

**CHAPTER TWO**  
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Brian Aldiss has experienced with a variety of literary forms and style throughout his career. He is best known as a prolific and popular author and critic of contemporary science fiction. His major contribution to the science fiction field has been to develop a more thoughtful and human literature that challenges the standard assumptions and beliefs of its audience. In his fiction Aldiss usually focuses on perceptual ambiguities, dualities and paradoxes not generally addressed by other science fiction authors. Although some critics consider Aldiss's stories pedantic and his characters unconvincing, he is generally praised for his confident and energetic style and the depth and scope of his ideas.

His first mainstream book, The Bright-fount Diaries (1955), written under the pseudonym Peter Pica is a collection of interrelated short stories about the domestic life of a bookshop assistant. Aldiss is also regarded as an observant critic of the science fiction genre, and has published numerous essays, reviews, and columns both under his own name and under the pseudonym of C.C. Shackleton. His Billion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction (1973) is considered a definitive study of the genre, serving as both an introduction to the field and as a reference volume for enthusiasts.

The Helliconia Trilogy is a series of science fiction books by Brian Aldiss, set on the Earth like planet Helliconia. It is chronicling the rise and fall of a civilization over more than a thousand years as the planet progresses through its incredibly long seasons, which last for centuries. The trilogy

consists of the books Helliconia Spring (1985), Helliconia Summer (1983), and Helliconia Winter (1985). The central character is not any person but the planet itself and its science, particularly in the light of James Lovelock's Gaia Hypothesis.<sup>1</sup>

“James Lovelock published a small book entitled, Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth (1979). Lovelock pointed out that the continued survival of a living Earth is miraculous. Life survives despite an amazingly narrow range of chemical and physical parameters-parameters subject to fluctuation. So Aldiss had done the same thing regarding Helliconia planet”.<sup>2</sup>

The title ‘Helliconia Spring’ comes from the planet it is set on. For astronomical reasons it is one of those places that has really, really long seasons. Winter on Helliconia lasts for around 600 years. This is because the planet has not one sun but two. The planet circles around a small, yellow-orange star called Batalix that is rather like our sun. The problem is that Batalix does not give out enough heat to thaw the wintry ice on Helliconia. Just like Earth, the planet circles around the small sun, Batalix at around the same speed as on Earth year. “Helliconia was slightly larger than Earth, in many respect, it was Earth's sister planet”.<sup>3</sup>

But Batalix is circling around a larger star, Freyr. Freyr is the second sun. Batalix's orbit is highly elliptical, so that the difference between the closest point to Freyr and the farthest point from Freyr is huge. Freyr emits vast amounts of heat, which means that at the closest point, the ice melts, spring and summer arrive, and the planet becomes scorchingly hot. At the farthest point, the planet becomes icebound again. So Batalix provides day

and night, whereas Freyr provides the seasons. Hilary Bailey is a British writer and editor. She is the wife of Moorcock. Her opinion about Helliconia Spring is: “what must be said is that Brian Aldiss is the most blessed of writer, alert to all the senses and usually incapable of being clumsy or malapropos. The fact that he has managed the calculations without losing style or emotional range is encouraging”.<sup>4</sup>

In this first book of the Helliconia Trilogy, Brian Aldiss has created what appears to be a Dune (1965) like epic taking place over many centuries. It is a creative concept of the Earth like world with a long orbit in a binary star system, with an extremely long revolution and seasons that last for centuries. “Helliconia was of unique interest of the people of Earth, and never more so than at this period”.<sup>5</sup>

Here the people of Helliconia have lived a hard life in winter conditions, much like the Neanderthals or Eskimos, and believed that the world had always been that way. But spring time slowly begins in this book, and the people become more cultured and learned with the easier life, but also less healthy and vigilant. This represents the transition in the real world from hunting and gathering to agriculture, or from the dark ages to the renaissance.<sup>6</sup> The character Shay Tal says: “You try to live as best you can. Good, good live well, love one another, be kind. But don’t pretend that the disaster is nothing to do with you. It may have happened long ago yet it infects every day of our lives”.<sup>7</sup>

These grand concepts are definitely healthy, but at the more immediate levels of the plotline and character development, Aldiss delivers little more than a very typical fantasy or adventure thread with a little bit of

science fiction mixed in it. There are some creative settings and weird features like animals that are born by eating their way out of their parents. 'The phagors slowly caught up with another party of their own kind, consisting of a female and two males'.<sup>8</sup>

The trees that grow underground during the winter then literally explode into the Spring. But these are undermined by a very predictable tale of epic journeys, strange creatures and complex but courageous leaders, straight from a million fantasy novels. Helliconia is being observed by a team of Earth scientists who ludicrously have been hanging ground the planet for centuries and making very quiet analyses of this primitive world. "The Earth Observation Station, Avernus housed some five thousand men, women, children, and androids, all of the adults specializing in some aspect of the planet below Helliconia".<sup>9</sup>

This seems like merely a convenient way for Aldiss to provide a detached narrator to the story, and the Earth Scientist's presence is hard to take seriously. This first book ends predictable with little to make you running to the following books in the trilogy. The Helliconia tale tries to be a vast epic but turns out to be small in scope. Michael Lawson Bishop is an award winning American writer. He says about Helliconia Spring (1982) that, "Aldiss is working on a vast, almost Stapledonian scale, not neglecting the complex ecology of a world where a single season endures nearly six and half centuries, where great galumphing animals and tiny tic-transmitted viruses play equally important roles in planetary history".<sup>10</sup>

Brian Aldiss's epic science fantasy trilogy tells how sociologically altered scientists from Earth, living in an orbital observation station, study

the conflict between primitive human-like and cattle-like beings on a planet with seasons lasting centuries. “The chimney was ventilator for the phagor warrens below ground. Yuli knew he could not climb in that way. He was shut out, and his father was lost to him forever”.<sup>11</sup>

Helliconia Spring (1982) is the first volume of Helliconia Trilogy. This is an epic story about the rise and fall of an entire human civilization. It begins with Great Yuli. He was born in the Barriers of Helliconia, at that time in the throes of an Ice Age. His father was captured by phagors and Yuli is saved by managing to get to Pannoval a city under a mountain because he was a child. Phagors wanted only grown up people: “Go and zzhout at the wind” one cried in olonets. They wanted only full-grown human slaves”.<sup>12</sup>

Phagors were indolent creatures, and preferred to have humans working for them. Brian Aldiss pictured them like abominable snowmen with tusks. They are fitted for cold weather living and have an entirely different physiology than humans, down to their blood cells. The phagors and humans are mortal enemies often fighting and taking slaves from the other’s ranks. The character Yuli, although an outsider, finds him a part of the priesthood and eventually becomes disillusioned. The character Yuli says: “Belief is not peace but torment; only the Great War is peace, that part of the creed at least was true”.<sup>13</sup>

Yuli leaves Pannoval and it is through his bloodline that the city of Oldorando is reborn—destined to become a great family of the planet of Helliconia. Meanwhile, a space station circles the planet with 5,000 earthling

families studying every move the Helliconians make as they advance technologically, mentally and socially.

So the 5,000 inhabitants of the Earth's observation station above Helliconia keep their eyes trained on the events of Oldorando and may long to intervene though the dangers are too great. Cosmic in scope, it keeps an eye lovingly on the humans involved. So we on Earth have them all in our vision in one of the most consuming and magnificent novels of scientific romance. In January 1982, Aldiss wrote, "I regard Helliconia as a three-volume novel rather than a trilogy, the parts will fit snugly together to form a unity and a resolution greater than one expects from a trilogy".<sup>14</sup>

Athenaeum's publicity sheet quotes Aldiss' comment that the series would be "the climax of my career".<sup>15</sup> Almost three years later, in September 1984, Aldiss discussed links between Helliconia and his earlier works. He says :

"... in particular Non-stop and Hothouse not to mention Galaxies Like Grains of Sound ... There, the division between man and nature was not properly resolved: now it is faced and accepted in all its implications. In Tom Clareson's interesting review of Summer in Extrapolation, he feared a final plunge into Arnoldian gloom. I believe I have gone beyond all that, even though I subsume the new sinister meaning to "Winter" coined since I embarked on the project".<sup>16</sup>

In the review of Helliconia Spring, Aldiss alluded to Clareson cites a prefatory note "referring to a supposed previous book, Life in the West, and defining Helliconia as a metaphor for the contemporary world".<sup>17</sup>

Brain Aldiss has created a very interesting world but there is not much of a plot in this first book, Helliconia Spring (1982). There is only one plot that is related to Helliconian people and creatures and there is no sub-plot. But in the second volume of Helliconia Trilogy - Helliconia Summer (1983), there is sub-plot also which is related to Avernus, means Earth Observation Station. The book seems to be a setup for the subsequent books in the series.

The book Helliconia Spring (1982) is mostly about how the humans on Helliconia cope with the severe change to their environment as Helliconia moves out of its long cold winter into spring. Due to a simultaneous change in leadership, they are threatened within by their own internal petty politics and without by the aboriginal phagors who have always hate humans and by other humans who are their sworn enemies and wish to kill or enslave them. Because once upon a time, the place Embruddock was ruled by phagors: "Embruddock was once ruled by phagors".<sup>18</sup>

Helliconian people must deal with a new Age of Enlightenment, which is at odds with their traditional ways of thinking and blindly following their religion is questioned. On top of all this, they also must deal with a devastating plague that threatens to wipe them from the face of Helliconia. For example: "The virus, bone fever moved into an active stage of development in the spring of Helliconia's Great Year, at the time of the eclipse. Every spring, the human population was afflicted with bone fever, only something like half the population could expect to survive".<sup>19</sup>

All this is watched by a group of anthropologists from old Earth who do not interfere because of Helliconian disease. The assumption is that this is an old Earth colony, which has fallen back to the Stone Age due to



Helliconia's severe winter thousands of years ago. The watchers add some clarification to what is going on in Helliconia. Whether they play any significant role remains to be seen.

The Helliconia Trilogy has an immense theme. In the eighties, one of Aldiss's interests was the rise and fall of civilization. His previous novel to Helliconia Spring (1982), Life in the West (1980) is about the decline of our own civilization. But Aldiss was not completely happy with the way that it turned out. So he produced the Helliconia Trilogy, taking the theme and exploring it within a science fictional context, in the genre in which he had originally made his name. Because of the way in which the background of the story can be tailored to whatever specification is desired, science fiction provides an ideal way to emphasize the things the author has to say about such a theme. In fact, there is already a considerable subgenre devoted to the fall and rise of civilization, the post apocalyptic story.

The background he sets up is a planetary system which induces a regular cycle of barbarism and sophistication, part of a double star system, a massive long "year" of millennia is superimposed on the usual seasons, bringing regular and bitter ice age. The resulting scenario is very similar to Vernor Vinge's A Deepness in the Sky (2000), though that is the result of different astronomy. In this first novel Helliconia Spring (1982), humans begin to rise from savagery as the barely survivable ice age begins to thaw.

Brian Aldiss shows another theme of Helliconia Spring (1982), that is, the destiny of human race. The destiny of race depends on seasons of the planet. Helliconia Spring (1982) is set during the period when great winter comes to an end and the planet 'wakes up'. Humanity is starting to rise from

barbarity once again. As the snows recede, humans rediscover skills and knowledge long forgotten and start to regain mastery of the planet.

The theme of eternal rise and destruction of civilization is also present in Helliconia Spring (1982). The long winters have the effect of ending any achievements and virtually wiping out the human race. The phagors enslave most of the humans. Only when the next summer comes will this again be reversed and the phagors become the slaves of men. An interesting twist is that, the mutual enslavement is, what enables each species, human and phagor, to survive the seasons of Winter and Summer respectively. That is why the destiny of human race as well as the phagors depend on seasons. Brian Aldiss follows the history of the descendants of a particular individual, a man who challenges the ancient gods. The character, Master Datnil says: “Worship arises from ignorance. Believing in one fixed thing is a mark of ignorance”.<sup>20</sup>

Aldiss gives extra force to events by introducing a second intelligent species to Helliconia, the Phagors. Here Aldiss applies the theme of alien creature which was used by many science fiction writers in 1960s.<sup>21</sup> So Brian Aldiss also used the same theme in his Helliconia Trilogy. The phagors play surprisingly little part in Helliconia Spring (1982), which concentrates on the emergence of a particular group of people from a shamanistic hunter –gatherer culture over several generations.

Something that, in the Helliconia Spring (1982) has going for, it is Aldiss reversal of the ideas of spiritualism. Aldiss says by the character Little Yuli : “This business of talking to the dead”, he said heavily. “The living should have no traffic with the dead. Our place is here, travelling on

this Earth”.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps an example of this is “pauk”. ‘Pauk’ means “trance in which one can commune with the spirits of one’s ancestors”. From the Helliconia Trilogy as a whole whether pauk is a genuine phenomenon of soul-contact or whether it is a mental illusion existing at a certain stage of society. The latter interpretation is suggested by the fact that the “Spirits” of the departed apparently change in mood, from grumpy to sweet-tempered, as civilization advances. It is possible for Helliconians to communicate with their dead ancestors, but this is unrewarding as they have been reduced to pure expressions of negative violent emotion: anger, spite and hatred. This is a real and much more believable-contrast to the cozy optimism of real world spiritualists that the dead become more benevolent. To read Aldiss’ stories, novels and criticism as map, rather than as escapism, prophecy or dogma makes them more individual, more compelling, and more meaningful.

Aldiss’ themes emerge clearly through his maps : chaos and order; inwardness and outwardness; ecological disaster; and inversions of standard and often stereotypic elements of Science Fiction such as the Galactic Empire as in Bow Down to Nul or space opera as in The Eighty-Minute Hour. His stylistic experiments are equally critical, as in Barefoot in the Head, with its evocation to Joycean prose and elliptical poetry, or Report on Probability A, with its layers upon layers of cold objectivity, both in plot and in prose. He is, as his various and varied works suggest, one of the few science-fiction writers capable of changing his style with each novel. He has his share of cosmic theme such as the need for humanity to retain contact with itself; The Dark Light Years, for example, is not simply a novel “all about shit” as Harlan Ellison once remarked, but rather a study of

humanity's need to integrate rather than divide.<sup>23</sup> Yet rarely does Aldiss present a rigid program for change. Rarely does he sound his voice as one "crying in the wilderness". Instead, he presents maps, guidelines and suggestions of terrains we might yet encounter and through which we may need help in passing. And, not coincidentally along the way, he builds bridges between science fiction and mainstream fiction,<sup>24</sup> providing connections not only for himself but for his readers. He is self-admittedly a guide, constantly shifting his focus, refusing to spend too much time with any particular landscape. Coling Greenland concludes thus:

"...the irreducible variety of Aldiss' work is not only the exercise of an agile and energetic mind, but also the expression of a broad and deep imagination which considers it dangerous to look from any viewpoint, even the human one, exclusively. "With every novel", (Aldiss says) "I write, I grasp something, and then don't wish to repeat it; there's always something else to do".<sup>25</sup>

Aldiss makes maps, but gives his view towards guides and maps, that is a weighty responsibility, which he has met with great dedication for the past three decades.<sup>26</sup> We see, in Helliconia Spring (1982), that the spirits of the human dead are always violently angry when their descendants communicate with them. They become overwhelmingly polite and generous of praise in the Helliconia Summer (1983), but only because of the empathic involvement of terrestrial humans. Phagor ancestors, on the other hand, are consistently benign. The reason for this disparity is simple. So Aldiss says:

"Dreadful though the phagors are, they are not estranged from the Original Beholder, the Helliconia Gaia Figure. So they are not

tormented by the spirits about them. The humans are estranged; they worship many useless gods who make them ill. So their spirits can never be at pence”.<sup>27</sup>

It is, in fact, the perception of this very phenomenon that prompts the Earth bound humans’ first attempts to communicate empathically with Helliconia. It is through this involvement of humanity with the inhabitants of Helliconia that Aldiss approaches the Gaia theme.<sup>28</sup> That the natural world of Helliconia is a complex organism with a high degree of unity is first suggested by the increasingly frequent contrasting of Helliconian life with affairs on Earth Observation Station, Avernus, a satellite orbiting Helliconia that closely monitors events on the planet and beams pictures back to Earth, a thousand light years away. Yet the scientists on the Avernus are entirely isolated both from Earth and Helliconia, and indeed have no sense of proper belonging. The families on the station, “were sundered infinitely from the Earth like world they studied, yet how much more sundered were the eight families from that distant world they regarded as their native planet”.<sup>29</sup>

The setting of Helliconia Spring (1982) is an imaginative, but some of the details Aldiss adds detract from the effectiveness of the trilogy. Unknown to the inhabitants of Helliconia, a satellite orbits the planet. From there, a colony of Earth humans beams back the story of events on Helliconia to their original home, a huge piece of “reality TV” style entertainment. It makes Helliconia seem to be some kind of giant experiment, a feeling heightened by having human beings at the centre of the story. This would have probably passed without analysis as a common-place of the genre if they had been placed on Helliconia by themselves and if they

were not the subject of this surveillance, particularly, if the only reason the reader is given for thinking of them as human is in identifying with their concerns.

The Helliconia novels, with their emphatic sweep across continually changing landscapes, map characters attempt to understand the contradictions of stasis and change. In these novels, Aldiss notes, readers may again determine the full dimensions of the maps: “by the time of Malacia and Helliconia ... the middle period complexity remains, but again it is possible to conceive of a reliable map. Indeed, Helliconia actually provides a map physically”.<sup>31</sup>

Helliconia Spring (1982) is not Aldiss’s most immediately successful piece of characterization. There are only few character which dominated in the novel. For example, Yuli, a human who finds himself in the underground city of Pannoval and part of its priesthood, despite his unbelief. Yuli sets out from the icy barriers after his father has been captured by phagors. Yuli enters the priesthood of an underworld where darkness is holy and holiness keeps power over individuals. The character Yuli says: “The administration was in the hands of the priests, and they worked with the militia, one reinforcing the other”.<sup>32</sup> The character Yuli leans of warrior mystics called keepers and of an even more secretive elite, the lascivious Takers. For example, “Priest might serve as soldiers and vice versa”.<sup>33</sup>

Through trials and wonders, Yuli works his way back to the world of day to found a city called Oldorando, where his descendants recall his name because he rejected his faith in favor of his people. There are many other characters like, Laintel Ay-one of the heirs to the Oldorando throne,

considered eccentric. Laintal Ay becomes the dominant and lead character afterwards. Then another character Aoz Roon becomes the leader of Oldorando. He is power hungry and the father of Oyre, beloved of Laintal Ay.

In Helliconia Spring (1982), there are only a few women characters. One of the great examples is Shay Tal – the sorceress of Oldorando. She pursues knowledge of the past to guide them in the future. There is great speech of character Shay Tal: “And Shay Tal said; you think we live at the centre of the universe. I say we live in the centre of a farmyard. Our position is so obscure that you cannot realize how obscure”.<sup>34</sup>

Women characters are not allowed to read yet it is they who try to discover why their world keeps ending. The character Shay Tal says : “You try to live as best you can. Good, good, live well, love one another, be kind. But don’t pretend that the disaster is nothing to do with you. It may have happened long ago, yet it infects every day of our lives”.<sup>35</sup> The character Shay Tal stands for wisdom even she is woman. So another woman character Vry follows her and her principles. Even there are many minor characters like Eline Tal, Datka, Datnil Skar etc. Another woman character, Loilanun, daughter of Little Yuli, is ancestor of great family; she suffered a lot because she is woman. This character is totally exploited. “Loilanun was forced to work here with the other women. She had become very thin and her face held a yellow hue”.<sup>36</sup> Brian Aldiss expresses the condition of Helliconian women in his novel Helliconia Spring (1982). Women lag behind because of male dominant society. For example, “As the women struggled to work, geese the fowl of Embruddock came up to fed, honking

and clattering. Every woman had a titbit to throw them”.<sup>37</sup> We find that there are all too many characters which do not go anywhere. Aldiss’s descriptions of the landscape, the sentinels, this entirely alternative and possible world Helliconia are at times poetic, as things themselves they hold a life of their own, from the trees that grow on top of geothermal mounds to the animal life. Yet the characters themselves only develop superficially and their presence becomes superfluous at times. A Canadian author and critic, John Frederick Clute, who has lived in Britain since 1969 says that, “Brian Aldiss triumphs, in his 22<sup>nd</sup> novel to date and possibly his finest so far”.<sup>38</sup>

The Helliconia series was Aldiss’s attempt at a world building on the scale of Frank Herbert’s Dune (1965). But at the same time, it is using, to make a commentary on his views on current society. Lofty goals but the beauty of it is that it never feels like he is overextending himself, everything feels natural and the book never deviates from Aldiss’ calm, almost Arthur Clarke-like narration, though his use of metaphor is much better than the more hard science fiction oriented Clarke. For example:

Wutra in sarrow  
Will put Freyr to barrow  
And us to the billow.<sup>39</sup>

Aldiss envisioned Helliconia as an Earth like planet with one big difference, really, really long seasons. The planet takes about 2500 years to orbit so each generation effectively notices only one season. In the first book Aldiss shows the end of winter and the reawakening of civilization, a cycle that has gone by many times, without anyone realizing it. In the



beginning the book is almost standard Tolkien stuff fantasy. But just when you think that Aldiss has gone into word and sorcery.

In the interview of Science Fiction Weekly Magazine, Aldiss says that, "I wanted Helliconia to stand as a massif central of the scientific romance. I saw the flood of Tolkien imitations lapping like a poisonous sea at the grounds of what I regarded as the old SF, the straight flat-diction, SF presided over by John Campbell in the heyday of Astounding... The vast tapestry was a requirement of extended Great Year of Helliconia".<sup>40</sup>

Brian Aldiss uses obscure words, very difficult to get into. His description about animals and other creatures is very difficult. For example Helliconia is world imagined in enormous details. Animals are given reminiscent name: horse like "hoxneys" and easily imagined "Yelk". The humanoids evolution has reached an uneasy balance with the helico virus, whose name suggests the DNA double helix and which brings both death and adaptation to the changing ecology: as "bone fever" it stripe away body fat reserves for spring, while as "fat death" it prepare survivors for winter.<sup>41</sup> Aldiss gives here the example of Indian Mythology, Shiva, the Indian Mythological God, who stand for his preservation as well as destruction.

Both the scholars on the Avernus and the Helliconia-watchers back on Earth had deduced the function of this devastating virus. Like the ancient Hindu God Shiva, it represents the ancipital principle of destruction and preservation. It killed, and existence followed in its deadly wake. Without the presence as the helico virus on the planet, neither human nor phagorian life would have been possible. For example: "Because of its presence, no person from Earth could set foot on Helliconia and survive there. On

Helliconia, the helico virus ruled and set a cordon sanitaire about the planet".<sup>42</sup>

Thus the cycle of enantiodrama of qualities turning into their opposites pervades Helliconia. As Aldiss himself remarks in Helliconia: How and Why, that "knowledge becomes by turns a blessing and a curse, as does religion".<sup>43</sup> Subjection and freedom swap roles. Humanoids and the phagors who regard them as food undergo cyclic role reversal, alternating between dominance and slavery. In part the phagors represent the animal flipside of human nature, the bestiality that seems to recur no matter how often repressed by civilization.

Aldiss And More An Interview with Brain Aldiss he says: "Technology is another aspect that has changed considerably through time". As a generalization, the amount of technological and strictly scientific content has increased in science fiction over the years. This probably has something to do with the proliferation of popular science writing, which has also immensely improved over the years. However, it would be a pity if this put the Surrealists out of business. Science Fiction and the Surrealists have always lived cheek by jowl. Robert Sheckly, R. A. Lafferty, William Tenn and me in my "Enigma's mood", and many others, have committed Surrealism at one time or another".<sup>44</sup>

Brain Aldiss is very curious about writing style, its periodic opulence, its poetry, its mixture of elegance and bracing abruptness. In the interview of Science Fiction Weekly Magazine, Aldiss says about his writing style, "Periodic opulence" that is good.<sup>45</sup> In here Helliconia Spring (1982), the period of story is almost 2500 Earthly years. It means, it is huge period of

time, where the story happens. He says about literary influences, “The style developed from extensive reading, things that later were seen as pretty trashy, as well as standard, ‘goods books’. Certainly that taste for the exotic, a prize example being Alejo Carpentier’s The Lost Steps (1953), wonderfully translated into an English prose like clotted cream, so that you are always aware of its foreign origin. A novel I wish I had been able to write. Also Lesley Blanche’s The Sabres of Paradise (1960), a book as thick with flavor as roast wild boar, tusks and all. Doris Lessing’s Shikasta (1979) has been good for me”.<sup>46</sup>

The book Helliconia Spring (1982) is a collection of science, astronomy, society, physical and human geography and a touch of science fiction. This is scripted in prose form, of an evolving planet and its ensuing effects on the living beings and geography. It allows us to wonder about other life forms in the universe similar to us. It gives us a pretty good idea on how civilizations probably come to be on planet Earth itself. It describes how the flora and fauna must have also developed on Earth. The fact that it is setup on such a good scientific platform makes it a great read.

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46. Science Fiction Weekly, interviewed Brian Aldiss, by e-mail in July 2004.