



Having disposed of the ineffable bore...what's that...the lout has now taken the offensive (which he always was, critics will deign to comment) and would press upon your shell-like ears the information that he has rather a largish stack of unsold 104 page, mimeographed "fanzines" called HUITLOXOPETL 8 which \$1 will bring slithering into your mailbox for whatever unfathomable purposes and, further, that amidst the science fictional and comix-related topics there lurk within its pages a George Wetzel article about Lovecraft collector and fan, Jack Grill, and weird fiction by Steve Cartwright, Margaret Carter, William Tredinnick and Jerry Saunders as well as a Lovecraftian parody, "The Shuffler from the Stars" by M.M. Moamrath.

One must surely presume him daft as he hastens to add that he has available for 50¢ ONLY when ordered in connection with some of the foregoing garbage [only joking, those of you who contributed to any of it, heh heh, gulp] the first (not second) underground comic to adopt HPL's stories. This is entitled Skull #4 and should be in every collection.

Finished? Alas not, he seems to have mistaken this little discussion group for a huckster room and has recalled his interest in unburdening himself of untrimmed copies of the central 16 pages of HPL, consisting of the art folio which with dexterous application of scissors or penknife can yield the graphically-oriented a set of 8 two-sided 8 1/2 x 11 black and white pictures on slick paper. By third class mail, his cost is 24¢ so he seeks 74¢ unless ordered with something else (except the comic) in which case the tariff drops back to 50¢, or 6 8¢ stamps.

Good grief, is there no end to this...if asked politely in a small note on the back of a five dollar bill, he will transmit a cassette recording of a 1945 Suspense show called The Dunwich Horror starring Ronald Coleman and a chilling rendition of The Rats in the Walls, performed on the more recent Black Mass program in Berkley by the talented Eric Bauersfeld. (The tariff is high because he doesn't really like to do these things.)

In case this boor finds anything else to hawk, he'll just have to use the tradesmen's entrance and crop up in a footnote because the real business of this magazine is due to begin any moment now and the crass commercialism of the foregoing has already been perceived to adversely affect those more sensitive natures amid the group here assembled for the demonstration of their obeissance before the omnipotent fishgod of the Babylonians. Iä! Utl-utl.

Actually, the purpose of this sheet of paper is to double as the first two pages of the following ~~h/h/h/h/h/h/h/h~~ zine and as a flyer by which a curt reply (but prompt and that's the key) may be foisted upon the good gentry interested enough to inquire about one or more of the foregoing matters by post, often with an SASE which usually prompts a personal reply, of course, but not always owing to the press of time upon a Bear of Very Little Brain, as it were. So...

SUPPORT A WORLDCON AT R'LYEH IN '78: That is not dead which can eternal lie, and if you come here, you will surely die. -Maximus Gibber
Con Chairman

] This has been a Love of Labor Production.....10-4 [

WEIRD TALES REVIVED

To amplify perhaps on his editorial in Weird Tales Vol. 47, No. 1, Sam Moskowitz, the editor, wrote in December, 1972 that no manuscripts were wanted at that time. "Understandably we don't want to read scores of manuscripts, engage in correspondence, and then find out that the magazine will collapse before we can get any stories in print...even if successful WT would not be a market until towards the end of 1973." This latter remark was made anticipating a March 1973 date for the first quarterly issue, which as you know was delayed so that it sports instead the legend "Summer 1973."

The magazine has shown up in strange places - a newsstand in Biloxi, Miss has all the copies one could wish whereas Birmingham, Ala, the home of a rather large distributor, does not seem to have any. Many may recall the immediate sell-out of Gerry de la Ree's supply and his restocking to offer only one to a customer.

Nevertheless, there is a certain nostalgic glow associated with one's first riffling through the pages of this revived classic. One wonders whether the odd appearance of the cover painting resulted from water damage to the painting over the years since Virgil Finlay painted it or rather whether the camera work in producing the cover was at fault.

It is certainly comforting to find the back cover page, inside and out, a typical pulp pitch-sheet, which never ceases to inspire a question concerning AMORC conjointly with an apathy toward clipping and transmitting the coupon.

Bradbury's The Watchers was worthy of inclusion in the revived issue. It is true that Dark Carnival by no means captured all the Bradbury weird fiction and that not all the Bradbury weird fiction (as read in tear sheets from 40's WTs) is worthy of reprinting, but The Watchers, with its touches of grue amid pulp padding, is essentially a gimmick story with a twist ending and one can have a rush of its treatment in the pages of an E.C. comic of the 1950s culminating in the rotting corpse and the narrator's revelation of "the microbes, the microbes".

The ghost tale by Hawthorne's granddaughter is the type of piece one would expect Sam Moskowitz to fall heir to. Those who have not read The Black Cat and predecessors (and who share with the writer a disinclination to such pursuits) may be warned of the nature of the contents by Perdita. If it appeals, however, Ghostly by Gaslight is to be recommended.

The next offering, Spear and Fang, leads one to a speculation concerning the artwork. The cut was been poorly half-toned and the original could have been in color which might offer some justification for the unattractive result but if it was black and white, all the abuse which comes readily to mind may be heaped in gay profusion about the ears and shoulders of the printer. To the story itself, there is every justification for its reproduction in such a volume.

Hoch's The Funeral in the Fog must have its place, as well, because one will admit that WT was not uniform and readership there was to which this type of tale appealed.

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WEIRD TALES (continued)

This critic disagrees with the inclusion of the Norris piece in the issue on the strictly problematical grounds that this was not a story which appeared or probably would have appeared in the magazine, its publication antedating WT by a score or so of years. If SaM liked it, it is submitted it should have found a home elsewhere not here.

The Sign of Venus by Robert W. Chambers suffers from the latter criticism of the foregoing paragraph and yet somehow fits. Curious.

The Hodgson study by SaM is a really worthy contribution which should help sell the first three issues to serious students of imaginative literature.

The Dyar yarns are historically interesting but The Serpent City is a little too mundane for certain tastes.

A Tropical Horror indeed? Glut Glut, Joky Joky. This is significant. Not so The Man with the Brown Beard for all its historical position.

The Black Hands is so dated and out of touch as to provide the only harsh criticism for its inclusion. It is of little or no discernible value.

Swet's story seems quite adequate and The Canal rounds out the issue. Let us all work toward the success of this Noble Experiment and keep WT on the stands if at all possible, so as to provide a source of new writings in the macabre (which are sorely lacking a professional market) as well as an opportunity for SaM to present interesting forgotten tales.

THE BURROWERS BENEATH
TO BE PUBLISHED

Brian Lumley just let us know that DAW Books, Inc. (Donald Wollheim, editor) has signed to publish Lumley's whole, long, complete novel, The Burrowers Beneath early in 1974. It will be paperback, of course, and represents a departure for that line of books from the strictly science fictional bent to date. Readers of HPL will recognize that the first chapter of the novel appeared therein on pages 83-87. Other chapters have appeared as stories in Arkham House anthologies. Lum's first Mythos novel, Beneath the Moors, is still scheduled to appear from Arkham House, which has recently been reported by E. Hoffman Price and Rusty Hevelin to be alive and well.

Lumley is of course author of the recent Arkham House collection, CALLER OF THE BLACK, which is highly recommended to those of you not yet possessed...of a copy of it.

Further news of Lumley must include his Mythos tale in the June 1973 issue of Fantasy & Science Fiction, which has been very sparse in the Mythos department heretofore, it will be noted. That story, Haggopian, is likewise destined to see print in Richard Davis' YEARS BEST HORROR STORIES 3 in England. And another Mythos tale of his has been accepted for another British anthology, New Writings in Horror and the Supernatural 3, entitled Aunt Hester.

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William Scott Home writes:

[Upon his receipt of the 64 page mimeographed publication, HPL Supplement No. 1 or HPL Commentzine as it was variously known - which is now out of print, mercifully - W.S. Home, whose work was either praised or despised there, penned the following "reaction to the reactions - just in case anybody thinks I'm a sweet old man"]

"close to genius level"... Close to? I'll sue

"he should go far...".... So the folks said. And I went.

"was complex for the sake of being complex"...are you simple for the sake of being simple?

"should have been told in far fewer words"... I don't speak Pali. In Basic English "blood, sweat and tears" comes out "blood, body water and eyewash" which leaves something to be desired in simple language.

"second time I finished the story and thereby found out what was going on" ... Qucik! Call the Smithsonian Centre for Short-lived Phenomena!

"after the first few pages nothing happened...".... Such revelation of intellectual sterility betrays you. Why didn't you scratch your head? What will you do on a desert island?

"slow as molasses and rather dull" ... In the tropics, hamhead, molasses move at a respectable rate. Brackish they may be but never dull

"thought I knew what a frontistery was and the ph was cutesy" ... "Cutesy?" CUTESY? ME, William Floyd Scott Douglas de la Tour du Pin Home, issue of the Earldoms of Home, Names and Marchmont, the Baronies of Douglas, Dunglas and Polwarth, certified reincarnation of King Matthew I of Redonda, autocrat, tyrant, motherass, consort of imps and succubae, dealer in magicks and spells, invoker of the Nether Universe, blaster of pipsqueaks, heir apparent to (empty) philosophers, (chief) anatomists and (liar) mediums and wielder of all such uncanny powers, dominions and principalities, CUTESY? AArrghhhh...To the Tower, to the hooks! Just for that I won't tell you that the Oxford Universal (not to mention the Oxford Historical) defines phrontistery with ph intact as "a place for thinking", that I have no idea where I encountered the word the first time and that Random House is not for those who relish language like fine cheese or wine (I don't mean Italian Swiss Colony or Velveeta).

"felt it was more trouble than it was worth..." True; as one out of 70 at \$3 it was worth 4-2/7 cents and at the minimum wage you accounted for probably 75c reading time, wore 1/25 in. off your fingertip and 1/50 inch off your lower lip.

"struggled through it...wish I hadn't" ... So do I. Bad-mouthing. from yahoos like you I don't need. Don't you wish you were as perceptive as F.B. Long? I do. Then both our lives would be richer.

"looks like I'm becoming a WSH fan..." Welcome. Club Dues \$10, Remit direct.

continued

WSH Retorts(continued)

"W.S. Home is immensely unreadable..." Unfortunate fellow. At least there are plenty of remedial courses these days. I learned to read at the age of four.

"I hope to see much more from this author..." I live on about US\$85 per month. If it's worth that much to you, put up or shut up.

"story overshadowed all the rest..." The overshadow was underwritten by M. Frierson. The deadline was overshot when undertaken, the editor overworked and underfunded, the project overwhelming and underpraised, and the author is crocked.

"a reincarnation of M.P. Shiel..." Shiel was a cantankerous old Socialist; I'm a cantankerous young capitalist or would be, if I had any capital to cantanker about. However I was six before he croaked which makes a trauma at that age necessary, but none is recorded. The only Socialist king in history; not, I daresay, paid up. I'll accept the kingdom and title, and the enormous compliment, with pleasure. (Shiel has always been my foremost model, especially in his supreme weird classics "Vaila", "Phorfor" and "The Dark Lot of One Saul". I cannot express too much how flattering I find the comparison. Fool. But flattering.)

[It is hoped that future issues of this quarterly may be spiced by extracts from the various letters of William Scott Home.]

FANZINES

But for the breach of faith on the part of its unscrupulous publisher HPL would have joined the ranks of its contemporaries in October, 1972 in the desirable "out of print" status. However, though perhaps 150-200 copies remain cloistered in the manse, it is rare among the current output of tributes and quality publications relating to the genre:

Except for a few copies of the excellent CAS issue, HARRY MORRIS reports that Nyctalops is o.p. Some time ago the word was that a few copies of From Beyond the Dark Gateway #2 were available but one would suspect that they are likewise o.p. by now.

No recent report from Ambrosia #1 or Tamlacht #12 on Lovecraft. Tom Collins announces that the special Derleth tribute, IS #4, which was believed to be o.p., is available direct from him (not the Texas address used for all other business as indicated hereinafter) at \$3 each sent to 835 West Washington, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46804 on a first come, first served basis - no dealer discounts. There were only about 40-50 copies uncovered and now offered for sale. This 84 page item requires no description to the reader and should grace every Arkham House collection without fail.

Gerry de la Ree's 500 copy edition of Eich-pi-el Speaks on parchment with original Finlay artwork went o.p. very fast as did the excellent Etchings & Oddyseys #1. The CAS piece by Gerry de la Ree is probably in the same condition but the writer is not enough of a CAS fan to have obtained a copy or expressed any interest in it. Mirage 10 with material on both HPL and CAS has not been available since it was first out in 1971, but fine things are promised from Mirage Press of interest to Lovecraftians everywhere.

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1973, and the renaissance of the weird is underway! WEIRD TALES of course is the most exciting entry but also all must seek out and support THE HAUNT OF HORROR, a digest sized offering dated June, 1973 published by the Marvel Comics Group. A routinely grotesque cover painting by Gray Morrow, a reprint (with new illos) of Conjure Wife by Fritz Leiber and of Robert E. Howard's Usurp the Night (pubbed in 1970 by W. Paul Ganley, one presumes in his fine periodical WEIRD-BOOK - the sole source of new weird fiction until quite recently), and original shorter pieces by "brand name" authors like R.A. Lafferty, Harlan Ellison, David R. Bunch and Ramsey Campbell - all combine to launch this publication off to a successful (one hopes) start. John K. Diomedes and Al Attanasio (coeditor of Tamlacht and a fine new writer) are fine additions and point the way of the future in developing writers, who are not already established, as contributors to the pro market.

Yes, these are exciting but the amateur publications underway are something we all may take especial pride in:

THE DARK BROTHERHOOD is reestablished by George H. Record at 177 West 300 North #9, Salt Lake City, Utah 84103 and seeks \$2.50 per annum in dues which will cover the newsletter, listing in the address list and two issues per year of the Dark Brotherhood Journal.

WHISPERS FROM ARKHAM is underway from Stuart D. Schiff, co-editor of HPL, to whom inquiries may be sent at 5508 Dodge Drive, Fayetteville, N.C. 28303. He reports having a small article from Fritz Leiber, a Howard astrology piece (with suicide chart) from E. Hoffman Price, a Morgan Smith story by Robert Weinberg, fiction by David Drake, plus interesting artwork which Stuart always seems to be able to obtain. An item worthy of subscription, not just the premiere issue from the near future.

ETCHINGS & ODDYSEYS 2 was predicted in February as containing yarns by J. Vernon Shea, Joseph Payne Brennan, Graham Pryor, George Wetzel, Eddy C. Bertin, Robert Borski, Joe Pumilia and Darrell Schweitzer. "The Interview will be with Brennan and there should be several professional contributions in the way of articles. And poetry by de Camp, Lumley, etc." Since then contents have probably become even more exciting - we anticipate with bated breath (or somesuch) from P.O.Box 7042, Duluth Minn 55807.

Robert Weinberg, co-editor of PULP, author of Morgan Smith stories and the first Reader's Guide to the Cthulhu Mythos, 10533 Kenneth, Oak Lawn, Ill. 60453 is at work on a tribute to WEIRD TALES which was earlier reported as having "two unpublished Howard stories, including a 9000 word novelet, The Devils of Dark Lake, which is more fantastic adventure than fantasy. Also in are articles by Wallace West, Bloch, Wellman...and will be reprinting stuff (and probably using new articles as well) by Hamilton, Price, Williamson....hopefully will be reprinting some of Reg Smith's booklet."

Tom Collins; 4305 Balcones Drive; Austin Texas 78731 offers subs to his genzine, IS (number 5 onward, 5 and 6 are out already, 7 due momentarily) 4 issues for \$6 which would include if you order beginning with number 6, reminiscences by E. Hoffman Price and Carl Jacobi (#6)

continued - - - -

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Collins (continued)

a special Apollo issue (#7), Thomas Whitmore on Arkham House, Second Editions (#8) and #9 is to be "an issue full of Significant New Material in the field of weird fiction". These handsome publications, 8½ x 11, perfect binding, plenty of good art, etc. belong, for this modest price, in every fan's collection.

FROM BEYOND THE DARK GATEWAY #3, an anthology of weird fiction, is anticipated shortly from the Silver Scarab Press. The fiction editor of the Press is E. P. Berglund, Student (FSI), A Co Hq Bn HQMC, Henderson Hall, Arlington, Virginia 22214 to whom money and contributions for future issues may be sent.

NYCTALOPS #8 from Harry Morris, 500 Wellesley SE, Albuquerque NM 87106 was reported half finished on April 1 and so should be available shortly for 75c (or subs 4/\$2). Hopefully, Harry will have further details for us in his contribution to E.O.D. #1.

WEIRDBOOK issues seem to remain in print and available from W. Paul Ganley, Box 35, Amherst Station, Buffalo N.Y. for a price which it would be best to confirm by a p/c, but definitely order these. Plenty of good reading therein; no collection complete without...etc.

Mirage Press, c/o Jack Chalker, 5111 Liberty Heights Ave., Baltimore Maryland 21207 continues to offer special editions of interest to the weird followers[?] and a recent list of pending publications should be available for an SASE to Jack.

Certainly, WITCHCRAFT & SORCERY, 1855 West Main Street, Alhambra California 91801 cannot be overlooked for your support and inquiry might be made of Alan D. Gullette, 904 Allen Road, Nashville, Tenn. of the progress he is making with AMBROSIA #2.

Newly announced is The Literary Magazine of Fantasy and Terror, Box 89517, Zenith, Washington 98188. Amos Salmonson, editor, advertises a sample issue for 50c.

Moonbroth, the publication of unusual format, continues from Box C, Bellevue, Wash at the price of \$1 per shot. Frankly, it is not a loss publication like the foregoing and consequently people have noted the smallish amount of material which the \$1 will bring as compared to the fannish products; however, the answer is that it is the full time employment of Dale Donaldson and the artists and writers definitely share in the proceeds. It is frequent and it presents weird fiction, as well as articles and some impressive artwork thru Issue 8 at least (what issue are they up to now?)

If anything in the field has been ignored by oversight, profound apologies are in order and hereby extended. The current american distribution of Shadows, an excellent publication from England will probably be spoken of by Harry Morris, who also offers some handsome posters of the weird from Germany which are heartily recommended.

One has the feeling that much of the foregoing is advertising to themselves publications the editors of which are in this organization and know more about them than is stated above. Ah well, onward.....

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[The illo to the left is by young
Ralph Bellantoni of Somerville NJ]

Brief Notes: Remember MATHOM 6???

It may yet become its own second
annish, if it hurries...only 150
more shopping days left...

Huitloxopetl

by Meade Frierson III

[Inasmuch as this piece seems des-
tined to never be revised, it will
be run here in hopes that the
writer - whoever or whatever he
is - make take en/discouragement
from the reactions [?]and either
finish the thing or ashcan it.]

I. The Paintings

Sausalito was dity and hot in
the summer of 1959 and Michael
Freeman found no real pleasure
in the tourist diversions which
so enthralled his parents.

A few local artists were
hawking their wares but his artist's
eye became soon jaundiced by the
view of the church, the carefully
tended fields, the Spanish trappings, bright bouganvillea and the
drab flat bricks - executed in various styles but all the same, all
of this ancient earth.

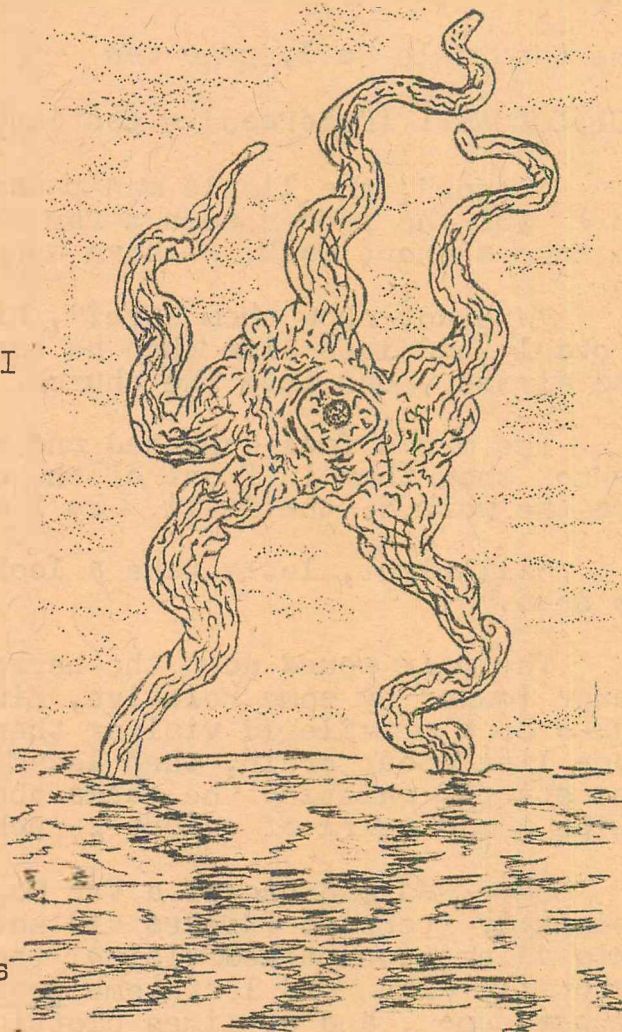
Checking his watch, he could see the fat, sweating guide across
the square probbing a pudgy finger up at the belfry for the benefit
of the Freemans, no doubt, Michael thought, spinning the yarn of the
bell's long trip from Spain in 15-some-odd and how the pirates had
captured it and so forth. He decided that he had time for one
Carta Blanca beer in the nearby tavern.

Thanking the fawning artists for allowing him to inspect their
paintings (in his halting Spanish), he started for the bar but one
small, white-clothed dark man whose church view was at least a cut
above the ordinary persisted, sorry to see those hidden travellers'
checks depart. Barking a stacatto mind-the-store command to a dirty
urchin squatting nearby, he scurried after Michael.

"Senor, senor, I have others. All different. And very cheap."

Michael stopped and eyed him. He might be telling the truth
because his guild members glared and mumbled with curled lips against
his breach of The Code, this unfair method of competition.

"How are these others different?", Michael asked in English.



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HUITLOXOPETL (Frierson) - continued

"Senor", the little man paused, rolling his eyes during his search for the proper sounds for the norteamericano, "you have only to take a short walk. I have many paintings."

"Why not show them here?", Michael really didn't care but he probably had less time than he needed to enjoy the beer as the tour had already gone into the church.

The man's face darkened and he whispered conspiratorially, "I cannot show them in front of the church. The Padre, he says they are the work of the devil. So I must sell them - very cheap."

"All right, let's take a look at them - but muy pronto, I must go soon."

The pair wound down the narrow streets and into a kind of warehouse (owned by some relative, Michael supposed, since the man seemed to be a privileged visitor there). He gave the other people there some line about grain, then led Michael to a corner in a far room and started shifting the sacks about to disclose several boards on which a mad swirl of colors struck Michael with a jolt.

Here was madness of a Van Gogh but more - the bold colors and seemingly frenzied strokes did not merely transform a bucolic scene into an emotion-packed vision; they hinted at, more than depicted, a totally alien and loathsome presence in the familiar surroundings, imposed upon, and at times blotting out, the mundane realities.

As Michael stooped closer and flipped through the paintings in the poor light, he could discern at once that these were overpaints, that an average talent doing the same kind of work he'd seen in the square had been suddenly seized by - what? insanity? the delirium of a fatal fever? some dose of hallucinogen? The transformation was chilling and Michael felt nauseous in the cool semi-dark.

Then he turned to the anxious little man, his enthusiasm much too apparent to drive a good bargain, tried to formulate his questions in his faulty high school Spanish and strained to follow the native's responses.

Michael's hand was still shaking as he scrawled endorsements on several, far too many, of his travellers checks, gathered the paintings under his arm, and somehow found the square again. His parents were quite annoyed about his unannounced departure and scoffed at the artwork he flashed at them in response to their demands for an explanation, but Michael knew, as he stowed them away carefully in the trunk of the car, that these paintings would change his life.

* * * * *

That fall he entered the midwestern university of his choice and enrolled in the fine arts curriculum which had drawn him there. Michael's temperament kept him aloof from the "beatniks", as they were called, and oriented him more toward the established artists on

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the faculty, who were very generous in their praise of his techniques and subjects.

had

Removal to college had precluded a comparison but/his high school teacher studied the works which Michael produced in his freshman year she would have been able to speculate on the enormous gulf between the diligent, above average student she had known and this sweeping and spectacular artist with dashes of genius in his work. As it was, Arnold Stewart, a painter of at least state-wide note and some tenure at the university, found himself growing close to a talented young man whose development he could only assume had been the product of long years of practice and a gradual maturity.

Stewart and Freeman had progressed in the relationship of mutual respect to such a degree by Christmas time that the professor had accepted the Freeman's invitation to the middle-aged divorce' to pass part of the holidays at their home in Westchester.

On his first day there Stewart had naturally inquired about Michael's earlier works and was surprised at the youth's reluctance to display them. He was more surprised when, with parental coaxing typical of those who cannot discriminate between one filial product and another in a field of which they have no understanding, there were at last revealed some sketches and paintings, including a high school prize winning one, which bore no resemblance to his student's artwork.

Michael seemed in some turmoil. He was debating whether he could entrust his "secret vision" even to this man with whom he felt such intellectual kinship, but when his parents drifted off after basking in the diplomatic praise that Stewart manufactured for the things he found quite unexceptional, Michael resolved to share this mysterious influence on his artistic life with Stewart.

It was Stewart who paved the way for the revelation. He stretched his greying beard and set his enigmatic blue eyes on Michael. "Now, then, sir" he said in that tone he used to remind students of who was teaching whom in some of the more heated debates, "since I have ingratiated myself with your parents, could you favor me with an explanation - did you perhaps paint with the brush between your toes in these by-gone days of all of nine months ago?"

"Arnold, I really don't want to try to explain in words right now. Come on down to the basement and see something - then let's excuse ourselves over to the Club - on a day like this there'll be no one in the 19th hole and we can talk."

They went into the woodworking shop in the basement which Michael's father had abandoned to the boy some years before and with a hesitating hand, Michael produced from his hiding place the first of the Mexican paintings.

Arnold Stewart's composure was the subject of campus teas at the time of his wife's abrupt and scandalous departure but his reaction to what his pupil showed him had to be the most extreme of his life. His eyes seemed to glaze, his breath came in a great struggle against the pressure on his chest, and he sat down abruptly,

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oblivious to the tube of zinc white on the chair.

"My god; Mike," he gasped after a full minute of silence, "I've always known, intellectually, that it was possible to convey a strong emotion upon first glance...but I've just been walloped."

Michael was a dam breached, an avalanche unchecked. "Yes, yes, that's what finally decided me. I knew you would understand. I knew you could feel it too. It takes...I don't know.. a particular mental attitude...something...in order for it to strike. But it took so much longer for me than for you." He turned to draw forth the next painting of the six he'd purchased that summer. Then the next and the next.

* * * * *

As he had predicted, the 19th hole was deserted as Michael led his still-stunned mentor in. They sat at a far table. Both sipped a Scotch, neat; both were absorbed in their own private visions, yet sought communication. Stewart then downed his drink abruptly and ordered another before he started.

"I suppose, now that we are out of the presence of those things, that we should analyze our reactions and relate it to the compositions one at a time." He swallowed a gulp of the fresh drink and fingered his beard idly.

"Now, the first one, can you recall your first seeing it and a sense of vertigo, particularly centering about the red masses to the left of center?"

"I brought them out just the way I saw them in that Sausalito warehouse. The field first - the warehouse was darker than my studio but the sensation was there."

The quick blasts of strong liquor restored some of Stewart's vigor. He thumped the table, attracting the bartender's attention: "It just isn't possible. My own palette has contained those hues - I've seen that mass many times. There has got to be an answer to this."

"Let me add some more factors, Arnold. I've made slides of each of them - the best, most accurate color reproduction science can come up with at present. It simply isn't there - no more than in black & white photos of them. Damn, I should have proved this for you. Why didn't I think to show you the reproductions first and then the originals?"

"Easy, lad, your nerves are still pretty raw. It affects you each time, doesn't it? And you must have looked at them...how many, a hundred times?"

"More than that. Now the second - let me go first on this - I swear that even in the dim light I could see your pupils contract when you saw it. To me, it was a sudden flash, like a gateway to the middle of a star, then afterwards, just like you might if you

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Huitloxopetl (Frierson) -continued

had looked quickly into a strong light, you saw the rest of the shapes crawl, pulsate...or did they?"

Verbalization of his own private experience drove Stewart to down the second glass and this time thump with meaning for the bartender. "All right, I'm really waiting for the third one - the first two are difficult enough to understand. Say, we've got to have that pigment analyzed! Here I am like a stunned ox, ignoring the obvious."

"You're right," Michael responded. "It was obvious and I had it done. Most embarrassing time of my life - I was frantic to get the results and told the wildest tales - then to get the dull results: nothing out of the ordinary."

"Look, let's continue our comparisons and ignore my foolish interruptions - I'll double-check your research to date after we're finished. The third one - God, it was magnificent - I felt that whatever it was, that brooding thing, dominating the house, was drawing me, leading me into the most pleasant experience short of bitter-sweet orgasm. The attraction to that house, really a hovel, that it was suffused with or into or something - that was...the...most...impossible magnetism!"

Drinks came again and again until they were both dulled and the slurring speech matched the glazed eyes. At length Arnold confessed to his protege that it was the most exhausting day of his life and that he had to sleep. When they arrived back at the Freeman home, it was a herculean task to keep the rudeness off the defenses to parental approbation and seek a late afternoon sleep from which neither woke until mid-morning.

II. The Scientific Approach

To the consternation of Michael's parents, the remainder of the holidays resembled nothing so much as a case of demoniac possession of both men. The Freemans rarely saw their son, much less his guest: the pair seemed always to be in the City where they literally lived in the Public Library and the various universities. The most secretive of tele phone calls in the morning would launch the pair, and the return with satchels of papers and conferences in hushed tones late into the nights were totally alien to any way of life envisioned or indulged in by Michael's family.

It was with some considerable relief to the hosts that the beginning of the new quarter sent both of the haggard artists in a near febrile state back to the campus; but there they were to conduct no less bizarre activities.

Arnold Stewart shocked his department head by his insistence on a semi-sabbatical, a drastically reduced course and studio load, yet his influence was sufficient to achieve not only the permission requested but permission as well for Michael Freeman to do special tutorial work with him, for credit, relating to what was entered on the official records of the department as "a significant breakthrough in fine arts."

Huitloxopetl (Frierson) - continued

Thus relieved external pressures to a great degree, professor and student continued the activity begun in New York and within the confines of their joint means found themselves by the late spring with several tentative conclusions and a need to associate other disciplines in order to advance an explanation.

Stewart and Freeman handed in a proposal to the Ford Foundation on May 1 and were summoned for an oral presentation, with the paintings, on the 16th. They sat in the director's office together with six or seven noted experts from several fields. In a case beside Freeman on which his fingers played abstractly were the paintings.

August Manning was to be their grey-maned inquisitor, a man whose vision had permitted numerous projects for the advancement of the human condition to be launched.

"Gentlemen, you have all read, carefully I am sure, the proposal which these two artists have presented. As they explained, they feel that they have carried the research described to its fullest extent without a substantially greater involvement by the scientific community. Their proposal is, to say the very least, one of utmost impracticality - by which I mean, of course, that we may not expect to reap any rewards, culturally, artistically, monetarily; it is, in bald truth, an inquiry into an enigma whose only reason to be solved is that it is there. We have no reason to doubt their sincerity or, I might add, their sanity." Some muffled chuckles passed around.

"The paintings are here and we shall view them in the course of this interview. Likewise, they have made available the source material for the conclusions summarized in the report. I note that we have," he turned several pages, "spectroscopic analysis of samples of the paint; several amino acid and other tests for strange organic components which might be present; we have a physiological and psychological profile - quite an exhaustive one - of each of these men; we have the responses of those students of the inexplicable: Duke's ESP facilities, ghost hunters here and abroad, the UFO teams - in brief, beyond the scientific, these gentlemen have sought for clues among those students of the occult; we have certain astrological and astronomical data - at least, whatever was within their means to prepare."

"Gentlemen, most doubts can be cast aside by the final series of exhibits submitted. Dr. Harrington here was approached by them to eliminate the most obvious defect in the project - namely, gentlemen, pure and simple sham, for whatever purpose. His medical studies convince me, for one, that the experiences related by these two were, to the extent that our most sophisticated equipment can determine, real. Dr. Harrington is personally convinced that there is in the series of paintings which we will see an element of the greatest power over the minds of these men - and perhaps others, for as you have noted there is a need to conduct a great many empirical studies to isolate responsive factors."

"Now, gentlemen, I propose that we view the paintings and then I'll open the conference to practical suggestions as to approaches from your various disciplines and monetary estimates so that I can

take the matter to the Committee."

Upon a nod from Mr. Manning, Michael opened his case and withdrew the first of the Mexican paintings. The men in the room craned forward as he held them up, one by one, until a sudden noise brought the attention of all to bear upon Dr. Crichton who, on viewing the fourth painting, collapsed on the floor with a seizure. He was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital minutes later.

On June 14 the recommendation of the surviving members of the conference had been assembled and the Foundation had made its grant. Due to the politics of academia, Stewart was made assistant to the project chief, an eminent psychologist from Boston, Angus MacDonald. Michael Freeman dropped out of school and went to Boston with Stewart to follow the investigations.

The research began on numerous fronts simultaneously. A team of geologists, chemists and ESP sensitives went to Sau. salito. There they were to trace every aspect of the final days in the life of Miguel Quocha, the indian artist who had painted the pictures during the fall of 1958 while in a pulque-influenced state to which his untimely demise in the following spring had been ascribed. The sensitives touched the objects which could still be located which were familiar to Quocha; the chemists tested the local pulque and water supplies for unfamiliar elements; the geologists sampled the soil he lived upon. The team tasted the pulque and all contracted dysentery, but the results were negative.

In Boston Dr. MacDonald personally conducted the empirical studies on students and within a surprisingly short time noted five who shared the visions with Freeman and Stewart, although each with the same slight differences which the two artists had in their exhaustive sessions themselves discovered. Sally Braithwaite was the most extreme in her reaction; Dr. MacDonald had found the four before he tested her and had her psychological profile but when she was asked into his office, the outcome was hardly to be anticipated.

Michael was opening his case and at the same time admiring the pretty 18 yearx old blonde, inwardly hoping that she would respond so that he might have an excuse to know her better. He realized that the odds were heavily against this since all six people who had seen something most could not were males. Sally shifted a little uneasily under his gaze but smiled at Dr. MacDonald as he said, "Young lady, as soon as this lad holds the painting toward you, I must have your immediate reaction, your first thoughts, even if they are that his fingernails are dirty or that his head is quite handsome."

Sally's giggle turned into a scream when Michael turned toward her holding the first painting between his eyes and his belt. "The Pit - the sulfur and brimstone - Daddy, save me, I don't want to go to Hell." Her knuckles whitened on the arms of the chair, as she babbled. "I'm dead and I'm falling down, down into that..." She mercifully fainted and Michael, shaken, put the painting to the wall. The aging doctor was still puffing as he ministered to the stricken girl while Michael scrambled in the desk for the smelling salts he had been told were there.

Huitloxopetl (Frierson) - continued

The vision was still tormenting her when Sally's blue-eyes flickered open at the sting of the amoniac vapors, for she clutched Dr. MacDonald's lapels so hard and fast she almost toppled him onto her. Michael fumbled for some comforting words and laid his hand on her perspiring forehead only to receive a vicious bite on his wrist.

MacDonald shuddered after the shaken girl had been led out by his nurse to the restroom. "I can't take this myself, young man. The unexpected, I mean. Now that attack was not hysterium nor any other in the catalog of known aberrations. Of course, the girl had sexual guilt, her Rohrschach's revealed that to me, but never, I say never, could a non-sexual scene evoke that nature of response. I just don't know. I sometimes feel that I must tell Mr. Manning we cannot take further chances with the sanity of these young people!" Noting the anxiety evident in Michael's expression, he said soothingly: "No, no, son, I'm confident that young lady will recover, but the next time or the next we may turn some healthy young creature with a promising future into a vegetable. No, I simply cannot be responsible."

Michael was still upset but the ardor with which he and Arnold Stewart had pursued the mystery to this point could not be suppressed. "Dr. MacDonald, can you really consider turning your back at this time? Look at what you've proved already - Haskins, Loeb, that guy - whathisname - Eberhardt; these people have faced these things and seen! They've seen things more horrible and more beautiful than you can imagine, just like Stewart and me. You cannot back out on that challenge - why, Doctor, why is it?"

MacDonald eyed the youth, almost envying him - and the rest - the visions, the depth of these experiences produced by a simple set of paintings, splotches of color and eerie form - certainly interesting to view but hardly worthy of the pronounced reactions. At length he said, "Come, son, we have a mending job to do on that child. I'm not so sure you might not be proper therapy for her. You're certainly attracted to her."

He slapped the slightly blushing boy on the shoulder. "Just don't dwell on the paintings if you take her out for a walk in the Common. Let her talk about them if she wants to. I'm not going to ask her back here for a debriefing, I don't believe, but if she tells you she wants to come, give me a call, there's a good lad."

Sally was receptive to the idea and while she and Michael were outside, MacDonald picked up the phone and dialed the M.I.T. team for a status report.

TO BE CONTINUED