

Editor's Note: On Sheldon Sacks

Neither Sheldon Sacks nor the four distinguished contributors who have agreed to comment on his work will need any introduction to the readers of this journal. *Fiction and the Shape of Belief*, which will be reissued by the University of Chicago Press in February 1980, has been a rallying point for critical discussions of narrative for the last fifteen years and shows no signs of losing its power to stimulate and focus critical debate. The contributors to this discussion of Sheldon Sacks' criticism were selected not because we thought they would provide choruses of praise and agreement but because they have argued with Shelly, while sharing his sense of what the important issues are, in ways that helped to clarify their own criticism. Lawrence Lipking writes of the rewards of "Arguing with Shelly," and it seems likely that if Shelly had lived to complete his projected work on progression in narrative we would have had the pleasure of witnessing him in revisionary arguments with his former self. *Fiction and the Shape of Belief* outlives its author because his spirit of disinterested, passionate inquiry outlives any particular position that his book maintained. It is this spirit, rather than any doctrine, which we feel is exemplified in Shelly's last unpublished essay, which we print here after the four discussions of his work. Shelly liked to insist that the manuscript of this modest piece on detective fiction had been lost; on this point, however, he was definitely mistaken, and he will therefore have, in this episode of *Critical Inquiry* at least, the last word.—W. J. T. M.