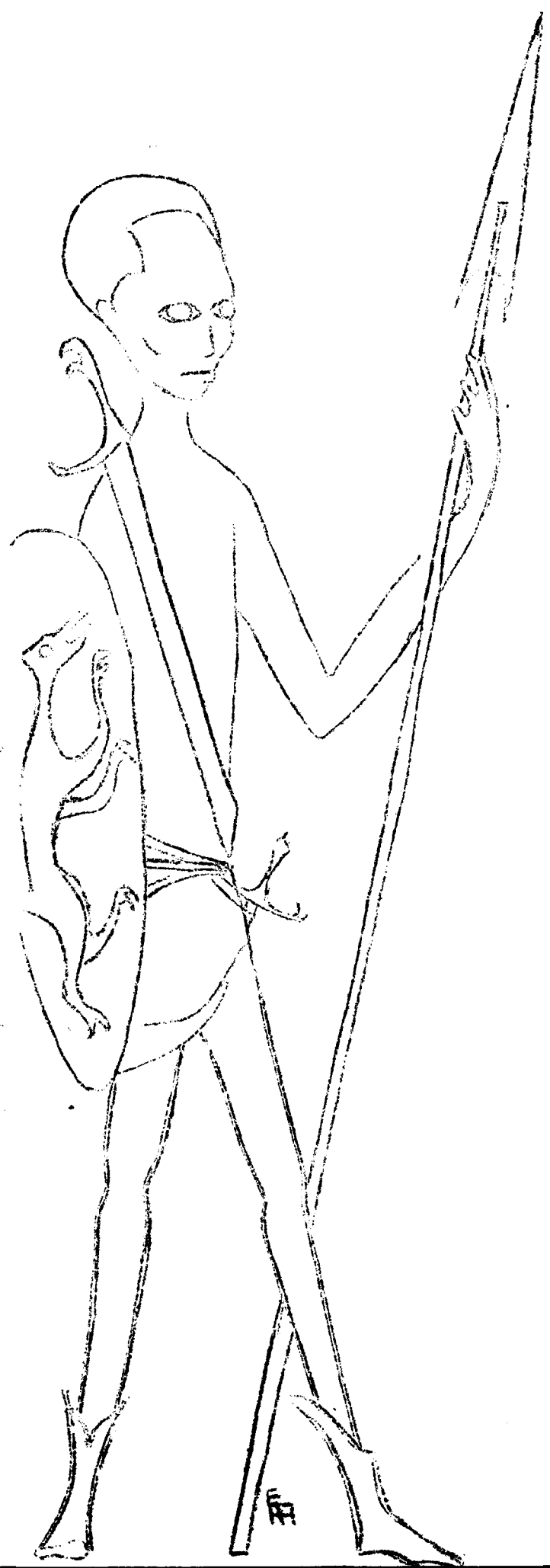


THE JERICHO



This, I hope and steadfastly believe, is Neolithic 16, June, 1961. It comes from the basement of Ruth Berman, 5820 Edgewater Boulevard, Minneapolis 17, Minnesota, and it is late. It is available on all sorts of bases, such as trade (all for all), write (once every two issues more or less), subscribe (2/25¢), or being stuck on the mailing-list irrevocably.

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With the pictorial aid of Eleanor Arnason, Dick Schultz, and Ron Whyte.

EDITROOLINGS:
CREDO

As most of you know, I am a frustrated writer. Recently, I also became a frustrated playwright (wouldn't you call it frustrating to be stuck in the middle of the second scene of the first act?). As a result I have (a) read How Not to Write a Play by Walter Kerr and (b) done some hard thinking about three little rules-for-writing-English-papers which I've used for years without ever quite putting them into words.

Result: my play is still stuck in the middle of Act One, Scene Two, and I have put those three rules into words.

A great work of art is well disciplined.

The plot has no loose ends, or the characters are consistent, or the style is perfect, or the ideas are discussed lucidly, or some combination of those—preferably a combination of all of them. Was it Oscar Wilde said he spent the morning putting a comma into a poem and the afternoon taking it out? That was discipline at work. In my best stories I have never disciplined my work as well as I might. A story that is well disciplined says precisely what its author intends to say—and more, which leads to Rule Two:

There is more in a great work of art than its creator knows.

Take a good critical essay. Let it be of a poem, because poetry, I think, depends more on unconscious greatness than prose does. Discard anything the critic says in which you think he is reading into the poem; he probably is. Consider the 10% to 90% of the critic's analysis which remains. He shows that the poet has combined words, emotions, ideas, and allusions to say something on several "levels." Do you believe the poet was able to consider all those things while he was writing? I do not. Robert Frost did not stare at a clump of birches one morning and say to himself "By cracky, the way a boy swings birches is just the way I like to reach for Heaven but always come back to Earth." Frost certainly knew he had put that idea in—but I doubt that he knew the poem was also about reincarnation.

A great work of art is not contained on one philosophy.

Man and Superman says more than than Fabian Socialism says, although much of Fabian Socialism is contained in the play. Freud is the great danger today. Too many characters are contained in Freud's theories and have no meaning outside those theories.

And my play? Well, it's all right on the third point, the second cannot be controlled, and I'm stuck on the first. It's a pity they're all three rules for criticizing, not for creating.

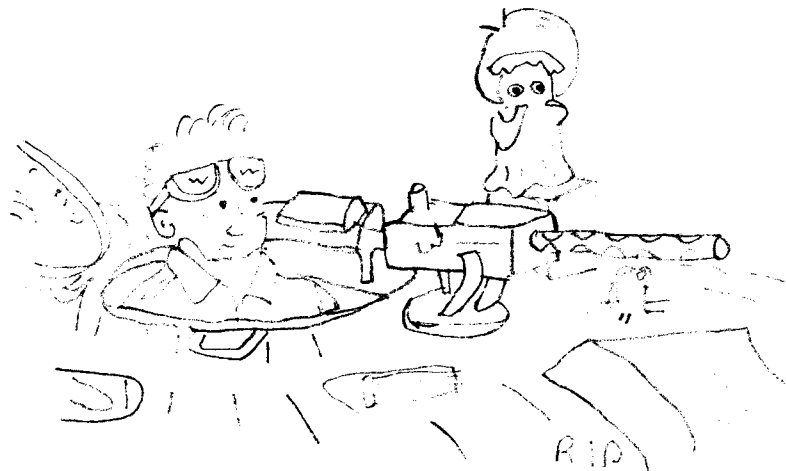
Felice Holfe's column, which was to have started this issue, was delayed, and it will start next issue.

I am having an amusing time this summer, going to summer school. At the U. of M., the summer is divided into first and second summer session, each session being half as long as the ordinary quarter. I am taking Beginning Psychology and Beginning Acting this session, and Stagecraft next session.

The psych course is, well, odd. Our teacher, Dr. Sperling, looks and talks like the Hollywood version of an old-maid school teacher. You know the type: talks in tones that would do an ice-berg credit, is actually rather glamorous, but isn't allowed to feel glamorous until her glasses are taken off. In the regular school year, Beginning Psychology is taught as two three-credit courses (i.e. three hours per week spent in class) in sequence. In summer school, the two courses are squeezed together, and we end up in class ten hours per week. If you calculate carefully, this means that we lose two hours of class per week—but that doesn't matter, since it's the sort of course that can be learned straight from the text book.

This week we had a midquarter in Psych 1. Next week we have the final. A week and a half after that is the midquarter for Psych 2, and a week and a half after that the final. And as a class project we're going to motivate a handsome young graduate student to take off Dr. Sperling's glasses.

Beginning Acting is fun, too. The third day of class I skinned my knee jumping an imaginary jump-rope. I was supposed to pretend to be hurt. Ah well. I suppose a little realism is good for the theater. If anyone, as it might be Redd Boggs, thinks I've gone wild about theater, he is quite right.



ON NEW MAPS OF HELL
eaa

I read Kingsly Amis' New Maps of Hell and was interested. Amis doesn't penetrate (assuming there is anything to penetrate) very deeply into the works he studies, but he makes the fairly obvious compact and concrete and—with the Lucky Jim aura sanctifying him—respectable. The book is certainly not The Definitive Study; rather it is the remarks, rambles, and personal prejudices of Kingsly Amis. That being so, I see no reason for taking Amis to task for over-concentrating on two authors, Pohl and Sheckley, and ignoring a good number who deserved attention. He doesn't mean to cover the field.

I agree with him on two points. First, that science fiction fiends demand too much glory. Although (God forbid) the black blight of fanthink sometimes descends on me, and I often find myself writing or talking fanspeak (as in that letter of Jan. 16, which you saw fit to print: you done an old friend the dirty there, Ruth*), in moments of critical sanity, I am entirely ready to admit that sf is not the sole vital branch nor bright new hope of literature. It is a minor, although interesting, subdivision. Second, that while the fiends claim too much for sf, almost everyone else refuses to grant it its due. Science fiction is a dirty word: ~~If you want something to sell or to be reviewed by the~~ "better class of critics," you label it an Orwellian fantasy or a tale of imagination. This irritated me when I'm in the mood to be irritated.

Amis tries to get rid of the stigma by giving sf (forgive the phrase) a *raison d'être*: social criticism. "Its most important use, I submit, is a means of dramatising social inquiry, as providing a fictional mode in which cultural tendencies can be isolated and judged." He belongs, in other words, to the flawed utopia and future society school.

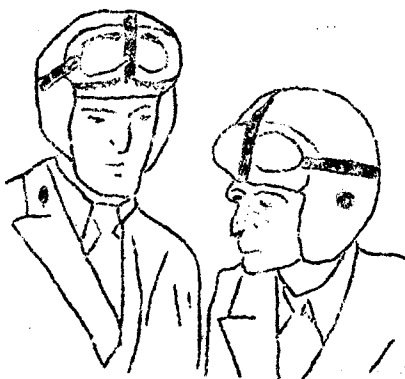
Certainly he has a point. Sf is suited to this, as 1984, Brave New World, and The Space Merchants prove. Yet, I think, in taking this stand, he is also taking sf too seriously and not seriously enough. Sf is escape fiction. Some of it—space opera and closely related fantasy adventure—has no other reason for existence. It is (if well written) exciting and vivid, and it gives the reader something else to worry about besides his own problems. Amis dislikes fantasy, presumably, because it cannot be easily related to "real life," and he tries to bury Edgar Rice Burroughs under the carpet. What he would do if faced with Robert Howard is morbidly interesting to think about. Yet stories that are primarily adventure, whether heroic, horrible, or humorous, are a large, pleasant, and (to me) important bulk of good sf.

*Sorry, but you will keep writing letters which I think would interest others, like that and this. If you object to my using this, say so, and I'll be more restrained hereafter—RB

At the same time, Amis limits sf's subject matter a little too much. The future society is, after all, at bottom an expanded gimic in which character is set beneath idea. A good example of this is The Space Merchants where, as Amis says, most of the characters are stock, including the hero. I think he is under-rating sf. It is capable, in such writers as Bradbury, of creating beautiful stories of mood, and (as with one of my favorite people: Martin Gibson in The Sands of Mars) of creating what are to me credible characters.

A few very minor points in the book did, as the San Francisco Chronicle predicted, stick pins in me. Amis' ~~horror set~~ "The Elves", Gnomes', and Little Men's Science Fiction, Chowder and Marching Society" shows a sad ignorance of great American comic strips. I don't suppose that he can be blamed. He also seems to think that fen and the BSI are mutually exclusive. Ignorance again. Finally, and this is not remotely Amis' fault, New Maps of Hell is not (goddamit) "the book that made science fiction grow up."

For all his reading, Amis is still an informed outsider looking in, which is all for the good, as far as I'm concerned. Read him.



Captain Video the Ranger
stolen from the comic book

CLAY TABLETS

from REDD BOGGS, 1 May 1961
2209 Highland Place N. E., Minneapolis 21, Minnesota

I was rather sorry that you didn't use again the distinctive colored paper that made #14 outstanding—partly, I confess, because it would be a feature that I could imagine borrowed from Discord that I could mention in case you ever threw it up to me that I borrowed the ToC feature from NeoL. But apart from that, the paper added something to the reading of #14, a vague tint that somehow enhanced the experience.

[Ordinarily I'm not sensitive to color—till my mother got me a brown bed-spread, my sister used to turn a little faint at the overwhelming chartreuse in my room which never bothered me at all. But I reacted to that yellow the way my sister reacts to chartreuse, so I shan't use it again—RB]

No no! If you insist on putting the mailing-wrapper-space on page 1, stern measures will have to be taken. I speak as a lover of beauty, which of course is the same thing as truth, and the truth is that my sensibilities would be offended to behold, as I opened NeoL, a scribbled address, a cancelled stamp hanging in the corner, and the blotchy postal markings. It's bad enough to find these things at the end of NeoL, let alone at the beginning!

[I'm afraid you're right. Anyhow, eaa took the stern measures so I couldn't anyway—RB]

"Editroolings": does it really help to know the meaning of a word if it is spelled "honour" instead of "honor" and "programme" instead of "program"? The etymology of a word is of little interest except to scholars. Spelling reform is probably a continuing process, as you say, but the fact that it must be so shouldn't deter us from making a start. If we had a strong tradition of keeping our spelling up to date, we'd have reached the point of weeding out most of our atrocities by now. I think there's something to be said for a language like German where you know how to pronounce a word if you see it spelled, and how to spell it if you hear it pronounced.

What strange attraction does the theater have for fannes? Sally Dunn Kidd ~~wasted~~ improved her time at college by working at the little theater, and about all I hear from Jean Young these days are her accounts (admittedly fascinating) of her work backstage at the Loeb theater in Cambridge. Your notes on "The Visit" (which I should have seen, I guess) were very fine. I'm led to ponder whether the injustice suffered by the billionaireess could have been "righted" at all, and if so how? How would the town have reacted if she'd merely offered them wealth as a gesture of returning love for hate? I suspect that even that would have a corrupting effect.

ence almost as powerful as her demand for the life of Schill. Have you noticed Al Capp's adaptation of "The Visit" in recent Sunday episodes of "Li'l Abner"?

Eleanor Arnason's "Omegas" is a striking and effective cosmic comedy that deserves print in a widely circulated magazine. I liked this very much, but couldn't decide whether I liked the idea of a god who used words like "nice" and "fixed" like any carelessly chattering American.

"Clay Tablets": I haven't read much Burroughs, but I can't see where he's demonstrated the "ability of giving exactly the right names to things." And his "fertile imagination" seems exaggerated. His Martian rats have three legs; this hardly impresses me as a brilliant invention. Neither do his six-legged horses, or his oviparous humans, since such alterations do not change the essential character of his creations. They are rats, horses, humans still.

from BRUCE FELZ, 7 May 1961
2790 West 8th Street, Los Angeles 5, California

I always found myself, at the end of a play, wishing it were not over. I'm not exactly a born actor, but I'm a born ham, and I like to keep the make-up on. You should have seen me one night a month or so ago, when Mitch Evans was doing monster makeup for the club. He made Steve up with a bullet-hole in the head, and a perfectly ghastly set of scars, shadows and the like. Then he made Ted up as an asphyxiation victim, and me as a victim of radiation burns. We took photos, and I just got them back—boy, do we look monstrous! Ted used a cookie to simulate a brown tongue for the picture, but got very annoyed when I kept making jokes while setting up for the pic—he couldn't keep the necessary dead look—or even a straight face. After the pix, Ted and I went with Milo and a couple others to a bar where we played pool; Ted and I were still in the makeup. Wow, did we get some strange looks! I tried to keep the makeup on and go to work with it in the morning, but it didn't work. Too bad—it was a good job of makeup, too.

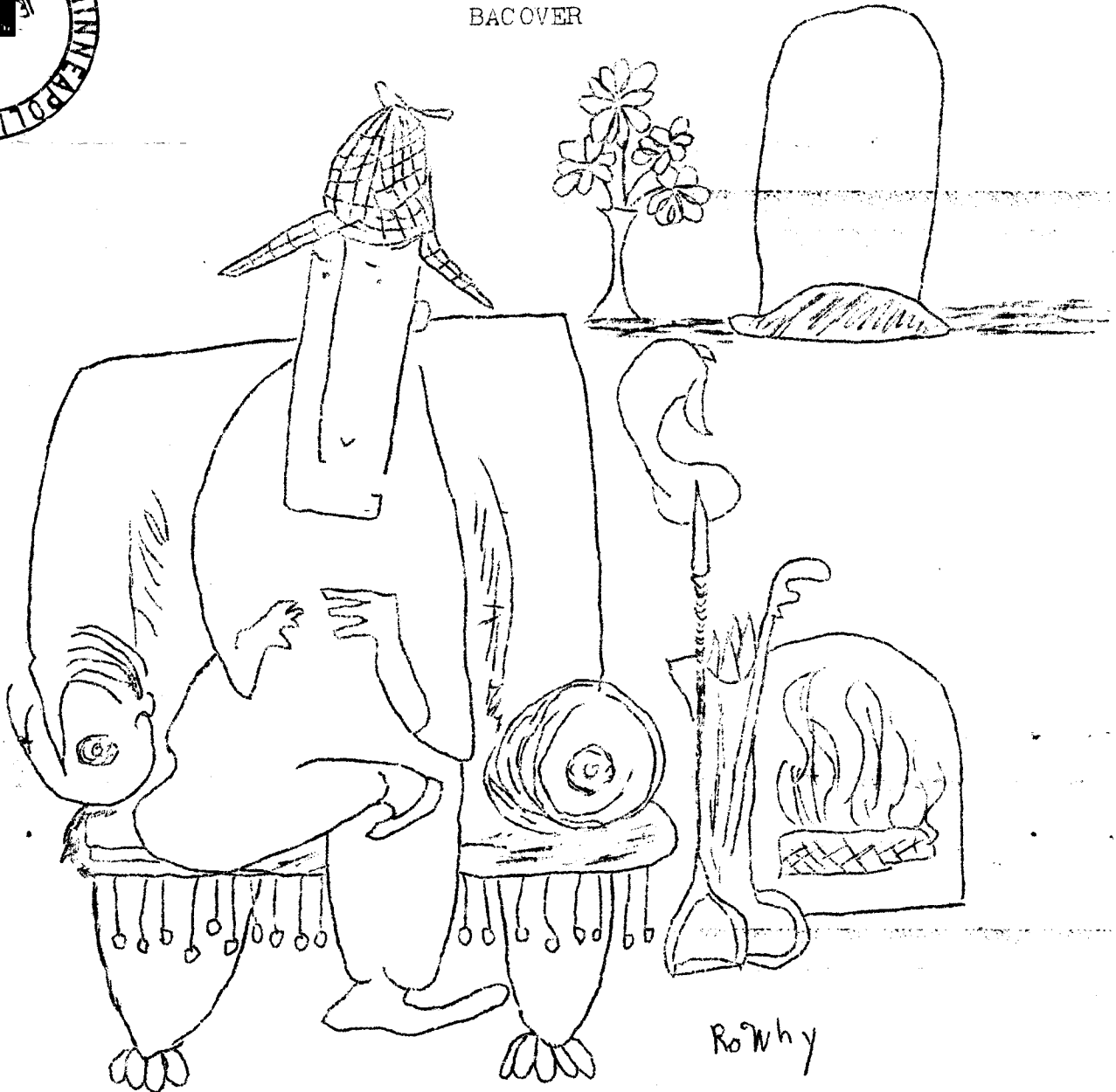
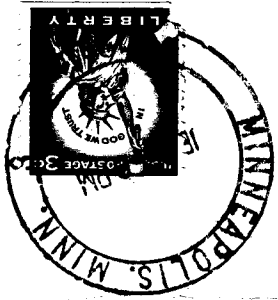
When speaking of fictional Ruths, has anyone mentioned PIRATES yet? Of course it's a bit unfair to bring in a Ruth who is first seen in her 47th year, but...

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BACOVER



Holmes awaiting a client, not without a certain strain of anxiety.