

# Light fantasy needs a new style

There is a pathetic disclaimer in the biography of Tom Robbins' 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.

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 "neo-beat", although Jack Kerouac and the old beats were certainly not alone in playing with a stream of consciousness writing. James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Nathaniel West and a host of surrealists had been doing it years before. What Kerouac 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 relish 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.

I for one would hate to see it damned to the backlots of literature because of a poor period of transition into the 80s.

## zangari

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 Voice* column "purple haze prose".

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

## Bowie...

Continued from Page 8

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 suddenly 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 vomiting

#### ADULT ONSET DIABETES

- Drowsiness
- Itching
- A family history of diabetes
- Blurred vision
- Excessive weight
- Tingling, numbness in feet
- Easy fatigue



**American Diabetes Assn. Nebraska Affiliate**  
7377 Pacific Suite 216  
Omaha, Nebraska 68114

### douglas 3

5:40-7:40-9:40

WALTER MATTHAU / GLENDA JACKSON  
**HOPSCOTCH**

5:30-7:30-9:30

CHEVY CHASE  
**Caddy-shack**

5:20-7:10-9:00

Walt Disney  
**Song of the South**

## NEBRASKA DIAMOND

wholesale prices

midwest's largest selection

5th floor Cooper Plaza  
12th and P - 474-6400

### SHOWING QUALITY (X) (X) (X) FEATURE FILMS



"Joy"  
Starring Sharon Mitchel

Color

**EMBASSY**  
1720 O ST 474-6042

OPEN 10 A M CONTINUOUS SHOWING

## Footloose & Fancy

Rampart Bldg 1219 P Street  
\*the ultimate walking shoe



Shakti Shoes & Boots  
good for the Sole

The Afrikan People's Union and the University Program Council presents the

## Miss Black University of Nebraska Pageant.

Sunday, Nov. 9, 1980

in the Nebraska Union Ballroom at 7:00 p.m.

\$2.00 Students

\$3.00 General Admission and Day of Pageant

Ten contestants will vie for the Miss Black UNL crown. Come out and support these women in a pageant filled with talent, personality, and ethnic and cultural beauty.

**UPC**  
Culture Center

## 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.

For further information Call 472-2588

UNL does not discriminate in its academic admissions or employment programs and abides by all federal regulations pertaining to same.



Marc

Mon.-Fri. 8:00-5:30  
Saturday 8:00-4:00

124 North 12th

474-4455

Visit The Clipper barbershop for your hairstyling needs.

## THE CLIPPER



**ROFFLER**  
**ROFFLER**  
**ROFFLER**

Catch Up On Your Reading While You're Earning Money

Become a plasma donor!

**EARN \$10-\$20 PER WEEK**

\$10 paid per donation (and you can donate twice weekly)

A \$2.00 bonus will be paid to new donors on their first donation

with this ad

CALL FOR AN APPOINTMENT!  
475-8645

And bring your books

**UNIVERSITY PLASMA CENTER**

Open Monday-Saturday  
8:00 a.m.-6 p.m.