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## Light fantasy needs a new style

There is a pathetic disclaimer in the biography of Tom Robbin's new novel *Still Life with Woodpecker* that describes him as a "developing young novelist." In any other context it might pass, but in this book poorly conceived and executed it can only be read as an excuse. Robbins must have known the book was weak and must either be under contractual obligation to get a novel out, or just dry.

What upsets me about this is that Robbins has become the standard bearer of a prose style that has been labeled "light fantasy" or as Tom Prash calls it in his *Nebraska Uoice* volumn "purple haze prose".

zangari

The influence of psychoactive drugs on pop culture has had a significant influence on the reorientation of sensual

## Bowie...

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As Bowie points out in referring to "It's No Game" part 1 and 2, which open and close the album on two very different levels; "when a protest and angry statement is thrown against the wall so many times, that speaker finds he has no more energy left." This gives the album a touch of nostalgia.

The David Bowie who seemed so out of context 10 years ago suddently sounds so convincingly wise. *Scary Monsters* is an excellent album, though the disillusionment has a way of wearing out the timid, unsuspecting member of the masses, for whom Bowie aims his ammunition with amazing skill.

WARNING SIGNALS OF DIABETES JUVENILE ONSET DIABETES Constant urination Abnormal thirst Unusual hunger The rapid loss of weight Irritability Obvious weakness and fatigue Nausea and zomiting

ADULT ONSET DIABETES Drowsiness Itching A family history of diabetes Blurred vision Excessive weight perceptions in the media, and in prose has lent an airy quality to a number of novels. So Prash is probably right.

The movement can be conveniently labeled "neobeat", although Jack Kerovac and the old beats were certainly not alone in playing with a stream of consciousress writing. James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Nathanial West and a host of surrealists had been doing it years before. What Kerovac added was a certain verbal quality to the prose. Kurt Vonnegut brought it back to earth.

These neo-beats are media babies. Born and bred on radio and movies, they go skittering like a needle off a record into a thousand influences more than were ever available before. Add a tinge of Don Juan metaphysics and you have a casserole hodge podge that is run to read.

The best seller list usually reads like a rehash of the worst of television. Middle-of-the-road prose is as stodgy and lifeless as New Wave's claim rock and roll has become.

"Ragtime and The World According to Garp are exceptions since they hover on being light fantasy, I'm sure there are others.

These artists (I'd toss Richard Brautigan, Robert Swigart, Ishmeal Reed and Robert Anton Wilson into this camp) walk a curious tightrope. They are usually concerned with preaching Aquarian politics in a Barnum and Bailey atmosphere. This is a great deal of fun up to a point. Sooner or later though, the desire to do a "serious" novel rears its ugly head. Unfortunately, our success criteria says that one must do "serious prose" to pass on insight and personal tragedy. Woody Allen deals with this in his new movie *Stardust Memories*, when he says "I don't feel like being funny anymore."

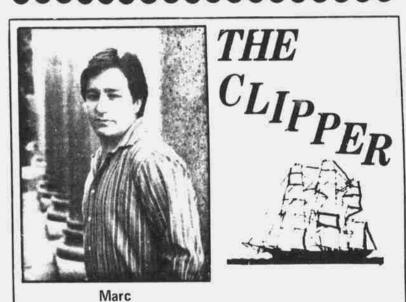
Unfortunately, the atmosphere has not been conducive to comedy lately. What happens to comedy writers who have been pigeon-holed into that category, is that they do half-forced jobs (because they are afraid of taking a chance on losing what they have) and turn out terrible novels.

Light fantasy is in trouble. So much of the newness has worn thin that there is virtually nothing left on the bookshelves of any interest. As a fan, and a writer of light fantasy, this concerns me. I hope a hybrid of the style is on the way, one that will allow the writer to stretch out and still be true to the darkness that is trendy in the 80s.

The openness and freedom that dawned with what the beats and neo-beats were trying to do is not dead. It is still a viable and powerful base from which to work. Stylistically it is as complex as any prose style to work with. It has as many forms and structural problems to deal with as any heavy prose form you care to mention. Because of certain openness, it also has to be focused to be successful STUDENTS . . . Daily Nebraskan Editor in Chief applications for the spring semester are now being accepted. Applications Deadline Monday, November 10 at 12:00 noon.

Applicants should be familiar with the Guidelines for the Student Press adopted by the NU Board of Regents (copies available upon request.) Resumes should be submitted to and applications completed at the Daily Nebraskan. Rm. 34, NE. Union.

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