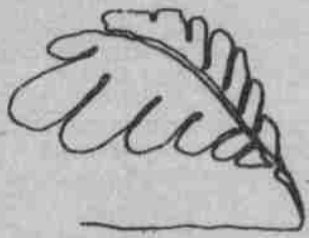


to the editor



Dear editor:

Re Bruce Nelson's *Cynic's Corner* article on science fiction:

I don't understand how he can castigate hack science fiction on one hand and ignore the truckloads of literary trash written alongside the gems of Shakespeare. True, there is no course "Literary Trash 563," but that is because the perspective of time has relegated old bad literature to the attic of life.

Science fiction as a genre has a continuum from bad ideas and bad writing to good ideas and good writing, contrary to the opinion of Nelson. The idea presented in a story is basic to science fiction, the idea being an extrapolation of a contemporary trend somewhere into the future, and the story consisting of the consequences of the extrapolation. In other words, science fiction is a collection of "what if..." stories.

It takes courage and imagination to read and enjoy science fiction and I consider that anybody that can't relate to it has a closed mind. If the world ended tomorrow and God reappeared as an elm tree, the only people that wouldn't be surprised would be science fiction readers.

Randall L. Carlson

Nebula for Nelson

Dear editor:

I would like to congratulate Bruce Nelson on his great short story in the Feb. 10 *Daily Nebraskan*. The genre of science fiction often takes an impossible, imaginary or unproven premise and makes it seem totally believable, and Nelson's piece was a masterpiece of said genre. He actually had me believing that science fiction is worthless trash and responsible for locking the nation into a permanent state of adolescence.

Yes, Nelson's column was overflowing with fantasies and dreams that should earn him a Nebula Award as soon as he can more fully develop his character.

D. "Eddie" Ashmun

Shakespeare's Fairies

Dear editor:

I would like to say that Bruce Nelson's attack on science fiction was interesting, but I believe it was carried to an extreme. Classics, I agree, are very good and interesting, and obviously everyone should read them, but Nelson took an unfair look at science fiction and blew it completely out of proportion.

Nelson is one who considers science fiction as all ultraweapons, spaceships and so on. It appears he did little reading on the subject before he wrote his editorial. Science fiction concerns the human race in the same sense any classic would, only the setting is in a time which may be or could have been. It involves people who are exactly the same as those in Shakespeare's plays or Hemingway's novels.

To say the elements of science fiction are unlike Shakespeare's magic potions and fairies is absurd. They both help create the effect of the story, but do relatively little in changing human nature. Science

fiction has evolved just as the world of classic literature has, but instead of working with a dead past which many people associate with, it shows the culture and the people as they are now.

People who read science fiction should therefore be given an apology from Nelson. The person who indulges himself in Shakespeare can hardly be said to be more sensible than one who reads science fiction. I suggest, Mr. Nelson, that you visit the English teachers who teach the courses and get about 40 or 50 of the books they recommend. Go read them all until your ignorance of the literature is dispersed, and then write your editorial. If you still feel the same way, it's because the "age of ignorance" has been upon you since you were taught to read.

I hope you will look once again at the author's quotes you listed and try to make an effort to make sense out of them.

Tom McArdle

Gross generalizations

Dear editor:

After reading Bruce Nelson's column concerning science fiction, I am positive that the "age of ignorance is upon us."

I believe that there's a need for *Cynic's corner*; however I heartily suggest that you find someone else with a talent for writing and a tremendous dose of tact. By trying to stir up controversy over everything and anything Nelson is steadily destroying the column.

It looked to me as if he had spent time at a bookstore with a little pad and pencil jotting down names he could drop in the right places. Of course, there are poorly written science fiction books, you have to pick your way through them to find the best, but this is also true of music, plays and films.

His gross generalizations such as "most of us outgrew this childish fetish by the time we were fourteen," are ludicrous. Anyone with a shred of "maturity" realizes that a person's I.Q. doesn't necessarily set standards of taste. There are genius who couldn't tell a Picasso from graffiti on a bathroom wall.

Interests do change as people "mature." A few shift to music, cars, carpentry, truck driving (the choice is limitless), and some become interested in science fiction and comics. Nelson fails to see that both these subjects are entertaining, relaxing, fun and as legitimate as any art form. Instead he insists upon sitting atop his artsy throne thriving on his supposed controversy and believing that he's making some significant contribution to journalism by making the readers so angry and upset that they write in and hence all apathy is curtailed.

Fortunately, Bruce Nelson's brand of pseudo-intellectual snobbery is dying out and so is his type of hack (in the literary sense) writing.

Ryle Smith

Brave new editorial

Dear editor:

Right on Bruce Nelson for your brave editorial on science fiction. You've shown it for what it really is: a pinko-communist plot to undermine the morals of our poor ignorant college students.

I was reading Jules Verne just the other day and he was trying to tell me that (are you ready for this?) someday there would be ships traveling beneath the

ocean and (snicker) rockets taking men to the moon! Man! He's as crazy as those guys who say the sun doesn't revolve around the earth.

Give me Shakespeare any day. Now there's intelligent literature. Take *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: its nymphs and pixies and men with donkey heads and love potions. Now that's good old believable entertainment. Or Hamlet with his father's ghost and all those great killings. That's realism. That's what life's all about.

I was reading that horrible, badly written sci-fi novel they call *Dune*. Sure, it's interesting. Sure, it has meaning. But it's obviously written so that almost anybody could understand it. Even (ugh) junior high kids and (ech) old people. It's just the same with Heinlein's books. We can't have everybody learning philosophy or broadening their views. Then they might become as intelligent as you and me.

Thank goodness there are still books written by Hume and Locke on the nature of things and treatises and ye olde governments (yawn)—oh, excuse me. They may not be as interesting or they might not have as much to teach you, but when you've finished reading them, people will really think you're intelligent even if you're not.

Hey, by the way, I was in the library yesterday and saw a book of fables written by some left-wing pinko-junkie moralist named Aesop (sounds Russian doesn't it?) Maybe you could do your next article on him?

Ben Bredowski

Blind logic

Dear editor:

After Bruce Nelson's Feb. 10 editorial I feel it would be appropriate if he crawled into his *Cynic's Corner* and stayed there. I doubt whether he has an imagination at all (his columns show none) and if he does he apparently never allows himself to be entertained by it.

Since fiction, which Nelson puts down, is a mixture of reality and reality-to-be whose foreshadowings are prefigured by gifted authors who have both faith in impossible notions and the ceaseless desire to look not to the past, which Nelson, as any cynic, loves so dearly, but to the unpredictable future which can sometimes be almost magically portrayed by the literary wanderings and stumblings of the sci-fi writer as he travels the non-worldly trail of fantasy, kicking over stones to examine the bit of cosmos which lies underneath.

Great promise is heaped on Shakespeare. If Nelson would take a Latin Literature in Translation course, he'd discover that not only did Willy deal with mental agonies, but he also "wrote" plays amazingly similar to ones written centuries earlier.

All prejudiced people suffer from blindness to a degree and Nelson is no exception. By desiring one form of literature (which he implies is not literature) he cuts himself off from a source of thought which, in the long run, results in a more limited field of vision.

The most egregious error Nelson makes, and the one which shows his lack of any rationality, is his asking whether Mr. Spock can really make more sense than Homer, Plato, etc. Come on, Mr. Nelson. Anybody, I mean anybody, in their right mind knows Mr. Spock is the most logical man in the Universe.

Jim Balters

