



to the editor

Dear editor:

I found last Monday's *Cynic's Corner* to be extremely lacking in quality.

As a science fiction reader, I dislike being labeled ignorant. I am offended by the Critic's description of the high quality literature I read as "hack" or "junk" or a "childish fetish." I don't read science fiction with an obsession; I consider it to be an interesting form of entertainment and a curious, scientifically-based projection into the future. Qualities found in the Classics can be discovered in science fiction works, if one would only look.

I don't mind reading an expression of opinion that differs from mine or that criticizes something that I enjoy, provided that criticism is constructive. But I do object to a determined attempt to destroy a worthwhile genre.

Richard Heim

No 'cynical intellectual'

Dear editor:

I have just finished Bruce Nelson's *Cynic's Corner* for today. I seem to recall that in an earlier column on another topic he referred to the idea of a "christian intellectual" as a contradiction in terms. From his column on science fiction, I get the impression that if he is the model of a cynic, then a "cynical intellectual" is also a contradiction in terms.

Nelson has obviously read very little and very poor science fiction. Nonetheless, he feels free to drag in extraneous and unrelated information which he apparently feels disparages science fiction by association.

I have read science fiction for almost twenty years and in the time have seen enormously more than Nelson appears to have touched, let alone read. Further, I think it reasonable to think I am at least slightly more than "negligibly intelligent." Anytime Nelson feels his background and erudition in science fiction would permit him to condescend to speak to a science fiction fan, I would be happy to point out a few things he's missed.

Richard K. Boohar

Charitable placement

Dear editor:

"Cynic—(1) member or follower of a school of philosophers that thought virtue is the only good, its essence lying in self-control and independence; (2) one who believes that human conduct is motivated wholly by self-interest; a person who expects nothing but the worst of human conduct and motives, (3) like or like that of a dog."

Charitably placing Bruce Nelson under definition two, one wonders why he bothers to write. His basic plan seems to be to take something he knows little about, then pick it apart with all the finess of an ax murderer.

"Unfortunately, the sci-fi fans, like the authors, are not objective about their fetish." By what stretch of his poorly-developed imagination does Nelson think he is being objective? Someone once said "A reasoned opinion with which I disagree impresses me much more than a mindless tirade with which I am basically in agreement." The author seems to have a knack for alienating the audience he would wish to impress.

To use a line from the only author Nelson seems to find palatable, "Methinks thou dost protest too much."

J.L. Masek

Off the side

Dear editor:

Joe Dreesen's column in the Feb. 6 *Daily Nebraskan* partly described the various "creatures" on campus—ranging from Bible beaters to Cornshuckers to Freaks to Ostriches. Depicting them as having their heads in the sand and being rather noncommitted in various campus activities, he probably tabbed 80 per cent of UNL's student population as belonging to this category.

Realizing as I read the article that I fit his description of a Ostrich, I stopped and examined myself. Immediately small pangs of remorse shimmied through my frame... it was true—I had failed my obligations as an active student.

For a solid week afterwards I despaired. On Feb. 12, I was redeemed. Reading the *Daily Nebraskan*, I came upon four letters to the editor which revealed I really wasn't as helpless as I thought.

Milton Ender questioned an earlier editorial by Bruce Nelson in which he lamented the rise of science fiction in the UNL English department. It seems Ender is at a loss to understand Nelson's perturbation in that there are twice as many science fiction classes being offered as there are Shakespeare classes. "Why," Ender asks, "does all literature have to be

profound? Doesn't entertainment have any relevance in the literary field?"

Milton, maybe you should stick to *Bambi*—it's entertaining and it won't tax your mental capabilities. You can just kind of absorb it all.

The next letter, written by Jim Gocke, is an assault (I think he was serious) on Dreesen's portraiture of "Cornshuckers." Stressing that a Cornshucker's lifestyle is certainly better than anyone else's—Gocke said we'd all quickly agree if we were just to come and visit him out on the farm.

Well, Jim, I appreciate your offer but I don't have a cowboy hat.

Randall Barton's letter, like Gocke's, starts off as what appears to be a joke. but when finished it doesn't look that way. He wonders why it wouldn't be possible to allow Richard Nixon back to Washington as some sort of "elder statesman." Mr. Barton, here's my pistol—you can end it all right now. (C'mon Randy... you were kidding, weren't you?)

Chip Treen's letter is a relic of bygone days. We ought to have it preserved. Ranting "police brutality," Treen bases his arguments on ignorance and stupidity, much like his cousins five and six years ago. Chip ought to be given a badge and a gun and told to clean up Dodge City his own way—exercising split-second timing, instant common sense and a sociological explanation for the problem at hand—all the while stopping a man with a knife by simply "apprehending" him.

The way I count it we have one Ostrich, two Cornshuckers and a Freak. I'm somewhere off to the side.

Brian Rugg

Nothing but facts

Dear editor:

The editorial on the food problem of India, as portrayed by Bruce Nelson, reflects his political viewpoint rather than the real causes. Feeding

to see him take up Dr. Richard Boohar's suggestion of a confrontation between the two of them—or, if he does not feel he can handle Boohar, I offer my own services.

Steve O. Smith

Nelson on top of list

Dear editor:

Among the many fads, fantasies and fanaticisms which flicker through the negligibly intelligent minds of students is a craving to write cynical editorials.

Most of us outgrew this childish fetish by the time we were 14. But alas, some people, while adopting the physical appearances of editorial journalists, have not adopted their journalistic minds.

Opinion writing began with people like Homer, Plato and (what the heck) David Hume. From there it moved downward into pulp newspapers (see *Daily Nebraskan*, p.5, Feb. 10). Hopefully, Bruce Nelson's brand will stay there (and not rise ingloriously out of the radioactive quagmire to terrorize the literary world—including science fiction writers—which has been wronged by you, Bruce Nelson.)

When the Martians attack Earth, Bruce Nelson, no doubt you will be at the top of their (expletive deleted) list.

Frank Shapiro

Community condemnation

Dear editor:

I wonder how much science fiction Nelson has read? Very little, I venture to say. I must agree that Asimov, Clarke and Heinlein are not very good writers and that *Star Trek* is trash.

However, on the name of three men and a lousy TV show (Lord save me from the *Star Trek* fans), Nelson has condemned the whole sci-fi community. Nelson mentions the Hugo awards, yet I wonder if he has ever read any of the short stories, novelettes and novels that have received awards? I doubt it.



thousands of rats in the temple next door is merely lunchtime gossip, and I hope the American people will consider it in the same way. We should always remember what Charles Dickens wrote in *Hard Times*: "In this life we want nothing but facts, sir; nothing but facts," and if we do, we may not consider that Hinduism is the cause of the food problem in India.

Ranjan Ganguly

TV doesn't compare

Dear editor:

The *Daily Nebraskan* has had, on occasion, some very good editorials. Unfortunately, it also has a proclivity toward articles in which the author knows little or nothing about the subject. This is evidenced in Bruce Nelson's editorial about science fiction.

One of his major errors was in attempting to compare television (e.g. *Star Trek*) and science fiction literature. A mass media format such as TV must appeal to a large mass of people and advertisers. Therefore, it will probably not be a very literate form. How many TV serials are good literature? To deal with TV one must deal in context. It is unfair to compare it to literature.

Besides such minute errors as taking quotes out of context and not really attacking science fiction (the article being somewhat of the flavor of the Josh articles), I don't have much more to argue with Nelson's editorial. It would be interesting, however,

If Nelson has read a fair sampling of science fiction he would not write so vehemently (and ignorantly) against science fiction. Science fiction is like any other literary field. There are artists and there are hacks.

Leo Meduna

Age of ignorance

Dear editor:

Once again Bruce Nelson has announced his ineptness as a responsible journalist: he has, based on obviously skimpy reading, wholesale stereotyping and, worst of all, preconceived negative notions, condemned an internationally recognized form of literature.

Many works of science fiction, such as *Dune* by Herbert and *The Martian Chronicles* by Bradbury have been ranked by critics among the best in any field of literature. Further, in his comments about Asimov and Clarke he has taken the regrettable position of attacking the man rather than his works. This is the tactic of a person whose beliefs are supported not by fact but by disposition.

As someone who takes this "sci-fi junk" very seriously, I will continue to apply my "negligibly intelligent" mind to my favorite "childish fetish." As for Nelson, it appears that he will continue being the standard bearer for his own personal "age of ignorance." May Heinlein have mercy on his soul.

Dan Smith