter between Victor and his creation.

Bodenland attends the trial of Justine Moritz for the murder of Frankenstein's youngest brother. He then follows Victor into the mountains to confront him about his refusal to speak the truth and prove Justine's innocence. Victor refuses to do so and asks Bodenland to take a message to his fiancee. Bodenland does so, becoming increasingly enmeshed in the Frankenstein family and trying to determine future events by recalling the plot of Mary Shelley's novel.

However, events are disrupted further when another timeslip displaces Bodenland three months into the future. He also discovers Byron and Shelley at Villa Diodati. He is made welcome and participates in the intellectual discussions of that small coterie. Bodenland realizes that his primary motivation is to find out more about the novel: "I could eradicate Frankenstein's monster. If I could borrow a

copy of Mary's book, I could map its route, ambush, and kill it!" (78) Bodenland reflects that he had increasingly

accepted the equal reality of Mary Shelley and her

creation, Victor Frankenstein, just as I had accepted

the equal reality of Victor and his monster. In my

position, there was no difficulty in so doing; for they

accepted my reality, and I was as much a mythic crea-

ture in their world as they would have been in mine.

(79)

Bodenland meets Mary Shelley and tells her of the recogni-

tion by posterity that her novel will bring her. Enraptured

by the intimacy of these disclosures, Mary and Bodenland

become lovers. (These scenes of physical intimacy between

the two characters, while initially disconcerting, are on

reflection an example of Aldiss's grasp of the gothic mode;

its inherently erotic nature is the convention that Aldiss

is adopting.)

Bodenland continues his increasingly obsessive search

and seeks out Victor's house, where he is arrested and

imprisoned for Victor's murder. However the temporal dis-

ruptions produce massive floods that destroy the prison and

Bodenland escapes. Seeking refuge in the hills he is set

upon by two other escaped prisoners and, half-unconscious,

witnesses Victor's creature thrusting a dead rabbit into his

hands to provide sustenance. Eventually returning to

Geneva, he confronts Victor who takes him to his secret

laboratory where they debate the moral ramifications of Victor's actions and the nature of his enterprise.

Victor attempts to drug Bodenland who manages to reverse the process, drugging Victor and then investigating, to his horror, Victor's laboratory. Here he discovers the head of Justine Moritz on a newly created female, a mate for the existing creature. At this point the creature enters the scene and kills Yet, Victor's manservant, in the belief that he has murdered the unconscious Victor. Bodenland witnesses the revived Victor agreeing to re-animate the female creature and the eventual union of the two creatures in a mating dance is followed by sexual intercourse.

After their departure Bodenland confronts Victor for the last time and, morally repulsed by the preceding episode and Victor's complicity, he kills him. The final action of the novel is spent in pursuit of the two creatures into the frozen arctic where Bodenland eventually murders them both. This action takes place near a mysterious city for which the creatures were heading. The ending of the novel repeats the final words of the original novel: Bodenland waits "in darkness and distance" (184).

Bodenland's temporal and psychological journey is profoundly unsettling, raising the novel's concerns into metaphysics. In Mary Shelley's novel the creature speculates, "I was dependent on none and related to none . . . Who was I? Whence Did I come? What was my destination?

These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them" (129). In Joe Bodenland's second letter to his wife, he writes: "one thing's for sure--we never had as secure a grasp on reality as we imagined" (14). This is followed by a brief discussion of whether Bodenland's role as a political advisor effected historical change and whether historical insight is possible. The issues that Aldiss raises in his novel can be seen as modernist concerns that have their own historical roots in the Romantic movement. This in fact is what Aldiss is doing in Unbound: merging his own speculations about the problems of identity and meaning with those of Mary Shelley and, as well, through his re-working of Frankenstein, placing them in a related literary/philosophical context.

Aldiss's choice of a Romantic framework to examine (or, more accurately, re-examine) these issues is an intelligent one. The Romantics were the first to give a sense of having become aware of the problem of defining themselves both as individuals in their own right and as phenomena of and in a world that was clearly new. In their reactions to this evolving awareness, they created forms of art that were new in many senses, but, more importantly, they began to draw attention to the ways that they themselves related to their art, and to the ontological status of that art in a world whose definitions of reality were changing as they came under closer and closer scrutiny. Frankenstein and Unbound

express a Romantic concern with the problem or nature of selfconsciousness. Bodenland's experiences force him to re-examine his concepts of self, of history, of his relation-ship to society. This is a Romantic dilemma in that the foremost problem facing the Romantics as a result of their intellectual heritage was that of how to achieve a rap-prochement between the objective without as given (i.e. historically) and the subjective sphere within as validating that external world (i.e. experientially). Granted, this concern is not unique to either Aldiss or Shelley. To some degree it represents the challenge of all modern artists. Shelley's novel testifies to an anguished realization that the legacy of Cartesian rationalism, Newtonian mechanism, and Lockean empiricism deprived the self of any ontological certitude or centrality and rendered the external world--whatever that might be--more lifeless and domineering. This sense of deracination and desoeuvrement, of being adrift in a fragmented and indifferent universe, is traceable to the breakdown by the last half of the Eighteenth Century of the traditional structures of belief like that of the Great Chain of Being which lent coherence and depth to human experience. With the lapse of such integrating systems of belief, the Romantic artist was obliged to generate within himself compensatory structures of order and meaning and to reclaim some measure of affinity with what lay beyond his own isolation.

David Ketterer perceives Shelley's novel within this philosophical context, stating that

> Frankenstein makes most sense if it is interpreted not
> just in relation to Locke but in relation to that en-
> tire body of philosophy to which Locke gives rise. In
> Earl Wasserman's words, "Locke's unsatisfactory theory
> of substances and qualities, Berkeley's God-based idea-
> lism, and Hume's skepticism had bequeathed to the early
> nineteenth century a universe whose location and con-
> stitution were disturbingly uncertain; and the Romantic
> was inevitably challenged to define reality and the
> mind's relation to it if he was to live in any meaning-
> ful way and to settle on the nature and values of
> experience." Frankenstein is Mary Shelley's response
> to that challenge. (92)

Aldiss's novel contains the same degree of "philosophical or ontological pasticity," in Ketterer's phrase, as does Shelley's. Both novelists respond to ontological uncertainty by grasping its different apparent manifestations. Boden-land's sense of the Other--the non-self--includes his wife, family, and, interestingly, Mary Shelley herself--beings with tangible existences who are known and loved at the same time. As well, the movement of Aldiss's novel is one from a situation in a known external reality that does have an independent existence to one in which this certainty is highly problematic; as well, in the increasing subjectivity

of the novel and in Bodenland's increasing obsession with Frankenstein and his creature, there is created an increasing sense of solipsism. Bodenland expresses this, stating, "Suppose that what was happening was just a subjective phenomenon, something going on purely inside my own skull? It was hard to believe that we weren't in a kind of dream" (17). Bodenland's philosophical (dis)orientation shifts between varying degrees of dualism and solipsism.

Ketterer states that "the construction of Frankenstein is specifically designed to allow for the possibility that the outward and the inward, the centripetal and the centrifugal, are mirror images of one another, or otherwise in collusion" (97). Unbound reveals a profound concern for the radical uncertainty of the nature of human knowledge and reality. Aldiss has written a SF novel which acknowledges the equality of all relative positions by assigning them equal possibilities. His decentered art portrays the world as an undirected energy, as a potentially infinite series of random possibilities. The world's coherence derives not from a universal order but from the narrator's individual stance. The dexterity with which Aldiss shifts philosophical position in Unbound is an essential function in this homage to Shelley; its exercise in ontological uncertainty is consistent with Shelley's and the success of this enterprise is evidence of Aldiss's capacity to deal with complex philosophical issues.

Unbound is a novel of ideas as is Shelley's, another
instance of how Aldiss adopts the form of his precursor. At
one point Joe Bodenland reflects:

> My theory is that while we are in Earth's shadow and
> intended to be dreaming, our mind may be wider open
> than by day. . . . Some of that subconscious world
> which has access to us in dreams may seep through under
> cloak of night, giving us a better apprehension of the
> dawn of the world, when we were children--or when man-
> kind was in its childhood. (107)

Aldiss reveals through Bodenland the extent of his mytho-
poeic sensibility and his concerns with identity, conscious-
ness and myth and, as well, how much myth itself is intrin-
sically related to self-identity and human consciousness.
To Aldiss, myths are an integral part of one's social iden-
tity, of conventional beliefs, of social ideology. As
Bodenland becomes enmeshed in the past, he realizes how his
lack of social identity, borders on a form of mental
illness; he speculates that

> the time-distortions might cause mental illusions in
> their own right. One of those illusions was my persis-
> tent sensation that my personality was dissolving.
> Every act I took which would have been impossible in my
> own age served to disperse the sheet-anchors that held
> my personality. (95)

Early in the novel Aldiss makes it clear that he is

interested in myth's relationship to social identity and,
more importantly, in myth as a manifestation of the deeper,
more personal and creative recesses of the human mind.
Bodenland watches the children bury a scooter and cover it
in flowers, chanting prayers and dancing. The children
refer to it as a "Feast" and Bodenland states that it "is
basically pagan, the Christian formulae mere frills" (10).
Reflecting on the children's activities Bodenland speculates
on the pervading importance of myth:

> They live in myth. Under the onslaught of school
> intellect will break in--crude robber intellect--and
> myth will wither and die like the bright flowers on
> their mysterious grave.

> And yet that isn't true. Isn't the great
> overshadowing belief of our time--that ever-increasing
> production and industrialization bring the greatest
> happiness for the greatest number all around the globe
> --a myth to which most people subscribe? But that's a
> myth of Intellect, not of Being, if such distinction is
> permissible. (11)

Aldiss emphasizes the irrational aspects of human conscious-
ness in his novel, the imaginative possibilities of the mind
as well as its limits. As Bodenland's narrative unfolds
there is an increasing sense of solipsism--time and space
become virtually manifestations of a single consciousness
and conventional notions of reality are undermined:

Somewhere, there might be a 2020 in which I exist-
ed merely as a character in a novel about Frankenstein
and Mary.

I had altered no future, no past, I had merely
diffused myself over a number of cloud-patch times.

There was no future, no past. Only the cloud-sky
of infinite present states.

Man was prevented from realizing this truth by the
limitations of his consciousness. Consciousness had
never evolved as an instrument designed to discover
truth; it was a tool to hunt down a mate, the next
meal.

If I came anywhere near to the truth now, it was
only because my consciousness was slipping towards the
extreme brink of disintegration. . . . Space/time went
on in my skull, just as in the rest of the universe.
(165)

Unbound is increasingly the stuff of nightmare, a
horrific vision of a world in physical and social disinte-
gration. Bodenland's narration becomes increasingly in-
volved with his own inner mindscape, his dream processes and
his own hallucinatory sense of external reality as the world
disintegrates around him. This sense of psychological com-
plexity in the novel is a reflection of the equal psycholog-
ical complexity of Frankenstein. As Robert Kiely states,

the early romantic novel at best and at worst is an

almost continuous display of divisive tension, paradox,
and uncertain focus. The dualism of man's nature--of
his taste, his impulses, his ambitions--the deep div-
sions in his very way of perceiving reality seemed an
inevitable adjunct to the first romantic stirrings in
the young genre. (17)

Both novels create a psychomachia, a convincing internal war
because of the extremity of the external action. Both deal
with minds that are becoming increasingly fragmented, minds
in increasing conflict with themselves yet striving to be
whole. Bodenland is seeking psychological meaning and
purpose in his existence in a fragmented, uncertain world:

. . . the graven image of reality had been destroyed
for me, so that I no longer had difficulty in appre-
hending Frankenstein and his monsters, Byron, Mary
Shelley, and the world of 2020 as contiguous. What I
had done--so it seemed--was wreck the _fatalism_ of
coming events. If Mary Shelley's novel could be
regarded as a possible future, then I had now rendered
it impossible by killing Victor.

But Victor was not real. Or rather, in the twenty
first-century from which I came (there might be others
from which I had not come), he existed only as a ficti-
tious, or, at best, legendary character; whereas Mary
Shelley was an historical figure whose remains and por-
traits could be dwelt on.

> In that world, Victor had not reached the point of
> emerging from possibility to probability. But I had
> come to an 1816 (and there might be countless other
> 1816s of which I knew nothing) in which he shared--and
> his monster shared--an equal reality with Mary and
> Byron and the rest. (164)

Aldiss makes Bodenland share characteristics of both
Frankenstein and his creature. Harold Bloom states that

> Frankenstein is the mind and emotions turned in upon
> themselves, and his creature is the mind and emotions
> turned imaginatively outward, seeking a greater human-
> ization through a confrontation of other selves. (613)

Bodenland is similarly split. On the one hand, his expe-
riences create psychological division, an increasing ina-
bility to differentiate between inner mental states and the
external world--a world which might be merely psychological
projection. On the other hand, there is a sense of personal
transformation in Bodenland: "I was a different man, full of
strength and excitement" (25) and "I felt myself in the
presence of myth and, by association, accepted myself as
mythical!" Bodenland also seeks out meaningful human con-
tact with Byron, Percy and Mary Shelley that reflects the
creature's own search for similar contact. However, like the
creature, Bodenland is a social outcast, a misfit outside
the natural order of things. Aldiss draws attention to this
by having Bodenland undergo an experience identical to the

creature's rejection by humanity:

> Cleaning myself to the best of my ability, I left the
> hut and set out downhill, in what I hoped was the
> direction of Geneva. My attempts to look like a normal
> human being again were evidently not too successful--at
> one point in my journey, I came on a man crouching over
> a small brook from which he was trying to drink. Look-
> ing up, he saw me, and at once jumped up and ran crying
> into the bushes. (116)

Bodenland is both Promethean in his attempt to prevent what
can be characterized as the encroachment of the Frankenstein
process--the despiritualization of the world, the avoidance
of moral responsibility--and like the creature in his search
for meaning and personal identity.

Bloom's psychological insight into Shelley's novel is
in the context of Romantic literature and its characteristic
mythology; he states that <u>Frankenstein</u> "vividly projects a
version of the Romantic mythology of the self" (613). He
emphasizes consciousness:

> The profound dejection endemic in Mary Shelley's novel
> is fundamental to the Romantic mythology of the self,
> for all Romantic horrors are diseases of excessive
> consciousness, of the self unable to bear the self.
> Kierkegaard remarks that Satan's despair is absolute,
> because Satan as pure spirit is pure consciousness, and
> for Satan (and for all men in his predicament) every

increase in consciousness is an increase in despair.

Frankenstein's desperate creature attains the state of

pure spirit through his extraordinary situation, and is

racked by a consciousness in which every thought is a

fresh disease. (617)

Aldiss's Frankenstein, in his final scene in the novel,

expresses his self-deluded argument for attaining the high-

est level of consciousness and for total, rational control

of the world:

. . . no purpose in life on this globe--only the end-

less begetting and dying, too monstrous to be called

Purpose. . . . Did you ever think that it might be life

that was the pestilence, the accident of consciousness

between the eternal chemistry working in the veins of

earth and air. . . . A purpose must be found, invented

if necessary, a human purpose . . . putting us in con-

trol, fighting the itness of the great wheeling world.

(162)

Aldiss's novel shares the perspective of Harlan Ellison's NW

story, "I Have No Mouth . . . and I Must Scream," in which a

world computer is pure Cartesian consciousness, cruel,

Satanic and despairing. Aldiss's argues for an awareness of

the limits of man's rational control over the phenomenal

world. Unbound is founded on a profound dichotomy between

feeling and intellect. Modern man has become increasingly

schizoid, Aldiss is saying, because of his rationalism,

preoccupation with technology and insensitivity to a natural, cyclical order that man's inner self is spiritually attuned to. Aldiss's explores myths that lead to self-destruction and images that lead in a Jungian sense to psychological wholeness.

Aldiss examines the Romantic sense of the tension in man between his visionary power and potential creativity and his spiritual limits as a creature. The psychological movement in the novel alternates between feelings of power in Frankenstein, Byron (in the scenes at the villa) and Bodenland himself and feelings of impotence in Shelley, the creature, and, at times, Bodenland as well. The social and intellectual portraits of Byron and Percy Shelley reveal how Mary Shelley captures them both in the composite figure of the creature and Frankenstein. There is in Aldiss's portrait of the group a bright and a dark side, violent as well as benevolent impulses, destructive as well as creative urges. This is another manifestation of Aldiss's profound concern with myth because Unbound is itself a myth about Romanticism, a mythic dramatization of the dangers of unbridled, self-absorbed, and self-deluding idealism. The novel becomes increasingly a nightmare reality; it has the nature and the process of a bad dream. In sensibility and concept it is true to its precursor as that novel is described by Paul Cantor:

Frankenstein remains what it was when the idea first

came to Mary Shelley: a nightmare, the nightmare of

Romantic idealism, revealing the dark underside to all

the visionary dreams of remaking man that fired the

imagination of the Romantic myth-makers. (109)

George Levine states that

Frankenstein is the perfect myth of the secular, carry-

ing within it all the ambivalences of the life we lead

here, of civilization and its discontents, of the mind

and the body, of the self and society. It is, indeed,

the myth of realism. (30)

Aldiss's acknowledges Levine's insights while creating its

own myth of the need to accept moral responsibility and

psychic wholeness even as it depicts an order in which this

myth of humanism is increasingly threatened. Aldiss

recognizes that Frankenstein's creation involves a

confrontation with our inner selves--as it does in

Bodenland. Aldiss's ambiguous attitude towards technology

is based on the recognition that, while technology can

enhance the quality of life, if it becomes an uncontrolled

and uncontrollable force, it will likely destroy all life as

it threatens to do in the novel. At the point in Unbound

where Victor's overreaching is greatest--his creation of two

creatures--Aldiss writes: "Time passed. The hours slide

slowly down the great entropy slope of the universe" (153).

Victor fails to recognize the secular-scientific myth of

entropy and the eventual breakdown of any system into en-

tropic disorder. Bodenland's resolve is based not simply on moral responsibility but on an acceptance of death as part of the natural order.

Unbound's protagonist is in a situation in which personal identity is consistently problematic. Bodenland constantly draws attention to this aspect of his experience; in some respects, it can be seen as the primary focus of the novel. Bodenland states that:

> My identity was becoming more and more tenuous. . . .
> Since our personality is largely built and buttressed
> by our environment, and the assumptions environment and
> society force upon us, one has but to tip away that
> buttress and at once the personality is threatened with
> dissolution. (50-1)

Aldiss's modernist outlook is evident in his preoccupation with "the destruction of traditional notions of the wholeness of individual character" (Bradbury and McFarlane 27). As well, he appears to be concurring with those thinkers "who in various ways propose a continuity into Modernism of the primary Romantic concerns with consciousness, with self-object relationships, and with intensified experience" (Bradbury and McFarlane 47). In fact, what Aldiss is creating in his novel is a strict adherence to the gothic mode and the context that Shelley is working within as much as he is conforming to a modernist outlook. As William P. Day describes it, the "gothic fantasy is a fable of identity,

fragmented and destroyed beyond repair, a fable of the
impossibility of identity" (6). The isolation that Boden-
land experiences is not solely modernist _angst;_ rather, it
stems from Aldiss's use of the gothic convention that
creates "a world of utter subjectivity" (22). In the phys-
ical and psychological dissolution of the novel, Aldiss
merges gothicism and modernism in a manner that reflects his
appreciation of gothicism's affinity with modernism. As Day
states:

> By dissolving the objective, the Gothic fantasy also
> dissolves the concept of the subjective; as one becomes
> the other, they become indistinguishable. The parti-
> cular qualities of Gothic atmosphere anticipate a num-
> ber of aspects of modernism, with its emphasis on the
> subjectivity of reality and the collapse of objectivity
> and the self. (28)

Aldiss's apocalyptic vision, the emerging wasteland of the
novel, the sense of crisis, of entropic breakdown and col-
lapse are shared characteristics of gothicism and modernism.
The self-referentiality of _Unbound_, its sense of its own
fictitiousness, has an increasingly postmoden quality that
can also, perhaps, be seen in David Punter's description of
the gothic:

> The Gothic is revealed as not an escape from the real
> but a deconstruction and dismemberment of it, which we
> as readers can only put together by referring its ma-

terials to our own assumptions about the relations

between world and mind and by entering actively into

the subconscious play of the text. (71)

Both <u>Frankenstein</u> and <u>Frankenstein Unbound</u> are completely

open-ended. Whatever resolution is possible lies beyond the

bounds of their fictional worlds. The final image of the

two novels is of a figure "lost in darkness and distance," a

figure once again consumed by the unknown. Neither novel

offers resolution or closure but rather a full spectrum of

possibilities. Aldiss's achievement is his consummate use

of the philosophical and psychological context of Shelley's

novel and its literary techniques in his own wholly original

manner.

Chapter Three:

Aldiss and H.G. Wells

There is no doubt that H.G. Wells has always been a major influence on Brian Aldiss. One of Aldiss's early successes, 1965's Nebula-award-winning novella, "The Saliva Tree," was an expression of appreciation for and understanding of Wells's early scientific romances. While Aldiss's skill with short fiction is considerable, his use of the novella length itself is, perhaps, an acknowledgement that Wells's greatest successes were with relatively short forms of fiction. Written early in the New Wave movement, it pays homage to H.G. Wells while also serving as a fictional exercise that employs the techniques, themes, and images of the early Wells. In both his criticism and his re-working of Wells, Aldiss conveys the degree to which Wells's romances were, in the words of Patrick Parrinder, "the work of a visionary with the acute observation and descriptive power of a realistic novelist" (Wells 17). "The Saliva Tree," like so much of the work of the 1960's, is a work of stylistic exploration: an exercise in the utilization of Well's literary voice, perspective and, to some degree, style. "The Saliva Tree" reveals Aldiss's capacity to explore sympathetically the fictional terrain of an acknowledged SF precursor and influence. Its particular strength is its manifest awareness that, as John Huntington notes, "the

whole body of [Wells'] early romances and stories . . . constitutes a coherent imaginative whole" (Logic xii)

While Aldiss's assessment of the importance and influence of Mary Shelley on SF is somewhat personal, even idiosyncratic, his understanding and treatment of Wells is more conventional. Aldiss's interest and critical emphasis has always been in the scientific romances of the late Nineteenth Century, the most enduring of Wells's work. Darko Suvin states that "in the final analysis . . . Wells's first phase, the cycle of evolutionary science fiction, is his lasting contribution to the genre and . . . to fiction in general" (Modern SF 18). Both "The Saliva Tree" and Aldiss's novel, Moreau's Other Island (1980), are conscious reworkings of the early scientific romances. Island, like Unbound, deals with a specific novel, The Island of Dr. Moreau. Taken together, they reveal the extent of Wells's appeal to Aldiss.

An early chapter of the autobiographical The Shape of Further Things is entitled "The Education of H.G. Wells" and the volume itself is named in homage "after one of Wells's most characteristic titles" (29). In this chapter Aldiss states that "if any man created one whole aspect of the twentieth century, it was H.G. Wells" (28). It is also evident from the deceptively random but, in fact, highly revealing discussion in this chapter of how writers have become categorized "to their detriment" (27) that part of

Wells's appeal to Aldiss is the manner in which Wells never became enslaved by his own early success or by the SF label.

The Wellsian spirit is quite evident in _Shape_. One influence is Wells's _Experiment in Autobiography_ which Aldiss characterizes as "one of the key autobiographies of this century" (27). The utopian dimension of _Shape_ is based on a belief in education that is deeply Wellsian in its advocacy of the exercise of freedom through personal, educated and conscious choice:

> An educational revolution could, in time, bring a better world. The information explosion, coupled with the communication explosion that is surely coming, will change all our ideas--including ideas about what education should mean. We have the privilege of standing on Wells's shoulders and seeing clearly a vision that that great man only managed to glimpse. (He was the first to do so, and so was thought very strange. Thank God, he was strange!) (27)

Aldiss's definition of SF reflects on the role of science as a tool for greater comprehension of man's role in the universe. This perspective recalls the impact of science on Wells. An altered consciousness is created that produces a new vision of life and its possibilities. Similarly, as in Wells's early fiction, Aldiss's utopian thinking is counterbalanced by equally likely dystopian possibilities and deep reservations about the ramifications of technological

change. Interestingly, Aldiss considers Wells's darkest vision, <u>The Island of Dr. Moreau</u>, to be "his best book" (<u>Spree</u> 121).

Wells's appeal for Aldiss is based on literary ability as much as on his capacity to express contemporary scientific thought. "The Saliva Tree" makes specific reference to <u>The Wonderful Visit</u> in which Wells sends a Pre-Raphaelite angel to expose the ugliness and absurdity of English society. John Batchelor notes that

> for a moment he seems to join Wilde, Beardsley, Max
> Beerbohm and the rest in teasing the bourgeoisie from
> the standpoint of the <u>aesthete</u> rather than that of the
> lower-middle-classs rebel. (81)

Aldiss places Wells firmly in his Victorian cultural context and emphasizes Wells's capacity to popularize in his fiction those ideas that were eroding traditional nineteenth century beliefs and values. Finally, Aldiss freely acknowledges the role that Wells played in both defining and popularizing the genre of SF.

One senses that Aldiss strongly identifies with Wells. There is, however, no trace of Bloom's anxiety of influence, no Freudian anxiety over the (presumably) dominant authority figure. There is no sense of rivalry, no sense of Aldiss working in Wells's shadow. Moreover, "The Saliva Tree" itself is an act of personal liberation, to some degree, in its deliberate deviation from conventional SF formulas.

Aldiss's fiction is consistently more articulate than his criticism in depicting Wells's central and persistent images and ideas. While Aldiss's critical commentary on Wells captures in broad outline the sweep and purpose of Wells's body of work, it is "The Saliva Tree" and Moreau's Other Island that capture what is essential and vital to the scientific romances.

In "Tree" Aldiss is working with Wells's early body of work and he is particularly adept at capturing the sense of time and place in Wells. The novella is permeated by a sense of nostalgia and a lost pastoral world. By drawing attention to the past and, consequently, to subsequent social change, Aldiss emphasizes the distance in time of the events. This serves the purpose of emphasizing the romance elements and mythic dimensions of the story. A number of critics have commented on the mythic elements found in Wells. Parrinder states that

> In 1923 Edward Shanks wrote that Wells's romances "are,
> in their degree, myths; and Mr. Wells is a myth-maker."
> Bernard Bergonzi substantiates this hint in The Early
> H.G. Wells (1961), the most valuable critical book yet
> to have appeared on Wells. He discusses The Time
> Machine, for example as an "ironic myth." An alter-
> native description of the romances which might come
> closer to Wells's own intentions and procedures would
> be "ideological fables." Both terms should be under-

stood as implying that the romances are literary incarnations of a self-contained intellectual and imaginative universe corresponding to Wells's reconstruction of the "frame" of things as a thinker. Such an approach stresses the continuities underlying the exotic variety of particular shapes and settings to which Wells owes his reputation as a story-teller. His inventiveness, in fact, can be seen as the prolific transmutation of a small number of themes and structures. (<u>Wells</u> 17-8)

Wells's appeal and importance to Aldiss is that of the self-conscious literary artist with a capacity to draw upon literary tradition and the romance. Aldiss emphasizes the romance aspect of Wells in "Tree" and, to a lesser degree, <u>Island</u>. Broadly speaking, Wells's affinity to Aldiss is his early involvement in 'soft ' SF; in fact, Wells is largely responsible for this element in SF. His emphasis on human characters, a mature, expressive writing style, and moral choice is integral to the 'soft' SF tradition.

On a simple level, Aldiss does this through the literal romantic interest in the novella: Gregory is seeking the hand of Nancy. The pastoral setting becomes increasingly grotesque and fantastic and Gregory eventually has to undertake a knight-errant's quest--Aldiss refers to him as "the hero of our account" (9)--overcoming obstacles and opposition to literally snatch Nancy from the jaws of death.

The gothic horror of the novella--something unknown, unseen, purveying death--also evokes the romance tradition. The central image of the novella, the surrealistic image of the saliva tree, stems from a dream; this is another strong connection with the Gothic. As well, the metamorphosis of the farm is reminiscent of a fairy-tale.

Aldiss assumes the writer-role of fabulator in the novella. Aldiss's re-working of Wells, his close attention to Wells's own complex structural technique is typical of how fabulation works. Fabulation "reveals an extraordinary delight in design. With its wheels within wheels, rhythms and counterpoints, this shape is partly to be admired for its own sake. A sense of pleasure in form is one characteristic of fabulation" (Scholes, Metafiction 2).

"Tree" resembles fable in its moral simplicity and resolution. Parrinder's description of the romances as "ideological fables" comes to mind. As Scholes notes, this recalls aspects of what he characterizes as "fabulation": "The structure also, by its very shapeliness, asserts the authority of the shaper, the fabulator behind the fable" (Metafiction 2). Aldiss emphasizes the meta-fictional dimension of the novella by having Wells in the background of the story. Wells is a correspondent of Gregory's and Gregory frequently quotes from Wells's letters. At the end of the story Wells appears in the "sleepy East Anglian town of Cottersall" and is, in the last sentence of the novella,

inhabiting the room behind "the door of Number Three" in the local inn. Wells's presence is consistently referred to.

"The Saliva Tree" is highly self-conscious fiction while capturing the tone of Wells's early romances. Aldiss skillfully works against the positivistic basis for traditional realism that Wells himself was also moving away from. Wells and Aldiss share a common interest in expanding generic limitations in their fiction.

"Tree" begins with the story's protagonist, Gregory Rolles, witnessing what appears to be a meteorite landing on the Grendon farm. Visiting the farm the following day he finds out that an object landed in the farm's pond the previous night. Investigating the pond by boat he responds instinctively when something appears to be getting into the boat, striking out with an oar. Returning to land, he finds out that unseen presences are being sensed on the farm and the farmer's dog is mysteriously killed. On a subsequent trip to the farm Gregory realizes that invisible creatures are living in the depths of the pond. Furthermore a mysterious dew has fallen on the farm, coating its residents with heavy moisture. By early spring a great fecundity has overtaken the farm: stock and crops are reproducing and growing in great abundance. In fact, the entire farm is teeming with life. Farmer Grendon exerts himself constantly to keep up with the enormous additional workload. But the taste of the farm's produce is offensive and mysterious

deaths continue to occur. Animals die, their internal organs dissolved and sucked dry. Mrs. Grendon gives birth to nine children but goes mad and kills all of them. She herself dies shortly afterwards, another victim of the mysterious alien presence. Farmer Grendon continues to work relentlessly. The villagers see the events as inexplicable; the local doctor is bewildered but not especially curious; and Gregory's uncle interprets the events as the work of ghosts and vaguely explains away the events on the farm as the result of the unhealthy influence of modern technology. In a fine satirical touch, Wells himself in his letters to Gregory, is sceptical about unconventional interpretations of what is happening on the Grendon farm.

Eventually Gregory manages to trap one of the creatures but the creature kills one of the farm labourers in the act of entrapment and an increasingly irrational Farmer Grendon shoots Gregory in the leg for his unwanted meddling. Because of his romantic interest in the farmer's daughter, Nancy, Gregory makes one last effort to convince her to leave the farm. On returning to the farm, Gregory witnesses another huge sow being killed by the invisible aliens. Furthermore, the half-crazed farmer is attempting to feed his own daughter to the sows. Gregory rescues Nancy but all is chaos in the barn: the farm animals stampede and crush Farmer Grendon. Gregory manages to reach Grendon's shotgun and fires at the outline of one of the creatures.

Escaping from the barn they see that the farmhouse is being consumed by flames, set afire by one of the farmhands. They also witness the space machine rising from the pond. The story ends with Gregory rushing to greet his personal hero, H.G. Wells, who has arrived at the local inn, to tell him his story.

Aldiss captures the archetypal situation of the early romances as described by Darko Suvin:

> Its basic situation is that of a destructive newness encroaching upon the tranquillity of the Victorian environment. Often, this is managed as a contrast between an outer framework and a story within the story. The framework is set in as staid and familiar Dickensian surroundings as possible, such as . . . the small towns and villages of Southern England in The War of the Worlds. With the exception of the protagonist, who also participates in the inner story, the characters in the outer frame, representing the almost invincible inertia and banality of prosperous, bourgeois England, are reluctant to credit the strange newness. By contrast, the inner story details the observation of and the gradual, hesitant coming to grips with an alien superindividual force that menaces such life and its certainties by behaving exactly as bourgeois progress did in world history--as a quite ruthless but technologically superior mode of life wedded to an imperial

civilization. (Introduction 18-9)

The plot outline reveals the cleverness and skill with which Aldiss integrates essential structural elements of Wells's early fiction into his novella. One such fundamental structural element is what John Huntington sees as "that opposition, that superimposition of one world on another. . . a 'two-world system'. . . Wells's most basic imaginative structure" ("SF of Wells" 40). Another fundamental aspect of Wells is also utilized by Aldiss, "the recurrent opposition in Wells's work . . . between the human and the alien" ("SF of Wells" 41). Aldiss astutely draws attention in <u>Spree</u> to the "submerged nation theme" (116) in Wells. While <u>Spree</u> was written almost ten years after the novella, Aldiss does employ the submerged nation theme in "Tree" as an essential component of Wells's literary technique. The alien creatures live submerged in the farm's pond and only emerge from it to feed on the farm's inhabitants. But the aliens are only literally the submerged race of the novella; the other submerged race is the hidden working class, the farm labourers who work for Farmer Grendon and accurately perceive the wealthy, college-educated Gregory Rolles as removed from and alien to them. Despite Gregory's ideological adherence to socialism, class conflict is consistently evident in his relations with other people, including Nancy Grendon, who perceives his self-imposed sabbatical as idleness. Cultural differences profoundly affect perspectives: just as the

aliens are invisible to the earthlings, the humans of the novella are, in a sense, similarly blind to one another. Their cultural and social niches provide self-definition but are also social enclosures, prisons. One of the farm labourers threatens Gregory and, while there is a rivalry for Nancy's affection, the conflict is almost between species and reflects an evolutionary, Darwinian perspective. The labourer shouts at Gregory: "Why don't you get off out of here and never come back bor? I warned you before, and I ent going to warn you again, do you hear? You leave Nancy alone, you and your books!" (31)

Aldiss also captures Wells's sense of potentially revolutionary social change. The pastoral microcosm of the farm, potentially Edenic, is transformed by the literally cosmic impact of the other-worldly contact. Gregory's involvement in Grendon's farm, apart from his attraction to Nancy, is to attempt to transform it through modern technology. Even without the alien visitation the farm is being transformed from virtually medieval labour methods to twentieth-century technology. The familiar comfort of the farm and its metamorphosis emphasize the Wellsian view that the aliens are, as Darko Suvin comments, "emotional higher products of evolution judging men as men would insects. . . Wells is interested exclusively in the opposition between the bourgeois reader's expectations and the strange relationships found at the other end" (Introduction 20).

Part of Aldiss's strength as a storyteller is his ability to create a sense of horror about the nature and purpose of the aliens that is consistent with Wells's outlook. As well, the setting of the farm is a constant and ironic reminder of man's similar dominace, his domestication and exploitation of other species. The aliens feed on the humans as readily as on the farm animals.

The character of Farmer Grendon is essential to grasp the impact of the alien presence. The extra-terrestrials are repulsively reptilian in their appearance--the skill with which Aldiss employs man's phobia of snakes is reminis- cent of Wells--and clearly they have no empathy with the humans. But the character of Grendon is also evidence of the dehumanization process, of alienation, in response to accelerated social and technological change. Grendon eluci- dates this when he says,

> I ent really got time for nothing but this here old
> farm. . . . I say it is true and I don't talk idle. I
> pass the time of day with you; I might even say I like
> you; but you don't mean nothing to me . . . Neither
> does Marjorie mean nothing to me now, though that was
> different afore we married. I got this here farm, you
> see, and I'm the farm and it is me. (28)

The process that overtakes the farm is a metaphor for social Darwinism: the image of the farm in the novella is trans- formed from a well tended garden to an overly abundant

breeding center in which purposeful human action is over-
taken by "natural selection" as all species must increas-
ingly fight for survival.

The fate of Farmer Grendon reflects how, increasingly
during the late Nineteenth Century, experience and ideology
combined to promote a deterministic or fatalistic attitude
to individual destiny. As in much of Wells's fiction, there
is a sense in which Grendon is a puppet at the mercy of
social and cosmic forces. When Gregory confronts Grendon
about what is happening to the farm and his own relentless
pursuit of its cultivation, he responds by saying:

> But suppose them there things do eat everything, humans
>
> included? Suppose this is now their farm? They still
>
> got to have someone tend it. So I reckon they ent
>
> going to harm me. So long as they sees me work hard,
>
> they ent going to harm me . . . I'm saying I do what I
>
> have to do. We don't own our lives. (69-70)

The fate of Farmer Grendon reflects how a breakdown in the
natural order creates a breakdown in moral order. The new
Eden of the farm becomes a farm of death--of moral and
spiritual death: Grendon's death is a spiritual loss of
will. Gregory's survival--and the expulsion of the aliens--
is due to a refusal to capitulate to imposing odds and
circumstances.

Aldiss does not limit himself to a single perspective
on the nature of the aliens. Gregory Rolles's friend, Bruce

Fox, expresses a point of view that Wells would share:

> Think what the situation must seem like to them.
> Suppose they come from Mars or the Moon--we know their
> world must be absolutely different from Earth. They
> may be terrified. And it can hardly be called an un-
> friendly act to try to get into your rowing boat. The
> first unfriendly act was yours, when you struck out
> with the oar. (23)

Fox tries to assimilate the aliens into his own cultural
experiences and expectations: "Remember what you were saying
about other worlds being full of socialists? Try thinking
of these chaps as invisible socialists and see if that
doesn't make them easier to deal with" (23). Gregory's
response reflects Wells's response to cultural imperialism
in the Nineteenth Century:

> Inwardly, he acknowledged that Bruce Fox's words made a
> great impression on him. He had allowed panic to
> prejudice his judgement; as a result, he had behaved as
> immoderately as a savage in some remote corner of the
> Empire confronted by his first steam locomotive. (23)

Aldiss is adhering to Wells's method in which "the human-
alien opposition generates a process of constant reinterpre-
tation and re-examination of the bases of similarity and of
difference" (Huntington, "SF of H.G. Wells" 42).

In the final confrontation with the aliens the encoun-
ter between the earthlings and extra-terrestrials becomes a

simple Darwinian struggle for survival. Throughout the story Gregory has been trying to deal rationally and, at times, sympathetically with the situation of the aliens. The novella's resolution, though, is essentially Darwinian. The outcome is a matter of the survival of the fittest: those best equipped and most determined to survive do so. In the climactic scene Aldiss captures Wells's belief that man is both prey and hunter. The evolutionary context that Wells consistently dealt with in the scientific romances is deliberately present in the novella as man and the aliens become competing biological species:

> As he grasped the old-fashioned weapon and pulled it up, Gregory was suddenly filled with an intense desire to kill one of the invisible monsters. In that instant, he recalled an earlier hope he had had of them: that they might be superior beings, beings of wisdom and enlightened power, coming from a better society where moral codes directed the activities of its citizens. He had thought that only to such a civilization would the divine gift of travelling through interplanetary space be granted. But perhaps the opposite held true: perhaps such a great objective could be gained only by species ruthless enough to disregard more humane ends. As soon as he thought it, his mind was overpowered with a vast diseased vision of the universe, where such races as dealt in love and kind-

ness and intellect cowered forever on their little

globes, while all about them went the slayers of the

universe, sailing where they would to satisfy their

cruelties and their endless appetites. (79)

"Tree" contains a number of systems: social, political, and
ideological. It is concerned with conflicts between imper-
ialism and oppression and between nature and civilization.
The novella alternates, as Parrinder observes about the sci-
entific romances, "the ideas of hope and despair, mastery
and slavery, release and submission" amd these reflect the
"opposing images of predetermined life and utopian life"
(Wells 18) which are fundamental to Wells's thinking.
Aldiss skillfully re-works Wells's formulas so that what
John Huntington says of the scientific romances is equally
applicable to Aldiss's novella:

> Wells's early work is profounding disturbing, not
>
> because it is pessimistic, nor because it is optimis-
>
> tic, but because it abjures the solace of simple solu-
>
> tions and attains balance, not by sacrificing detail
>
> and honesty, but by probing situations deeply, by main-
>
> taining sceptical openness, and by developing symmetri-
>
> cal structures that by mirroring illuminate. ("SF of
>
> H.G. Wells" 49)

There is a continuity between "Tree" and Moreau's Other
Island, Aldiss's two homages to Wells, that deliberately
reflects Wells's literary development. Both works recall

how "Wells's career is a movement from the 'undirected thought' of the scientific romances toward the 'directed thought' of his later work, both fiction and nonfiction" (Huntington, Logic xiii). Moreau's Other Island was written fifteen years after ".The Saliva Tree." Dedicated to Wells, "The Master," the novel is another informed homage. Moreau is interesting for its adherence to the imagery, symbolism and thematic concerns of the original novel, The Island of Dr. Moreau (1896), while retaining and developing those ideas and issues that were of increasing personal interest throughout the Seventies. It is further evidence of Aldiss's natural affinity with and indebtedness to Wells.

Overall, "The Saliva Tree" is more faithful to the early Wells in its emphasis on setting, structure and style; the novella is delightful in its raising of questions and possibilities while Moreau is intensely serious. The latter novel is, perhaps, more consistent with the later body of Wells's work and with Wells's increasingly overt didacticism. Moreau lacks the intense horror of the original, adding to it the revulsion produced by the creation and purpose of Dart's new race of creatures. It is replaced by a more contemporary feeling of persecution and paranoia and a Kafkaesque sense of entrapment and inexplicable process. The novel is somewhat lacking in the subtlety that is characteristic of Aldiss. The sense of the mythopoeic which is present in the original and in Aldiss's best work is

restricted to his development of the Beast People. The focus of the novel is on intellectual discourse and the gothic elements of Wells's novel are present but not to the same extent as in the original. Still, there is a certain tension between Aldiss's mythic impulses and the more conventional realism of the novel that is typical of Aldiss's technique.

Furthermore, the framing prologue and epilogue of the novel establish Aldiss's intellectual context. While these ideas are more fully developed in Enemies of the System and The Shape of Further Things--works that preceded Moreau and also have a strong Wellsian flavour--Aldiss is establishing his own concern with the human mind, with the opposition of reason and instinct, and with the natural rhythms of existence. Despite the conventional SF framework of Moreau, Aldiss's greatest concern is with the Jungian potential of SF in which, as Leslie Fiedler observes, "the sole absolute requirement is easy access to the unconsciousness at the point where it meets the collective unconsciousness of us all" ("Criticism of SF" 13).

This explains Aldiss's development of the mythic elements in Wells's novel. As well, Aldiss's sense of the literary tradition of SF would not only recognize Wells's paramount importance to this tradition but also to the role that Wells played in expanding that literary tradition. Tatyana Chernysheva has written about this essential

dimension of Wells:

> The unbound creative imagination of Wells allowed him
> to draw sustenance from all the riches of human
> thought, not only from the newest achievements of
> science and its near future. Wells's links with liter-
> ary tradition were much richer than Verne's. Conven-
> tional images and forms stemming ultimately from folk-
> tales often guided his imagination and shaped its ends.
> (38)

Chernysheva's observations lead to the conclusion that
Wells's importance to Aldiss was not simply in terms of
Wells's relationship to the emerging literary tradition, but
more specifically in terms of Wells's importance to what has
been characterized as the 'soft' SF tradition. Chernysheva
believes that in the early novels

> The folktale tradition proved artistically more
> valuable for Wells than scientific cognitions. Wells's
> use of the folktale amounts to founding a new tradi-
> tion. His significance lies in a liberation of the
> imagination, in the widening of boundaries imposed by
> natural science, and in making it again possible to
> turn to the folktale. (39)

It is particularly significant that Aldiss chose to re-work
The Island of Dr. Moreau because this work merges Wells's
scientific concerns with his sense of literary tradition.
Chernysheva observes that "the very thought of man's trans-

formation into animal, or vice versa, stems not only from Darwin's theory of evolution, but also from the most ancient folktale metamorphoses" (38). Aldiss explores the mytho-poeic dimension in his own novel and acknowledges the folk-tale dimension of the original when his narrator first sights the Beast People:

> I caught the red or green blank glare of iridescence, as if I were confronted by animals from a ludicrous fairy tale. Indeed, I recalled series of drawing by artists like Charles Le Brun and Thomas Rowlandson, in which the physiognomies of men and women merged through several transformations into the physiognomies of animals--bulls, lions, leopards, dogs, oxen, and pigs. (24-5)

As in "The Saliva Tree," in which the metamorphosis of the Grendon farm is essential to the power of the story, Aldiss is most interesting when dealing with the folktale roots of his own novel. Roberts, upon his first face-to-face encounter with one of the Beast People, experiences a shock that Aldiss describes in detail:

> I was confronted by as frightful a countenance as I have ever seen in my life. At close quarters, its brutishness was overwhelming, so that I half believed I was delirious. Under a floppy leather hat was no brow, simply a great swelling face covered with stubble. The jaw was prognathous with no chin. A mighty mouth swept

back, its corners almost vanishing into the absurd hat,
its fleshy lips hardly fleshy enough to conceal large
incisors in the lower jaw. Above his formidable mouth
was a snout-like nose, wrinkled in a sneer like a
hyena's, and two almost lidless eyes. These eyes
regarded me now--fixed themselves on me with a dull red
glare. I pulled myself back from them in a shock. But
still I had to stare into them. (16)

The strength of Aldiss's novel is largely dependent upon the
characterization and credibility of the Beast People; this
is essential for both the folkloric/mythic and evolutionary
aspects of the novel. Significantly, when the narrator
encounters the new sub-human species created by manipulating
the evolutionary process, his response is to merge the
scientific and the folkloric/mythic dimensions of the novel:
"What I did see was a thing so fearful, so unlikely, that it
might have stepped from the pages of an evil fairy story"
(146). Aldiss attempts to merge rational, scientific with
mythopoeic thought through his characterization of the Beast
People in a manner similar to Wells's technique in his
novel.

Like Aldiss's more radical literary experimentation in
the Sixties, Moreau is to some degree a modest exercise in
meta-fiction in that the novel's characters discuss the
relationship between Wells's novel and their own situation.
The narrator, Calvert Roberts, states, in response to the

Moreau-like Mortimer Dart's invocation of Wells's novel, that "Moreau's is a purely fictitous island. Wells was writing an allegory. I can distinguish between reality and imagination" (39). Interestingly, this development of the novel does not serve to emphasize the self-referentiality of the work as fiction; rather, it draws attention to the relationship between Wells's fiction and social reality, the degree to which Wells's concerns were prophetic and relevent to the contemporary world. This is an essential aspect of the novel in that it is a homage to Wells and is acknowledging Wells's intellectual insights. Wells's understanding of the endless possibilities for the process of evolution, that it is not purposive and directional in nature, is echoed in Dart's statement that he is "discovering <u>the relativity of flesh</u>" (42).

The focus of this novel, like that of Wells's, is on the Beast People. Foxy is of central importance to the action of the novel; he emerges as the leader of the Beast People, organizing a full-scale rebellion against the tyranny of the human master and pseudo-deity, Mortimer Dart. His sly cunning and competence seem to spring directly from the folklore tradition and with Jung's archetype of the trickster. In fact, Aldiss reveals the natural correlation between these two modes through Foxy. As a trickster, he breaks down systems; there is no real logic to his behavior so much as there is an anti-logic, an innate, instinctual

opposition to the rationalism of Dart. Conversely, the Beast People, Bernie, Bella and the community of the Seal People are essential to the emotional depth of the novel. All manifest personal qualities of empathy and heroism and a capacity for self-sacrifice. The manner in which this is done is deliberately reminiscent of Wells's. According to John Huntington, in Wells's work:

> The more intellectually superior creatures are, that is, the more capable they are of establishing an ethical relationship with other forms of being, the more likely they are to engage in evolutionary competition, while creatures of inferior intellectual accomplishment are occasionally able to achieve a more ethical relationship. (Logic 59)

Aldiss is similarly consistent with the humans of the novel: all of Roberts's human contacts on the island are based on conflict and struggle.

These conflicts and the struggle for survival that Roberts endures are manifestations of Aldiss's adherence to Wells's fundamental concern with evolution. Like Moreau, Dart is a Frankenstein figure, a genetic engineer involved in creating a new sub-race of creatures who, in all likelihood, will replace man as the planet's dominant species. A nuclear war is imminent. There is a strong Wellsian sense to the novel that man's permanency or ascendency is about to end. Aldiss's perspective on evolution includes, like

Wells's, the possibility if not the probability of devo-
lution. The ultimate horror in <u>Moreau</u> is that both the
Beast People and the new sub-race become more, not less,
human in their behavior: the sub-race's demand for political
rights, the Beast People's questioning of religious ritual
and their increasingly war-like behavior are human traits.
When Roberts encounters the new subrace, the SRSR, searching
for the rebellious Bella, one of them responds to his inqui-
ry by stating:

> Did you, indeed? Bella caused a great deal of destruc-
> tion, I fear, so we had to take care of her. She is
> dying in the next room. We persuaded her that her life
> was not worth living, and gave her the wherewithal for
> suicide. You have no need to worry further. (147)

This brief response captures and parodies the indifference
and insensitivity of Moreau's and Dart's scientific experi-
mentation. The pessimism of Wells's novel is shared by
Aldiss.

Bernard Bergonzi has written that the "young Wells,
though not an aesthete, was, in essentials, a <u>fin de siecle</u>
writer" (3). <u>The Island of Dr. Moreau</u>, according to
Bergonzi, contains Wells's fullest expression of a sense of
dissonance and disorder:

> . . . a sense that the whole intellectual, social order
> of the nineteenth century was trembling on the brink of
> dissolution. <u>Fin de siecle</u> was not confined to arts or

aesthetics; its wider implications affected moral and social and even political attitudes and behaviors. (4)

Moreau contains a similar sense of dissolution, of the apocalyptic. In effect, Aldiss is continuing to explore the NW's interest in entropic breakdown and Wells's comparable thematic concerns prove a suitable vehicle for this. Roberts's experiences on the island result in an increasing, almost Swiftian disillusionment with his society's values and institutions. The intellectual context of the novel is manifested through Roberts's awareness of his own complicity in a social system that permits and supports the scientific research that Dart has undertaken:

> So contaminated was I it seemed as if I had lived all my life on Moreau Island, my initiative--despite my efforts--perpetually taken from me, as if I were no more than one of the Beast People. And I said to myself that when I returned to so-called civilization I would have to resign my government post and live privately. (102)

Roberts's final realization is his need to escape from lust for power and to achieve, instead, a greater sense of moral, social and ethical responsibility. This realization comes from his recognition of how much alike he and Dart are. Aldiss develops this point thoroughly. The similarity between Roberts and Dart is most manifest in their identical ages and the discovery that Roberts's own employer, the

State Department, has authorized the necessary financial and logistic support for Dart's undertaking. More importantly, Dart and Roberts are locked into a psychological struggle that is very similar to that between Frankenstein and his creature, one that is primarily internal. This is evident from the following passage:

"You and I--could we ever be on good terms? You're a man of power, you've been around, you are probably on good terms with everyone you meet. You don't even know what 'good terms' means--it's something you take for granted. I can never have that relation- ship because of what I am. A thalidomide freak. I have to rule or go under. Does that sound like mega- lomania to you? Well it's not. It's the result of experience. . . . But I don't know what you're think- ing, do I? For all I know, you're thinking you ought to wipe me out."

I looked out of the window.

"I don't think in such terms. I can see you are determined to force me into opposition to you, whether you realize it or not, but that's a result of your paranoia, not my behavior."

"My paranoia! What old cant are you handing me? Do you know--have you any idea what paranoia is? It's a rational reaction to surrounding circumstances. Why shouldn't you be wiping me out? There's a war going on

all around the world, which you're part of and I'm
not." (85)

The underlying psychological tension is evident. As in
Frankenstein, it is sometimes difficult in this passage and
others to distinguish the speakers in that their language
and emotional states are so similar. Also, like Franken-
stein, Moreau is a novel in which even the most intimate of
acts become public discourse. Aldiss traces his literary
roots in both Wells and Shelley in this novel.

This is particularly evident in the novel's increasing
development of the Frankenstein theme--Aldiss's most persis-
tent concern; as Aldiss states it, it is "something I
generally attempt to represent in my own fiction: when new
things arrive, they function without attaining perfection"
(Shape 23). Aldiss and Wells in The Island of Dr. Moreau
are profoundly concerned with the issues raised in Shelley's
novel. Mortimer Dart is emblematic of Aldiss's statement
that "Western man has achieved his staggering technological
success by maiming himself" (Shape 19). Dart is not simply
physically maimed, but also psychically. His obsessive,
self-deluding, self-aggrandizing behavior cuts him off from
normal human and social intercourse. Like Frankenstein and
The Island of Dr. Moreau, Moreau's Other Island is a secular
myth about moral responsibility and the abuse of technolog-
ical knowledge.

Moreau ends with the destruction of Dart's compound by

fire--the purification process that Wells was so fond of--
but the epilogue also ends more soberly in an image of the
greater fire of nuclear holocaust. Similarly, Dart is shot
by Foxy, an act that symbolizes, like Victor's death in
Frankenstein, the culmination of unrecognized interior self-
destructive forces. The novel's final note of death and
destruction recalls Wells's similar concern with the pos-
sible doom of the human species.

In _Moreau's Other Island_ Aldiss displays a vision that
echoes Wells's most compelling fiction. Ultimately, though,
it displays Aldiss's persistent concern with the establish-
ment of a SF tradition while contributing to the SF genre
and developing that emerging tradition.

Chapter Four:

Aldiss and the Utopian Model

Many readers identify utopian fiction and its twen-
tieth-century development, the dystopia, with SF. Aldous
Huxley's <u>Brave New World</u> and <u>Island</u>, Zamyatin's <u>We</u>, Orwell's
<u>1984</u> and, to some degree, <u>Animal Farm</u> are the best known
examples. The inherently speculative nature of SF is
clearly akin to utopian thinking and writing. Aldiss's
interest as a writer stems from his capacity to integrate
various literary modes, styles, techniques, aesthetic
perspectives and contemporary themes into his SF; he
reflects SF's increasing self-consciousness and capacity for
generic expansion. He has stated that "science fiction,
like most branches of art today, is more aware than ever of
its own nature" (<u>Spree</u> 11). In his novel <u>Enemies of the
System</u> (1978) Aldiss displays his understanding of the tra-
dition behind utopian writing, its literary conventions and
the emergence of the dystopia. The novel develops this mode
of writing into a fictional expression of the utopian specu-
lation found in <u>The Shape of Further Things</u> and other criti-
cal works. Ideation is an integral aspect of <u>Enemies</u> but
the real strength of the novel is more literary: Aldiss's
narrative skill, psychological symbolism and insight, drama,
irony and humour are fully evident. Curiously, these are
the qualities that most utopias are often seen as lacking;

Aldiss, however, incorporates a compelling story into his exercise in utopian fiction.

In _Spree_ Aldiss acknowledges that the great utopias are intrinsic to SF "for utopianism or its opposite, dystopian-ism, is present in every vision of the future--there is little point in inventing a future state unless it provides a contrast with our present one" (65). Aldiss possesses the critical insight to add the following caveat: "This is not to claim that the great utopias are science fiction. Their intentions are moral or political" (65). Nevertheless, two things are evident: firstly, utopian literature is a tradi-tion that dates back to Plato's _Republic_, gains clarity in More's _Utopia_ (1516) and is well represented in Samuel Butler's _Erewhon_ (1872), W.H. Hudson's _A Crystal Age_ (1887) and Edward Bellamy's _Looking Backward_ (1888); all are predecessors of this century's dystopian classics: Zamyatin's _We_ (1920) Huxley's _Brave New World_ (1932) and Orwell's _1984_ (1949). Secondly, in the Twentieth Century there has been an outpouring of utopian and anti-utopian literature that is clear evidence of how speculative thought has penetrated modern fiction.

SF can be perceived as having a natural affinity with both utopian and dystopian literature because, as Mark Rose remarks, SF

> challenges our sense of the stability of reality by
> insisting upon the contingency of the present order of

things. Indeed, sf not only asserts that things may be different; as a genre it insists that they will and must be different, that change is the only constant rule and that the future will not be like the present.

. . . In principle sf might be called subversive. (21) Aldiss's perception of SF is similar in that he calls it "visionary, . . . a speculative literature" (Shape 65). He is attuned to the possibilities enticing Twentieth Century man that manifest themselves in utopian literature; these are acknowledged in Enemies: the theory of evolution and the possibilities of change in the human race; ideological possibilities in the form of socialist doctrine that emphasizes co-operative rather than competitive communities; the promise of the welfare state and the abolition of poverty, ignorance and disease; the dream of material welfare brought about by science and technology. In Aldiss's utopian speculations and fiction one finds an uncertainty typical of the contemporary writer: the hope for perfection and the fear of its realization.

Enemies is both utopian and dystopian in outlook depending on one's perspective. This is analogous to the perspectives of the novel's characters: certain characters have completely internalized the System's ideology; others-- reminiscent of Orwell's Winston Smith--are more removed from its ideological hegemony. Such a division is typical of utopias. Boundaries, barriers and other devices to create a

self-contained world of system are essential aspects of the utopian society. Functionally they serve to prevent the infiltration of outside influence and contamination and hence preserve the best of all possible worlds. Simultaneously, though, they are creating a static place impervious to change and innovation. This produces the twofold nature of utopias that Aldiss explores in his novel: seen from the inside, they function to keep disorder and chaos out; seen from the outside, they function to keep docile and unknowing inhabitants within and reflect the utopia's desire to escape the contingencies of time and history.

Northrop Frye has observed that technological change has removed the sense of isolation from the utopian community in that "technology tends to unify the whole world" and

> out of this situation come two kinds of [utopia] . . .
> the straight utopia which visualizes a world-state
> assumed to be ideal, or at least ideal in comparison
> with what we have, and the utopian satire or parody,
> which presents the same kind of social goal in terms of
> slavery, tyranny or anarchy. . . . Wells is one of the
> few writers who have constructed both serious and sati-
> rical utopias. (28)

While Enemies is not a re-working of Wells in the manner of "The Saliva Tree" or Moreau's Other Island, there is a strong correlation between Enemies and the Wellsian thinking found in Shape. While Enemies and Shape are Aldiss's own

particular (almost idiosyncratic) vision of the utopian
model, Aldiss's keen awareness of utopian literary sources
includes those of Wells. As a stylist Aldiss would be
attracted to Wells's experimentation with a great variety of
literary forms in his utopian writings. These range from
imaginary history to straight prose discourse, from fantas-
tic romances to fictitous memoirs. The Wellsian utopia is
always a World State which is directed and managed by scien-
tists and technicians. The main outlines also include uni-
versal education and world-wide socialism. This, in fact,
is the world depicted in Enemies. Aldiss's contemporary
variation is to present that utopian world as

> a product of modern technological society, and its
> growing sense that the whole world is destined to the
> same social fate with no place to hide, and its increa-
> sing realization that technology moves toward the con-
> trol not merely of nature but of the operations of the
> mind. (Frye 29)

Shape employs prose discourse to discuss the properties and
potentialities of the human brain as the basis for social
transformation into Aldiss's own concept of Utopia. Shape
and Enemies are closely linked in ideation; utopian think-
ing, even in fiction, has a strong rational, cognitive
basis. As Frye observes, "the utopian writer looks at his
own society first and tries to see what, for his purposes,
its significant elements are" (26). In Shape Aldiss delin-

eates these "significant elements"; in <u>Enemies</u> they are explored in dramatic, fictional form. While much of Aldiss's SF and, indeed, SF generally, is implicitly social criticism, the utopian tradition is more overtly so. It also frequently assumes the form of the novel of ideas. In <u>Enemies</u> Aldiss explores these facets of utopian fiction. The novel examines the intellectual framework of <u>Shape</u> while employing the literary conventions of the utopian form.

While technology has advanced far beyond any nineteen-century utopia's wildest dream, utopian conditions are hardly present. Aldiss does not confuse utopian speculation with social reality or programmatic possibility. He says,"I don't see that the basic human condition has radically improved over the centuries" (<u>Shape</u> 24). Aldiss's ultimate purpose in <u>Enemies</u> is synonymous with the whole thrust of the utopian imagination as defined by Frye: "Utopian thought is imaginative, with its roots in literature, and the literary imagination is less concerned with achieving ends than with visualizing possibilities" (31). Robert Elliot has commented on the extra-literary aspects of Utopian fiction that reveal how much it is a literature of ideas:

> . . . at the heart of any literary utopia there must be
> detailed, serious discussion of political and sociolog-
> ical matters. . . . Instead of incarnating the good
> life dramatically, novelistically, the characters of
> utopia discuss it. In part, this is a consequence of

the fact that the fictional utopia is a bastard form,
answering to the claims of a number of disciplines. It
purports to present a more or less detailed picture of
a society significantly better than that in which the
writer lives. The nature of the enterprise inevitably
elicits from the reader a series of questions. . . .
Because they are subject to the laws of politics,
morality, sociology, economics, and various other
fields, the issues to which these questions apply
require discursive treatment. . . . Most writers of
fictional utopias have had far more interest in, and
commitment to, the socio-political aspects of their
work than to the fiction, which they have considered
largely instrumental. . . (110-1)

Enemies accords with Elliot's characterization to some
degree: it contains "detailed, serious discussions" about
human identity, personal freedom, the nature of social order
and so on; it is a highly oratorical work and Aldiss's
thinking is examined at length from the perspectives of the
small cast of characters who are the focus of the narrative.
Yet Aldiss's narrative is never merely an instrument or an
excuse for the development of ideas. Enemies is a novel of
physical action with a clearly imagined and engrossing phys-
ical landscape, a highly developed symbolism, carefully
delineated characters and conflict that stems from a compel-
ling narrative. While ideation is an essential aspect of

the novel, <u>Enemies</u> does not sacrifice dramatic interest for the sake of expanding its more cognitive aspects.

The novel takes place over one million years into the future. Earth has a world society and man has genetically manipulated himself into <u>homo uniformis</u>, Man Alike Throughout. One of novel's characters distinguishes <u>homo sapiens</u> from <u>homo uniformis</u>:

> Rationality was something poor <u>homo sapiens</u> could never achieve. He was divided against himself physiologically. <u>Therefore</u> he was divided against himself mentally and socially and politically and well--in every way conceivable. He could not devise a stable society as we have done. Division was his lot. . . . Yet <u>sapiens </u>had vision, too. Yes, he even visualized Utopia, the perfect way. . . .

> And, in an ironic way, he achieved Utopia in the end, though it meant his extinction. When his physio-technicians and early endotomists invented the whole principle of Biological Communism--the theory behind the bio-shunt itself--then it became possible to rationalize the inharmonious governance systems genetically, passing on the improvement to succeeding generations. Through chromosome surgery, <u>sapiens</u> did away with all manner of systematic weakness--thus eliminating himself and ushering in a virtual new race. A race without absurd evolutionary flaws. A race truly

capable of establishing Utopia.   In a word, us. <u>Homo</u>

<u>Uniformis</u>, Man Alike Throughout. (26-7)

The novel's characters, the elite of the system, are vaca-

tioning on the planet Lysenka II.   Partners for the vacation

are chosen by computer and over the intercom of the space-

ship a voice softly expresses the official position on

sexuality: "Remember that sexual intercourse is an approved

social usage . . . it increases the physical and mental

well-being of both partners, thus enhancing their value to

the system" (11).   The tourists are part of the special

System-wide celebration of the one millionth anniversary of

of Biocom.   One of the tourist guides contrasts Biocom with

Lysenka II: "The universal beneficial aspects of Biocom will

never be more appreciated than on this planet, where every-

thing is primitive, regressive, and of an entirely lower

politico-evolutionary order" (13).

The guide also states, ironically as it turns out, the

wish that "you will enjoy your stay and be strengthened by

it for further dedication to our beloved system" (14).   The

subservience of the individual to the system and the group

is a constant focus of the novel.   When one of the tourists

expresses a wish to be alone with his partner, he is rebuked

by her with the System's slogans and dogma: "Don't utter

anti-social remarks.   Unity is a quality which needs per-

petual renewal.   We had a good time alone on the gulfhopper.

Now let's integrate with our new community" (51).   Slogans

effectively contribute much to the moral tone of society; their Orwellian tone reveals a largely repressive social cohesion. They are a substitute for original thought: Resolution is the Foe of Deviation; Unity Breeds Immunity; Never Think What Cannot be Said; Eternal Vigilance Grants Eternal Security: Without It Is Eternal Anarchy. Much of the dialogue of the novel revolves around the ease with which a person can deviate from the orthodox position. Repression and re-education exist in the form of the Reason Police, who suppress intellectual heresy and potential social rebellion.

While Lysenka II is at the stage of development Earth experienced 370 million years ago and the indigenous life forms are extremely low on the evolutionary scale, the tourists do see higher life forms.

> The animals now bounding alone beside the road had no tails. Their resemblance to kangaroos began and ended with their small pointed heads and their way of leaping over the ground. For the rest, they were more man-like, and waved their fists with oddly human gestures at the bus as it flashed past. (30)

The explanation for the presence of these higher, varied life forms lies in the forced landing of a colony ship from Earth on the planet 1.09 million years ago.

Tension is created when the bus crashes and tips over as it attempts to avoid a fissue in the highway. Not only are the tourists stranded on a desolate planet but because

of a technicians' strike that affects the planet's energy
supplies, there is no radio contact. The Utopianists, as
they call themselves, confer but are unable to decide on a
course of action and then one of them is killed by a mole-
like creature. State orthodoxy dictates that, in the midst
of danger, as one of characters states it,

> our first duty to the state is to triumph over that
>
> danger and survive. All of you make sure you now
>
> understand exactly the situation in which we find our-
>
> selves. Ecologically and ideologically, these
>
> creatures are our enemies. (43)

One of the novel's main characters, Vul Dulcifer, explains
the situation in more detail and more pointedly when exam-
ining the creature that killed their group member and was,
in turn, killed by them:

> There are no grasses on this world, no cereals, no
>
> high-energy packets for animals to eat--no basic requi-
>
> site for the support of a grazer-predator system such
>
> as grew up on Earth. . . . Lysenka has not yet reached
>
> a stage where it can naturally support anything called
>
> animal life. . . . This is not an animal. There are no
>
> real animals on Lysenka II. The whole grazer-predator
>
> system is _human_ in origin. . . . See its retractable
>
> genitals, its joints, its anatomical structure. It is
>
> made what it is by harsh conditioning. It is just a
>
> poor savage misfit. This is what it has been reduced

to, generation by generation. But its ancestors were

our ancestors. . . . They're ex-human stock. That's

the danger we have to understand. We are up against--

not instinct, but cunning. (47-8)

Evolution plays as central a role in Enemies as it does in

Wells's fiction. Both authors seek to achieve the widest

possible perspective on man's emergence as a unique species

and his capacity to cope with his natural and social envi-

ronment.

Six utopianists head for the nearest human habitation,

but before reaching it they are captured by hunters. The

hunter chief stares into the eyes of one of the women in one

of the key passages of the novel; it eloquently captures the

fundamental psychological and spiritual differences between

the two species and cultures:

A strong psychic shock overcame her as her gaze met

his. He was lean, arrogant, ruthless; those character-

istics beamed from his attitude, from his narrow eyes.

And some other quality that she had never met before,

some mysterious mainspring of life which assaulted her,

before which she felt humble. Of that unwanted humil-

ity she was ashamed; but she dropped her eyes submis-

sively before his slitted gaze. (61-2)

They are taken to the camp of the hunters, a group of caves

located beneath the surface of the planet. The captives are

well taken care of and they participate in discussions typ-

ical of the intellectual debate that is an essential to the
utopian tradition. These discussions become increasingly
radical, personal and unorthodox as new experiences produce
a new knowledge of reality that the System cannot account
for. They become witnesses of and participants in the
rituals of their captors; these rituals are increasingly
religious in nature. Dulcifer manages to escape during one
of these ceremonies, is quickly discovered by a search party
and returns with them to rescue the rest of the group. On
returning, Dulcifer is informed that the remaining captives
were treated as gods after his violent escape: "They fell
down before us. They worshipped us. They accepted us as
gods. . . . How little they comprehend. And how little we
comprehend about ourselves" (115).

At this point the Outtourist guide reveals her identity
as a member of the Reason Police and orders the arrest of
the others:

> The charges agains these criminals include conspiracy,
> sedition, hostile logic, deformed thought-processes,
> misapplication of history, free discussion of Classi-
> fied matters, treachery against the party, pessimism,
> collusion with traitors, and intent to conspire with
> degenerate capitalists who scheme to take control of
> this planet. (118)

After a brief, futile attempt at resistance by Dulcifer, the
prisoners are led away and "they sped from the cavern,

through the tunnels, and into the night of Lysenka II"
(119).

Unlike much of Aldiss's fiction and primarily because
of its utopian framework, Enemies conforms to Darko Suvin's
definition of SF as "a literary genre whose necessary and
suffficient conditions are the presence and interaction of
estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is
an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empiri-
cal environment" (Metamorphoses 7). In Suvin's view SF em-
braces all forms in which he detects the principle of "cog-
nitive estrangement." Indeed, the boundaries that Suvin
draws around utopian literature and SF are almost identical:

> Utopia is a verbal construction of a particular quasi-
> human community where sociopolitical institutions,
> norms, and individual relationships are organized
> according to a more perfect principle than in the
> author's community, this construction being based on
> estrangement arising out of an alternative historical
> hypothesis. (Metamorphoses 49)

Suvin proposes a central distinction between "naturalistic
genres" and "estranged genres." The former, he suggests,
set out "faithfully to reproduce empirical gestures, sur-
faces, and relationships vouched by human senses and common
sense"; the latter seek to "illuminate men's relationships
to other men and to their surrounding by the basic device of
a radically different location for the postulated novel

human relations of the [work's] fable" (<u>Metamorphoses</u> 54).

The "shocking mirror" presented by utopian works creates, according to Suvin, a particular cognitive effect: utopias defamiliarize the author's sociohistorical environment in order to expose its flaws and contradictions and make them transparent to critical understanding. Cognitive estrangement constitutes for Suvin the identifying response to the utopian landscape (and to SF). It sets utopia apart from generic neighbours such as myth, which limits cognition because it views--according to Suvin's interpretation of myth--human relations as fixed and supernaturally determined, and the folktale and fantasy, which are "indifferent to cognition" (<u>Metamorphoses</u> 29) and deal with supernatural themes.

"Cognitive estrangement" does indeed describe what is potentially the most significant effect of utopian literature--its capacity to disturb and unsettle its readers, to provoke critical thought through the projection of alternate social arrangements. Utopias do, however, present a dimension that is not fully accounted for by the concept of cognitive estrangement, for they not only defamiliarize or "make strange" a deformed social situation but also seek to familiarize a clear alternative--a fictive "other" situation in which all forms of estrangement have been overcome. Utopias, in other words, not only defamiliarize "what is" but also formulate answers in terms of "what ought to be."

Thus, as Suvin himself observes, literary utopias are "positive negations" (54); that is, Utopias make us aware of the distance between the "is" and the "ought," allowing for critical reflection and cognition, at the same time as they diminish the importance of this distance, urging the reader to convert to the wisdom and truth represented by the utopian transformation. Although these two operations are implied in the concept of estrangement, they are not fully distinguished by Suvin as separate strategies: criticism of social fact _and_ projection of utopian fantasy. The former is negative, critical, cognitive; the latter is affirmative, suspends critical faculties, and limits cognition by blurring the very boundaries between fact and fiction.

Aldiss's works employ both strategies. _Shape_ contains the qualities of criticism, cognition and dissatisfaction with the social order that are one aspect of utopian literature; it is also intimately connected with _Enemies_ in that much of its speculation about brain function and the human mind is the basis for the utopian society found in the novel. _Enemies_ is also a utopian fantasy; its use of an enormous expanse of time produces a blurring of fact and fiction: evolutionary possibilities are presented in fictional form but have a conviction that bespeaks the full possibility of their realization. As a utopian fantasy, _Enemies_ is concerned with exposing the limits of cognition. To some degree, this is Aldiss's own particular variation on

the Frankenstein theme--his most recurring concern. More
importantly, the remaining <u>homo sapiens</u> of Lysenka II live
in a world that is in opposition to the System and their
world is the basis for utopian possibility in Aldiss's
utopian framework. These beings are attuned to the natural
order in a manner that recalls Jung's rejection of pure
cognition and rationalism as a basis for a full life:

> . . . there is a thinking in primordial images, in
> symbols which are older than the historical man, which
> are inborn in him from the earliest times, and, eter-
> nally living, outlasting all generations, still make up
> the groundwork of the human psyche. It is only pos-
> sible to live the fullest life when we are in harmony
> with these symbols; wisdom is a return to them. It is
> a question neither of belief nor of knowledge, but of
> the agreement of our thinking with the primordial
> images of the unconsciousness. They are the unthinking
> matrices of all our thoughts, no matter what our con-
> scious mind may cogitate. (<u>Modern Man</u> 21)

Aldiss's critical thinking favours the gothic, mythic, fan-
tastic and surrealistic. This propensity is evident in his
utopian speculations. <u>Enemies</u> inverts our traditional con-
cepts of a Utopia as an orderly, rational, technologically
oriented society into a world that is fundamentally attuned
to the human psyche and the natural world. It is a movement
away from the positivism that underlies Suvin's thinking and

requires imaginative insight on the part of the reader: an ability to see the true utopian possibilities in the tribes of Lysenka II.

Northrop Frye also sees utopian literature as a form of social awareness or criticism that is similar to Suvin's concept of "cognitive estrangement":

> the utopia, in its typical form, contrasts, implicitly or explicitly, the writer's own society with the more desirable one he describes. The desirable society, or the utopia proper, is essentially the writer's own society with its unconscious ritual habits transposed in their conscious equivalents. The contrast in value between the two societies implies a satire on the writer's own society, and the basis for the satire is the unconsciousness or inconsistency in the social behavior he observes around him. (27)

Both Frye and Suvin emphasize the critical, cognitive dimension of utopian thought; both emphasize how this type of literature produces through estrangement a new level of insight in the reader. Aldiss's novel is consistent with these insights: it refracts our image of our selves; we perceive the false hopes of technological change, our separation from nature, the limits of a spiritually empty world in which, as George Kateb describes it,

> virtue can become automatism, equality can become uniformity or truncation, stability can become stagnation,

> efficiency can become compulsive routine, social
>
> rationality can become social texturelessness, harmony
>
> can become lifelessness. (231)

While the programmatic elements in Shape reveal that Aldiss

envisions "partial realization" of his Utopian thinking, the

tension in Enemies stems from Aldiss's desire for a Wellsian

world-state that is in conflict with contemporary historical

experience and the literary influence of the dystopian

novel. Enemies is both utopian and dystopian in outlook:

the failings and limitations of homo uniformis can be revi-

talized by the strengths of the surviving tribes of homo

sapiens on Lysenka II. The novel possesses a deep under-

lying desire for a utopian society and, in accord with the

tradition of utopian thinking, Aldiss is communicating his

own vision of the future.

Aldiss deviates from Suvin's critical framework. His

emphasis is on the irrational, the mythic, the subconscious

mind, dreaming and fantasy; this approach is in contrast

with Suvin's emphasis on the "cognitive" and the "scien-

tific." While it would be unfair to deny the imaginative

aspect of Suvin's poetics, this imaginative aspect is highly

cognitive, emphasizes conformity to scientific laws and is

indifferent to the essentially mythopoeic approach of

Aldiss's work. While there is an element of "cognitive

estrangement" in Aldiss's comment that "there is little

point in inventing a future state unless it provides a con-

trast with our present one," the main theme of _Enemies_ is the limitation of a purely rational, cognitive approach to existence. In contrast to Suvin's, Mark Rose's approach to SF, while not identical to Aldiss's, has a tentative, provisional quality that lends itself to the type of ambiguity of form and thought inherent in much of Aldiss's SF:

> SF appeared at about the same time as modern fantasy, and both genres took form against the background of the dogmatic realistic or naturalistic movement of the late nineteenth century. . . . SF can be seen as filling a space between the opposed forms of the new realism and "pure" fantasy. On the one hand, by portraying a world that is always in some respect fantastic, sf differentiates itself from realism; on the other, by invoking the scientific ethos to assert the possibility of the fictional worlds it describes, SF differentiates itself from fantasy. . . . SF might be described as a form of the fantastic that denies it is fantastic. (19)

It is interesting to note that in those sections of _Shape_ that are most clearly linked to the type of speculative thinking that is the basis for the utopian society found in _Enemies_, Aldiss's rational, cognitive theorizing is balanced by his own sense of the fantastic in everyday life:

> Even news can be as much fantasy as fantasy itself. We are surrounded with fantasy. Or perhaps that should be expressed another way. We surround ourselves with fan-

tasy. . . . Our waking hours are rarely notable for their sober labours and rational inquiries! . . . The necessity for fantasy is paramount over our lives. And perhaps the dictionary admits as much when it gives as one of the definitions of fantasy, 'preoccupation with thoughts associated with unobtainable desires.' The old prehistoric life of man was full of unobtainable desires; but western civilization is powered by them. Maybe we have caged nature--but we are ourselves part of nature. (Shape 53)

Aldiss's own movement towards fantasy and the mythic and his emphasis on dreams and the unconscious mind are compatible with his critical thinking about SF:

SF is a particular form of fantasy; although with regards to form and expression, it generally clings to a somewhat faded realism, in content it comes remarkably close to dream, combining as it does both ancient and modern myth-ingredients. In other words, it seems, typically, to be something that it pretends not to be: surrealism covered by surface realism. (Shape 53)

The Jungian sensibility that pemeates Enemies--its emphasis on a collective unconsciousness, the psychic importance of symbols, connection with the past--is anticipated in Aldiss's speculations in Shape; this work reveals itself to be what Frank Manuel would characterize as a "psychological document that significantly reveals the sensibility of

the particular historical society in which it appeared" and
is, in its utopian thinking "a sensitive indicator of where
the sharpest anguish of an age lives" (70). Manuel's ima-
gery for utopia, like Aldiss's, emphasizes the inner mind,
the personal, the dream-like:

> The waking fantasies of utopia are subject to diverse
> interpretations on as many different levels as ordinary
> dreams. In one sense they are private worlds whose
> geography and laws of movement are explicable in terms
> of their creator's life experience. . . . Some dreams
> express so forcefully a poignant longing of masses of
> men that their words reverberate for centuries. (69)

Aldiss's Jungian perspective is particularly evident in the
following passage:

> Dreaming is to a certain extent a way in which visceral
> and intellectual communicate in one body. We must take
> cognizance of dreams to be in touch with all our
> selves. Only that way can we be permitted to boast,
> with Whitman, that we contain multitudes. That the
> multitudes are largely of the past--the long past, in
> many cases--explains why they communicate to the intel-
> lect in symbols; in the beginning, there wasn't the
> word. The intellect, which is modern, must accept
> those blurred signals. In the proper spirit of accept-
> ance, they enrich and fortify. . . . The real communi-
> cation lies within.

Our brains are, among other essential things, the repositories of human and pre-human geology, and for health we must send taproots down into the strata. We must communicate with the past we find there. . . . We need to be more inward-looking, and quieter, to learn what we can from the freighted metamorphic rocks in our head. (47-8)

Jung expresses the identical idea when he succinctly comments that "the collective unconscious contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual" (Portable 65).

This is what homo uniformis has lost; the system is primarily a public world that provides social identity, material comfort, relatively meaningful work and a social ideology that explains man's relationship with the cosmos by separating him from the natural world and providing an illusory sense that his society is the natural world and not merely an arbitrary social construct. When the Utopianists are first exposed to Lysenka II, "the passengers took deep breaths and looked at each other, as if the new environment forced them to take fresh measure of themselves. In the unaccustomed light, the set of their faces was strange" (14). Once removed from the normal limits of their own system, the Utopianists are quickly threatened: a system that emphasizes stasis does not have the vitality to cope with the new and the dynamic. The contrast between homo

uniformis and homo sapiens is between two modes of con-
sciousness. Uniformis inhabits a world that is, in effect,
dominated by the left brain hemisphere--one that manifests
the daylight world, the analytic, the verbal, the scienti-
fic, the positivistic, and the objective. What is lacking
is a sense of connection--with nature, with one another and,
most importantly, with the inner self. Their rationalism
limits them to narrow perspectives and narrow paths of ac-
tion; verbal discourse rather than action is their charac-
teristic mode of behavior. Aldiss refuses to adopt the as-
sumption that to increase man's rational control over his
environment is also to increase his control over his desti-
ny. Instead, the cerebral cortex has enabled man to control
the world through his capacity for reason but it has also
made possible a degree of alienation from the natural world
which less intellectual creatures are free from.

The strength of the novel rests on its psychological
symbolism. From a Jungian perspective, the characters are
unaware of how much their rationalism has put them at the
mercy of the psychic underworld symbolized by the surviving
homo sapiens whose consciousness is still attuned to night,
eternity, space, mystical awareness, belief and subjective
experience. Their religious rituals and family structures
are the source of their spirituality and humanity. Their
subterranean world is emblematic of man's rich psychic heri-
tage, his multivalent inner self and integral connection

with the natural world.

Homo uniformis has freed himself from "superstition"--
to which he reduces everything outside of his narrow field
of consciousness--but in the process has lost his spiritual
values and self. His moral and spiritual tradition have
disintegrated and, as his rational, scientific outlook has
grown, his world has become dehumanized. The novel's char-
acters increasingly feel themselves isolated in the cosmos;
they are no longer involved in nature, have lost their emo-
tional unconscious identity with natural phenomena and,
hence, have lost the profound emotional energy this symbolic
connection supplied. Only one of the novel's characters,
Ian Takeido, is able to partially assimilate his experience
and break away from the System's mind-control and reach an
existential awareness of his situation:

> I just want to say that there is another point of
> view to be put, and in the System it can never be put.
> There's no way of putting it. Know what I mean, com-
> rades? If you speak out, you are an enemy of the sys-
> tem. Is our way of life then so insecure? Can one
> question make a whole statement collapse?
>
> . . . We can't trust each other because of the
> constant fear of betrayal. We can't trust each other
> . . . (102)

This character articulates the need for psychological whole-
ness in which man's rational capacity must be balanced by a

vitality that stems from his integration with the natural
world and his innate spirituality:

> They survive in impossible conditions. I'll tell
> you--I'll tell you all, you numb utopians. I'll tell
> you if a few hundred of us were set down on a deserted
> strip of Lysenka now, we should sit on our bottoms and
> talk and argue and bullshit until we perished. That
> would be our logic. We're just robots. . . . I'll tell
> you my great idea. It's a way we might break the
> impossible stranglehold that Biocom has on everyone in
> the System. I'll say it whether you support me or not.

> We should forget our carefully taught prejudices
> and see that these savages here are to be admired.
> Yes, admired! They should not be obliterated. We
> should see that they are preserved. More than that,
> they should be taken back, every last man, woman and
> child, and established in a large settlement on Earth.
> . . . Not all the degenerate animal-forms; simply those
> tribes--this one and any others like it--who have man-
> aged to retain their humanity over more than a million
> years in the face of impossible odds. I believe we
> need them. After a million stultifying years of World
> Unity, I believe we need _sapiens_ as they once thought
> they needed us. (104-5)

This passage recalls Jung's

> . . . picture of the anthropoid and archaic man with,

on the one hand, his uninhibited world of instinct and,

on the other, his often misunderstood world of spiri-

tual ideas, who, compensating and correcting our one-

sidedness, emerges from the darkness and shows us how

and where we have deviated from the basic pattern and

crippled ourselves psychically. (Portable 298)

The psychological action of the novel adopts the Jungian

process of individuation--the conscious coming-to-terms with

one's own inner center or psychic nucleus or Self--as the

focus of the action which is, of course, primarily internal.

The characters, once removed from the System, undergo expe-

riences that necessitate re-evaluation, a reliance on inner

resources, genuine empathy and connection with others.

These experiences wound the personality and cause psycho-

logical suffering that is an a priori necessity for the pro-

cess of individuation; but the novel ends abruptly with the

System re-establishing its ideological and psychological

dominance. Aldiss's point is that homines uniformes are

mere copies, simulcra and not genuine humans in any vital

sense. They lack the necessary capacity for psychic rebirth

and the hegemony that the System re-establishes is a logical

result of these limits. Uniformis lives in the world that

Aldiss's fiction and humanism consistently reject: a uniform

world without vitality, without genuine ritual, without

truly individuated inhabitants. They are trapped in old

ideologies and cut off from revitalizing dreams that produce

self-confrontation, self-awareness and a sense of the complexity of man's inner and outer life. Despite the dystopian dimension of Enemies, Aldiss's dialectical purpose contains the seeds of his utopian vision. His wish is to integrate bifurcated man into a new being. The division is between the comfortable, static, material and collectivist world of homo uniformis and the hard, dynamic, spiritual and individualistic world of homo sapiens. Aldiss is suggesting a Jungian synthesis of opposites as the basis for psychic integration and greater social vitality.

Enemies contains the elements found in other works examined: the Wellsian socialism that Gregory Rolles idealized in "The Saliva Tree," the mystical communion with the natural world of the Utods in The Dark Light Years, man's need for spiritual direction in Barefoot in the Head, and the questioning of unexamined technological advancement in Frankenstein Unbound and Moreau's Other Island. In Enemies these diverse elements are coherently integrated into an imaginative examination of the psychological and social conditions necessary for the potential establishment of a more ideal society. It is an examination that involves both a recognition of the dystopian direction of certain trends in contemporary society and an appreciation of man's psychological depth and an acceptance of his spiritual nature that is the basis of all social harmony. As Frye comments, "the ideal or desirable quality in the utopia has to be recog-

nized, that is, seen as manifesting something that the reader can understand as a latent or potential element in his own society and his own thinking" (38-9).

Whether or not one accepts Aldiss's vision of man in Enemies, one must acknowledge Aldiss's appreciation of the utopian mode as a literary tradition and as, historically, the basis for the development of certain ideas about society, liberty and the individual. Enemies is deeply concerned with evolutionary change in man; as well, the name of Freud and certain Freudian concepts--the id and the super-ego--are prominently mentioned in a manner that reinforces the psychological symbolism of the novel: Lysenka is Id-like, Earth is the Super-Ego. Aldiss is invoking the impact which Darwin and Freud had on utopian thinking. Frank Manuel has commented on this impact:

> . . . in the latter part of the nineteenth century two scientifc hypotheses about the nature of man appeared to raise almost insurmountable barriers to the prolongation of the utopian dream: the discoveries of Darwin and of Freud. Both were shattering to those men of the nineteenth century who had visions of a peaceful, orderly, progressive world from which antagonism and aggression were virtually banished and where man's creativity would flower forever. (86)

Manuel also notes that the contemporary utopian mode of thinking postulates that "we are on the point of ascending

to a higher stage in the autonomous and irreversible evolutionary process." This view believes that "the development of man, who now has the power to control his own destiny, must henceforth take place in the realm of mind or spirit" and that the theory of evolution "has moved away from the dramatization of the individual struggle for survival to envisage a future world peopled by humane, cooperative, totally conscious beings" (88). Aldiss has a similar perspective. He looks at man's social problems within the framework of evolutionary development:

> Although this speedy development of the neocortex has (now literally) rocketed our species to success, it carries its penalties. For one thing, the neocortex and the limbic brain both retain certain areas of autonomy which sometimes come into conflict. . . . It is this brain of ours that Koestler calls jerry-built. Pointing to a paranoid streak in human history, he claims that 'schizophysiology' is built into the species; at times, and especially at times of crisis, the two halves of the brain, modern and archaic, pull different ways. Something was sacrificed by the so-speedy development of the neocortex; insufficient neural connections were established between the two phylogenetic epochs. As a result, there is inadequate hierarchic co-ordination between instinct and intelligence. From this weakness, mankind's historic trouble

flows: wars, rapes, rivalries and violence. (Shape 71)
Utopian thinkers and Aldiss himself employ scientific rea-
soning to buttress their views on the emergence of a new
world of consciousness. Aldiss's novel shows these views to
be a dream of reason. Enemies parodies the utopian ideal of
a peaceful, rational, cooperative man. The credibility of
the ideal itself is questioned. Furthermore, the psycholog-
ical symbolism of the novel is compatible with Freud's two-
fold dualism--the dualism of ego and id within the psyche
(though the System's thought control and enforced internali-
zation of social precepts make it more of a dualism between
superego and id) and the dualism of individual and society.
The presence of the Reason Police is an explicit acknow-
ledgement of novel's dualism: society and the individual are
in conflict. Biocom bypasses the id, the repository of the
deep instinctual drives and the dynamic part of the self.
Homo uniformis possesses a rigid superego and a nullified
ego. The Freudian view is that culture demands increasing
instinctual renunciation and cultural creativity requires a
considerable psychic energy that can only be obtained by
diverting it from its primary instinctual aims and using it
for cultural purposes. Enemies takes this Freudian position
even further. Uniformis is psychologically and culturally
castrated: society is static and conformist; the individual
has no real self-identity. Aldiss develops these ideas
through narrative and symbol and through the use of exposi-

tory discourse that is a part of utopian fiction; he makes Enemies a novel of ideas and ingeniously explores Darwinian and Freudian concepts in the novel's symbolism and the characters' discourse. This is also an example of Aldiss's deliberate use of the literary utopian tradition because, as Frye points out, "the utopia, the effort at social imagination, is an area in which specialized disciplines can meet and interpenetrate with a mutual respect for each other, concerned with clarifying their common social context" (33). Frye's perspective also indicates that the public, impersonal, conformist world of the System is--on a literary level--another convention that Aldiss adopts:

> In most utopias the state predominates over the individual: property is usually held in common and the characteristic features of individual life, leisure, privacy, and freedom of movement, are as a rule minimized. Most of this is, once more, simply the result of writing a utopia and accepting its conventions: the utopia is designed to describe a unified society, not individual varieties of existence. Still, the sense of the individual as submerged in a social mass is very strong. (37)

Enemies uses various aspects of utopian ideology and the literary conventions associated with the mode. Its early reference to language and its use--one of the characters comments on the term id, "Probably declared a non-word

. . . . In which case, it should be neither used nor mis-
used" (19)--is analogous to 1984's semantic concerns and
subtly recalls that novel. Another passage that deliber-
ately recalls 1984's social structure and Orwell's simpler,
idealized working-class life adds emotional depth to the
novel; its simple, moving language reveals Aldiss's depth as
a writer, his ability to move from the level of intellectual
discourse to pathos and psychological insight:

> . . . the old peach orchard remained at the back of the
> creche. . . . There were two women who worked in the
> creche, prole women. They were large and shapeless.
> One, I remember, had black hair which was tied to hang
> down her back like a horse's tail. They liked to walk
> in the derelict orchard. I must once have known their
> names. I used to envy the women. They walked so
> close, heads together, talking, half-smiling. How I
> used to wonder if they were sisters, and what they
> talked about . . .
>
> And they would stand under the trees and lift
> their fat bare arms and pluck the golden fruit. They
> used to gather it in their arms and eat with the juice
> running down their chins, laughing. Not pleasant,
> really--but to me then, as a lonely child, so pleasant,
> so very pleasant. They were so happy and in such
> communion. (73-4)

The lost world evoked in this passage captures the sense of

loss in the novel as a whole.

Enemies is SF as speculation, as a literature of ideas
and as social criticism. Characteristically of Aldiss, the
tension and complexity of the novel derive from the simul-
taneous occurance of a number of images, concepts and con-
ventions: he exploits the inherent conflict between the
social dystopia of the System that encloses homo uniformis
and the utopian potential of the spiritual world of homo
sapiens; the psychological framework of the novel also
subtly contrasts and recalls the tension between Freud's
repressive and largely reductive concept of man and Jung's
emphasis on individuation and spiritual renewal. Similarly,
the scientific positivism of the novel's SF conventions is
at odds with Aldiss's sense of the fantastic and the mythic.
The enormous time frame of the novel undermines a purely
cognitive response; its temporal scope is beyond anyone's
intellectual grasp. This serves to enhance an imaginative
sense of possibilities.

Another source of tension is the opposition between the
programmatic dimension of Shape and the impact of historical
experience. Aldiss skillfully develops this tension while
maintaining his own high literary standards for narration,
symbolism, irony, humour and drama. It is further evidence
that Aldiss is creating a literate, intelligent body of work
that reveals his artistic and intellectual growth and,
through this work, protean potential of SF.

Conclusion:

Philosophical and Literary Context

Brian Aldiss's SF deals with philosophical issues in aesthetic contexts. His primary concerns are metaphysical: man's relationship with the universe is always the fundamental issue but his philosophical perspective is enhanced by an artist's sensibility, a creative imagination, an acute sense of literary history, and a comprehensive understanding of the development of SF as a genre. The traditional boundaries of realism are inadequate for the range of Aldiss's concerns and he has increasingly resorted to fantasy and speculations about man's psychic life to express his sense of reality. Aldiss discovers in his literary precursors, most obviously in Shelley and Wells, ideas and images that are consistent with his own: they are reshaped by him while he simultaneously acknowledges his sources. His interest in utopias stems from a dissatisfaction with society that is intrinsic to his restless intellect and to SF itself.

Infinities of space and time, distant worlds, alien encounters, impending nuclear holocaust and a complex future are the varied backdrops of his fiction. While these images are part of the fabric of SF, they are also fundamental to Aldiss's sense of the scope of the genre. Literary theory and artistic expression merge when Aldiss defines SF as a "search for the definition of man and his stature in the

universe." While his definition of SF places it within a
cognitive framework, "our advanced but confused state of
knowledge (science)," the movement in his fiction is towards
'soft' SF. He does not emphasize the rationalistic and the
positivistic but, rather, attempts to create tensions in his
work that reflect a modernist awareness of the complexity
and ambiguity of human existence. Change, not stasis, is
his focus; such a focus is inherent in SF.

His conclusion about SF is that it is "characteristi-
cally set in the Gothic or post-Gothic mould." His interest
in various psychological states stems from his use of the
gothic; he is attuned to gothic's early awareness of the
complexity of the mind. Moreover, his definition of SF in
the context of the gothic is a manifestation of his funda-
mentally literary approach to SF. One of his primary con-
cerns is with SF as a genre and his fiction consistently
attempts not simply to deal with ideas and intellectual
process; rather, his often radical stylistic experimentation
introduces an aesthetic perspective that provides greater
depth for the themes that he works with. The tensions
between modes of writing and intellectual premises are con-
stant in his work. Realism's affinity with empiricism is at
odds with romance's sense of the fantastic and he maintains
a consistent creative tension in his work through these
apparent polarities. As well, he is aware of both the
modern and the post-modern aspects of contemporary fiction;

among his works there exist modernist exercises in centered, purposive, organic forms as well as post-modern exercises in chance, indeterminancy and antiform.

The temporal framework of Aldiss's fiction is enormous and his fiction frequently deals with man's increasing comprehension of time. This comprehension arose from the Nineteenth Century's discovery of the age of Earth and led to a more contemporary sense of time as relative and possibly solipsistic, a function of the mind. His perspective on time is Wellsian: man is but a species struggling for consciousness. All of his work contains a philosophical tension between the possibility of man inhabiting a deterministic universe while attempting to exercise choice and to direct overwhelming social and historical forces. Nevertheless, Aldiss's focus is always on the human and on his characters' individual attempts to achieve self-knowledge and greater insight. His concern with myth and the mythopoeic is in terms of self-identity: it is the source of man's identity with himself and a natural order. As well, Aldiss values social communion. While life is an inherently solitary process, the thrust of Enemies, Moreau, and Enemies is towards the celebration of the communion of the human spirit. Bodenland's encounter and involvement with Byron, Percy and Mary Shelly are the social high points of that novel. Roberts's only moments of joy are when he briefly joins the communal order of the Seal People. Removal from

the System briefly creates a genuine sense of community among the cast of _Enemies_.

While Aldiss occasionally explores an indifferent and empty universe in his fiction--his work explores all philo-sophical positions--he is primarily interested in recovering a religious significance to the universe; it is not merely a place of surface and symbol, but _numinously_ so. He makes an effort to remove us from an empirical reality to the world of the unconscious which, he suggests, informs the meaning of every event and of every act of interpretation. The basic tension in his fiction is between the material and the spiritual. The central characters of his novels consis-tently undergo a Kafkaesque ordeal of trial and struggle. Bodenland, Roberts and the cast of _Enemies_ are all literally incarcerated. All participate in a process that ultimately results in a liberation from ideological and societal limits. Aldiss's fiction is fundamentally concerned with the metaphysical and the ontological: meaning and a greater sense of connection with the wellsprings of life are what he explores in his work.

Aldiss's central characters are typically men of posi-tion and power. Their conflict is not merely that between order and disorder, nor between human constructs and the inevitable process of entropic breakdown. Their ultimate recognition is of the limits of human effort. Aldiss's persistent exploration of and variations on the Frankenstein

theme supersede all of his concerns. It is emblematic of a spiritually impoverished secular, material, rational and technologically obsessed external world.

This is the continuing focus of his fiction: his re-working of the utopian tradition, Wells and Shelley always deals with this fundamental concern. Almost equally importantly, by re-working these writers and exploring styles of writing such as the scientific romance, the gothic tale and the utopian fantasy, Aldiss reaffirms SF's own literary framework and capacity to express itself in a range of styles.

Aldiss has created a body of work that reveals a contemporary sensibility and a capacity to deal with sweeping philosophical and social issues while usually maintaining a traditional concern with narrative and the reader's pleasure. His ability to merge literary sensibility, critical insight and great imagination produces fiction of considerable importance. His expanding body of work contains much that merits further critical attention.

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