

# Lethé



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JULY-47

# LETHE

## Contents

COVER BY BILL WATSON

FRONTISPIECE Mimeo-Block-Print. The Most Colorful Fan Illustration Ever Published.	JACK RIGGS
KNIT ONE, PURL TWO A Tale of the Grey Sisters.	LARRY Page 3
FROM THE ANNALS OF TOLMAYA The Story-Teller Spins a Yarn	JACK RIGGS Page 8
CHALK LINE Stf--Fantasy--Which?	EDDIE CLINTON Page 12
THE STATISTICAL EGO Collectomania.	PSMITH Page 16
DARKNESS Hall of Fame Fantasy Poem.	LORD BYRON Page 18
"THESE LIPS HAVE KISSED--" . Gatefold--the Year's Best Mimeo- Print.	MALIANO
OPEN LETTER <u>Read This!</u> <u>Important!</u>	THE EDITOR Page 21

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"The Dark Forest"  
...Tolerance Hebe'

ITSELF:  
But takes - as if it were - at once, the  
myself  
I wish the daylight were and the ocean  
can never find us a twilight of  
The night left, awfully: this sudden long

The night fell swiftly; this sudden land  
Can never lend us a twilight strand

'Twixt the daylight shore and the ocean  
night,  
But takes - as it gives - at once, the  
light.

....Laurence Hope,  
"The Teak Forest."

## KNIT ONE, PURL TWO

by Larry

THROUGH THE WINDOW above my couch, the huge orange, summer moon hung lazily in the sky. As the sight captured my fancy, I dropped the book I had been reading, and indulged in a bit of gazing and day dreaming.

How long I gazed, I do not know, but suddenly, I became aware of a faint shimmering haze, outside the open window. A reddish-golden haze that swam blurringly, and slowly took shape.

It was of a tantalizing nebulous quality, and hung as a spangle-spattered drapery between my window and the night. Its breath-taking beauty left no room for wonderment as to its source. Only dreams..

The claw clutching at my window sill likewise roused no surprise, until its incongruousness knifed icily into my brain.

It was furred and bony, and it kept clutching, clutching...

In that moment fear swept over me and held me in a vise-like grip. I was covered with a cold sweat, and could feel my pulse hammering at a hundred points in my body.

Then I managed to throw off some of the stronger chains of fright, and slowly arose, finding it difficult to stand because of a sudden spasm of shaking.

I came closer to the level of the sill, fearing, yet feeling a strong compulsion of attraction, an overpowering urge, a desire to know---

When I reached the window, laid a quaking hand upon the sill, that ghastly talon slowly moved back, and as I was about to peer out in search of some horrid parent-body, it jerked suddenly away.

The jewelled, wavering mist began to vibrate,



Then to enfold in upon itself, and the horror I was searching for dissolved...disappeared....

## 2.

The same couch, that same window---- but now it was daytime, and nearly a month later... For a while I had kept my window closed at night, and avoided that corner of my room with a lingering distaste and horror.

Today, after all this time, I had finally convinced myself that I had dozed off and dreamed, that other evening.

My window was again wide open---in hopes that a vagrant breeze might be lurking in the neighborhood, and so be captured.

I was working over a line in the poem I had been attempting, and as before was little conscious of my surroundings.

...When I saw the butterfly at first, it did not greatly surprise or disturb me. It travelled swimmingly down a path of glistening pearly light, straight toward my window. Even when so close that I could see how huge it was and the manner in which the sun reflected from its wings as from many-faceted jewels, I did not feel alarm.

Then suddenly it swooped into the room---through the window---onto my chest. Its weight was out of all proportion to its tiny size.... Tiny in relation to myself...but how huge for a butterfly...and while I felt the breath crushed from me, my mind went spinning on, saying wildly that this was impossible! This fragile thing couldn't be that heavy. I felt, though, the pressure of the springs beneath me, each pressing its coils agonizingly into my back. I attempted to raise my arms to try to push the thing away from my chest. My legs, too, seemed to be under a terrific pressure, although the beast was perched on my upper body. I realized that my eyes had closed, and when I tried to open them, found that the pressure was heavy even upon my eyelids.

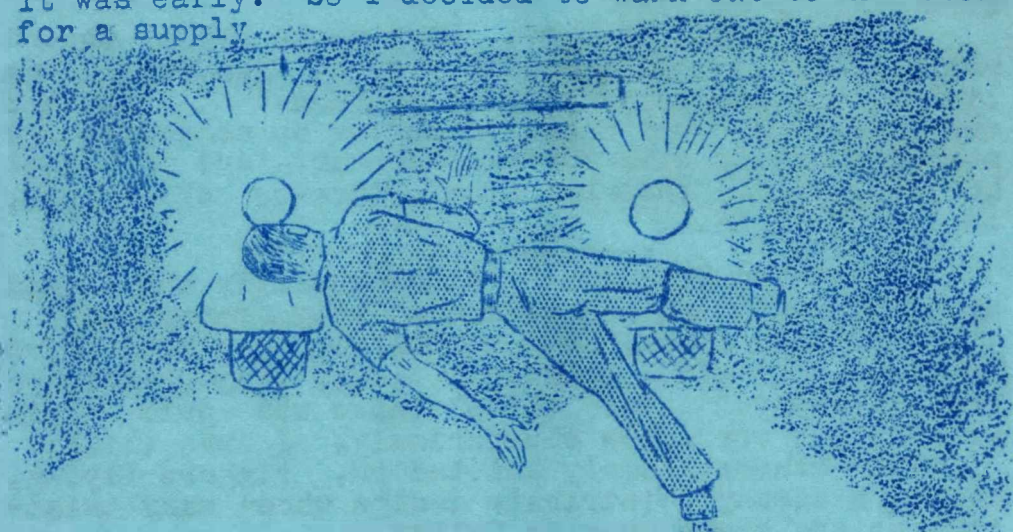
For an endless eternity of seconds, then, fright paralyzed me, as on that former occasion, but when I felt that the breath was being completely forced from me, I gathered myself for one last burst of energy. With what force I could command, I found that all I could do was lift my arms; but even as I did

so, the creature rose suddenly, and hovered for a moment above my startled, quickly-opened eyes. Then it swept from my window:... And off from whence it had come, flew the gorgeous, jewel-woven butterfly of my second visitation....

## 3.

You may be sure that, although some months had passed, I kept well away from open windows, and sat warily upon my couch at that side of the room. I felt no fear otherwise, and pretended to myself that both happenings were merely dreams.

This night I found myself out of cigarettes, and it was early. So I decided to walk out to the store for a supply.



I sauntered home slowly, savouring the night air. The streets out here are very dimly lit, and when I felt a light tap on my shoulder, I was startled. I turned.

The sight of a beautiful, dark-haired, unclad young lady did not arouse in me the emotions one might suspect... The sight was too unbelievably fantastic---and I had good reason to be wary of the unnatural, particularly in the form of the beautifully bizzare. And her tiny, elfin-form was beautiful, in a haunting, half-seen way. Her body was that perfection of symmetry that is the ideal of all men. So perfect, indeed, that it could never be more than a mist-hidden, unattainable hope...

The tinkling bell of her voice spoke, and it had a throaty smokiness that only enhanced her unnatural



other-worldness.

"Twice before, we have tried," she said, "and this time--"

It would not be right to say that I did not understand, for in some manner of lightning insight, I did... Vaguely... And I started back in horror....

There was no warning. Those perfect eyes swore adoration with a power to damn the souls of men, and holding me in that hypnosis, she swiftly, pouncingly lunged...

Out into the street I whirled, sprawling, and struggling to rise... Struggling, with that silvery tinkling laughter in my ears. And over that a new, strange roaring---

Bearing down upon me, looming as large as the world itself, were two huge lights and behind the lights, the monstrous body of a truck. Roaring and the sudden tortured snarl of rubber on concrete...my scream mingling with the tire scream. And then that horrible pain, that blinding flare-up of crimson, shrieking light...

-----  
The third Gray Sister clucked softly and picked up the thread that had so momentarily dropped.

"You both tried," she murmured. "You both tried to weave that bit... and your clumsy fingers snarled the tapestry." Her elfin voice was prim. "How grossly you work, how blunderingly. I have skill."

The others merely knitted on, fingers flying, making a strange, intricate design whose many twistings no eye could hope to follow...

##END##

# DO NOT FAIL

TO REMEMBER THE BIG WEIRD TALES TABLE OF CONTENTS NOW BEING READIED BY WATSON AND THE SMITHS. BE SURE TO LET US KNOW HOW MANY YOU WANT, SO THERE WILL BE ENOUGH TO GO AROUND THE CIRCLE OF FANTASY FANDOM. WE WILL NATURALLY PUBLISH A LARGE ISSUE BUT WE WANT TO BE CERTAIN. SO LET US HEAR FROM YOU. AS WE'VE SAID BEFORE, NO EXCHANGES ON THIS ONE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF BRITISH FANS. THE PRICE IS A QUARTER AND WELL WORTH

THIS COVERS EVERY ISSUE OF W. T. FROM VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1, UP TO AND INCLUDING THE ISSUE FOR NOVEMBER, 1943....A TWENTY YEAR LISTING OF THE GREATEST FANTASTIC PUBLICATION EVER TO SEE PRINT.

ADDRESS COMMUNICATIONS TO L.C. SMITH, 475-A, EAGLE AVENUE, ALAMEDA CALIFORNIA. NOT NECESSARY TO SEND MONEY NOW. YOU WILL GET A CARD WHEN WE'RE READY TO MAIL...

(25¢)

# From the ANNALS of Tolmaya

THE STORY-TELLER from distant Hrath had come to our encampment, that day. For a few thals and a scrap or two to eat, he would weave magic stories of lands far off in space and time... We always looked forward to these chance meetings with a wandering story-spinner upon the lonely caravan trail. For it was a weary road from gloomy Molgoth back to our sunny Raydan, and they would help to while away the long nights and days.



Around a roaring fire that night, he began his wondrous tale...

"In far off Kalidar, the slave mart flourished as nowhere else, for the people of Kalidar were rich and would not soil their dainty hands, and must have slaves to toil for them.

At this point he flexed his brawny arm, looked scornful, and we nodded in sympathy.

"A raiding party had returned with spoils of war and many captives from small, weak Golom. Inspecting this great caravan was Jalur, the prince of the ruling house of Kalidar. His father had willed this inspection, deeming it wise that his son should know how the domain was conducted.

Now this Jalur was a handsome youth, husky-blond --unusual in dark Kalidar, and straight as an arrow

Opening one enclosed cage, he gasped, smitten by such a vision of female beauty as his eyes had never before beheld. Gently he inquired of her how such a noble maiden happened to be in such an unfortunate position. Had he been there, he vowed, never would she have been taken captive.

Proudly she answered, saying she was a nobleman's daughter, and that she had been strolling outside

the city's walls with a few handmaidens, defenseless.

Promising her freedom, he turned to the chief of the raiders, demanding of him that he relinquish this radiant creature to him. Regretfully the noble Prince was told that, if he were desirous of her, he would be forced to purchase her at the public auction block, the following day.

(For know you," said the weaver of tales," that ruthless though the folk of Kalidar be, they abide by their laws, king or beggar, lest chaos rule, and their city fall.")

"So is the law," said the Prince.

Turning, he whispered to the glorious one; and he learned that her name was Alanna; telling her that he would buy her on the morrow, and that she would also have her free choice --- of staying or of going. But in his heart he had divined her course by the long glance she'd bestowed upon him. So, he bade the caravan pass on...

Know you also there is always one in any group who is evil, a consort of the Evil One. Kalidar was no exception, for it had Grath. Grath was rich, and his face was the most handsome in the city -- but in payment for dark knowledge, it was said that he had sacrificed something to the Demons he'd summoned to aid him, long years ago... something highly valued by him. He had ever been proud and vain of his perfect body.... What they demanded of him had best remain a secret. I will tell you only what is hearsay some of the curious of Kalidar claimed to have seen the hideous thing they said his body had become. It was whispered to be of ebon black and scaly as a reptiles; further, the flesh seemed to ripple with a life apart from his.

For years he had gone about clad in a long and flowing robe and cape, as though hiding something blasphemous and loathsome.

On the same day Jalur was inspector, there was also a hidden spectator...Grath. Through his black arts he ferreted through the caravan from his abode, searching for choice objects. Alanna flashed across his brain like a vision from a drugged dream. Some of the darkness went from his mind in just the seeing of her. Determined to possess her at any price, he summoned a djinn by magical and devious means.

At first telling the repulsive thing to fetch her, he repented, and bid the djinn begone, realiz-

that she would recoil in terror from it. This matter would have to be handled by cunning. It would be best to watch and wait patiently for an auspicious moment. So, searching out the cage again he heard the entire conversation between the Prince and the high-born captive.

With Alanna, as with Jalur, it was love at first sight. She contented herself with the thought that he must be some great and gentle personage, as the caravan resumed the march. Could not one tell by his mien that he was of gentle birth, and had not the chief of the raiders called him Prince? He would be masked on the morrow, for he had told her it would not be seemly for a Prince to be openly at the slave mart.

Back in his fortress-like palace, Grath brooded over the situation. Suppose he had a demon assume an earthly disguise, one to take his face and form while another would indispose Jalur as the auction took place. Suppose, then, by sorcery, he might also.....

The day of the auction arrived, fair as are all days in far off Calnya. A few fluffy, pure white clouds drifted lazily in a deep blue sky, and the world seemed fair to all men.

The auction began with the sale of booty. Furs, satins, rare gems, odd statues, and items without an end. The bidders came and went and jostled in an endless stream. At last, with a fanfare of trumpets and a clashing of cymbals, the sale of human wares began. Black men from Nubya. Huge, husky men from the fields of Golom and from the mines of the Parthenites.

Then the female merchandise: all shapes and sizes, some shy, some brazen, some fat, some slim.

Alanna was almost the last to be placed upon the block. One could see the breeding in her every line as she stood there, clad only in a thin band of some satiny material about her hips. And the rose of modesty that mantled her cheeks...

If Jalur were a Prince, every inch a Princess was she.

Men have different conceptions of beauty, but she was fair in the eyes of all. But in only two did the desire for her burn as a whip, sharp and stinging.

Competitors dropped out as the bids went up, 'til at last only a masked one and Grath were left.

Grath and a masked one -- ah, well, that is what those others thought, too, as well as Alanna.

Now the people of Kalidar are not saints, but their hearts were with the masked one. A hideous, twisted, evil sorcerer is no man's friedd, ever. So when Grath turned in anger and melted away into the crowd, the onlookers gave a shout of joy. They did not notice the supposed Grath vanish mysteriously in a wisp of smoke. The masked one went up to the block, covered Alanna with a robe, and after loosening the ankle chains, led her away.

\*\*\*\*\*

Little did the people of Kalidar dream of the awful events to take place but one shord day from that fateful sale.

For in a day the Prince had gone mad and had led the Kalidarians to storm the house of evil Grath. --And while they were thus occupied, the armies of Golom, Farth, and the cavalry of Vighur scaled the walls of the city. A few short hours later the folk of Kalidar were scattered, slain, and sold as slaves -- and Kalidar was no more.

Why, you ask? I am but a teller of tales, and not always in life does good triumph over evil. I tell but the simple truth.

"Come, good story-teller," we pleaded, "tell us how this monstrous thing came to be."

"So be it... It was dusk when Alanna and her owner reached their destination. It was a huge palace, fit for a king, but ill-lighted. They entered.

"Removing the mask, he ordered servants to bring sundry foods and wines, and life was good to both. That night they exchanged vows before the All-Wise One, the impartial god of Kalidar.

"'You are my first and only love,' she murmured as he carried her to the room.

"'And you are mine,' he said softly, as he put her down on the huge silken couch.... Then he extinguished every lamp in the room, and returned to her.

\*\*\*\*\*

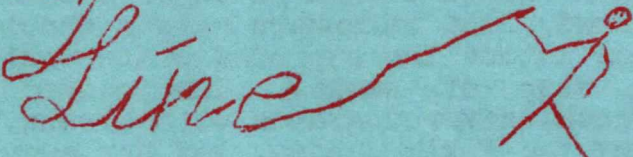
"Morning came to the two lovers, and with it, too the disappearance of Grath's trickery. Alanna was the first to awaken.

"Then she screamed, long and somewhat insanely, for, as she watched, the features and body of Jalur dissolved into those of the loathsome Grath...

END

By Eddie Clinton

# Chalk Line



THE GREAT PHILOSOPHER DESCARTES, in propounding a powerful philosophical premise into which there is no need to go here, pointed out that the shape, the size, above all the appearance of anything varied according to the angle or point of view from which you looked upon it. That, dear friends, you must apply here: for your obedient servant is only poking his nose in, as it were: feeling around in unexplored territory, if you please. In other, simpler, words, this is an article on fantasy written by a science fiction fan.

Not that there is complete ignorance on the part of the brazen INDIVIDUAL with the nerve to write this; as mentioned above, he has done some little exploring into fantasy. Enough to make him curious ---curious about many things. That, patient and snickering audience shall be the theme of this little piece.

The dictionary defines---

fantasy ... 4, a work of literature showing extravagant fancy in spirit and design ...

Which, like most dictionary definitions, ~~merely~~ involves looking up more words. Reminds one of some of John Dewey's definitions; so we still don't know what fantasy is.

Though, of course, it at least gives us a fuzzy impression. Let's see--extravagant fancy in spirit and design. Hmm-m-m. According to that, practically everything---modern detective stories, above all westerns, certainly science fiction, as well as what we restrict the calling to, can be called fantasy. A little trimming down is in order.

On general principles, we'll throw out detectives (don't like them anyway), and along the same lines boot westerns (read those years ago and got tired of them). This leaves us with science--fiction and---let us refer to the type of material that Weird

Tales, Unknown, et al, publish, as material X--- to avoid confusion, since so far the term fantasy includes both science-fiction and X.

Now we're getting to a point where we can again argue. Here, on one side, we have E. E. Smith, Heinlein, Wells, and others, all extravagants in spirit and design. These represent science-fiction. On the other side of the carefully drawn chalk-line, representing material X, we have C. A. Smith, Lovecraft, Merritt, Hall, to mention only a few moderns. But just where, exactly, is this chalk line of definition drawn. And, indeed, who drew it?

Let's take the two Smiths. The great E. E. writes what we should instantly classify as strictly science-fiction. For a moment let us assume this to be true. But what of Clark Ashton? We have at hand a copy of that recent collection of his prose works, "Out of Space and Time." The introduction, by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, makes it clear that the volume contains fantasy--in the sense of our X material -- as well as straight creepy-crawly stuff, and science-fiction. Here they rereferred in particular to "The City of the Singing Flame," of course. Yet -- turning from, say, "The End of the Story" to "The City of the Singing Flame," do we sense an abrupt change in style, type, feeling, outlook? Or--without knowing beforehand that the Flame story is supposed to be science-fiction--do we sense any difference?

I think not.

Or, for instance, consider the great Abe Merritt. How would you classify his material? Is "The Moon Pool" X or science fiction? What of his "The Metal Monster" -- "Burn, Witch, Burn" -- "Creep, Shadow" -- "Three Lines of Old French." How would you classify these?

If they should be classified as X material, why? What is the quality that sets them apart as such--the broad and vibrant imagination of the author--the beautiful prose construction--the fact that Merritt did not occupy pages explaining away in terms of tangent, light-year, and electronic reaction all the wonders that went on? Is that your difference? Is the quality that makes Clark Ashton Smith's Flame story science - fiction, then, his occasional resorting to occasional comments on the ways and wherefores of this or that? Is that the terrific, tremendous dividing line, the carefully set chalk



mark, between what I call science fiction and that which you call fantasy?

Or, perhaps, does it go deeper? Is it a quality of credibility, of faith and belief on the part of the writer?

Sounds possible.

No one acquainted with science-fiction doubts, I am sure, that writers of that material believe, to a certain extent at least, in what they put down in writing. As Kummer once said, not to the letter, "but in spirit, surely." In other words, when Heinlein writes of rolling roads, of great sociological changes in the future, of of the eventual, ultimate form of dictatorship -- "If This Goes On"--he writes with sincerity. The characters, the actual events portrayed -- these are mere instrumentalities in the hands of the writer, which he may use to put forth his ideas. The ideas which, essentially, he believes in.

Perhaps here we can find the dividing line we've been trying to locate. What about fantasy? Surely these are just stories, literary works whose composers haven't the slightest bit of faith, can't possibly believe at all, in them.

I wonder.

Ever read "Hell is Forever"? That, you will affirm, should definitely be classified as X material. But somehow I think Bester believed in it--completely, even more so than many science-fiction writers believe in their works.

As Shakespeare put it, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy"--and somehow I wonder if this might not be the lurking, haunting philosophy in the minds of your great fantasy writers. For that matter, what are you thinking when you read it--are you just getting a big boot out of it, a cheap thrill, perhaps, a few tense moments of reading? Or do you pause and wonder, after you've read a few dozen stories and the stuff is in your blood, you're not quite so sure about the solidity and reliability of this old earth? After all, things have happened which--couldn't have happened.

We can count that out, then, as the dividing line. There can be and probably is just as much faith--albeit applied in a different way--in fantasy or X, as we've been calling it, as there is in science fiction.

The truth begins to dawn, mayhap. Have you ever wondered if--there is a difference?

Apallin- thought!

There must be a difference. Why....why....there just is, that's all.

Think for a moment. What is the difference between E. E. Smith and H. P. Lovecraft? Smith is worried about man's future and what it may bring, Lovecraft is worried about man's world and his past, and what it may bring. Their interest is above all in man's struggle with nature, seen and unseen, and as such I defy you to draw me that chalk line of distinction.

There is gradation, to be sure; but difference there is not. What we have taken to be difference we have concluded from contrasting two extremes, just as contrasting red and blue would hardly lead one to believe that they were both the same thing with merely a difference of gradation, or that, together, they are a part of pure white light.

For a long time, now, I've felt that the term, fantasy, has come to be a universal term, encompassing all of what modern imaginative fiction is. We're going to realize that more and more as time goes by, and eventually, when the word fantasy has lost the stigma of its derivation from and connection with the fantastic, with the resultant connotation of impossible -- when that happens, we're going to say fantasy, and mean everything from E. E. Smith to Lovecraft.

I may be wrong.

But I'll lay a wager on it.

End

# The Statistical Ego

Long in my heart has been the desire and yearning to become a bibliophile of things fantastic; a seeker-out of the odd, the unknown and the spectacular in the realm of fantasy. To my mind, steeped these many years in so much of the cutes and the bizarre, there is nothing so fascinating as poring over the dusty heaps of a bookstore's basement trove -- nothing to afford a thrill comparable to the unexpected discovery of a lone, stray copy of early BLACK CAT; or some nineteenth century periodical containing a strange tale.

Or, as has often happened, the references one will find in ancient publishers' lists, telling of some fantastic novel or collection never before suspected.

After such discoveries, I rush home to revise my listing of fantasies; to jot down notes reminding me to search for the volume named.

Possibly there is no one among the great tribe of the phantastophile who has not felt at one time or another that urge to compile lists of things; to collect and systematize indices, tables of contents and folders of facts concerning all things fantastic or strange. Authors, magazines, novels, fan publications -- anything and everything.

At one time, back in those nostalgic days of THE TIME TRAVELLER, FANTASY FAN, FANTASY, I had a complete card-index of over a thousand fantasy books that is -- an authenticated list. I have seen some much larger, but they have always included various (and numberless) items written down merely because someone heard someone tell someone else there was such a book. Or perhaps the title sounded fantastic (witness that silly love story by Vina Delmar, titled THE END OF THE WORLD, or WORLD'S END, or some similar thing.

On a long roll of paper I had listed, from the beginning, all fantasy fiction printed by the early Gernsback Publications -- THE EXPERIMENTER, RADIO NEWS, SCIENCE AND INVENTION.

In a brown paper booklet were listed all yarns of "different" character ever to be printed in Munsey Publications -- and that includes them all, from GOLDEN ARGOSY, ARGOSY, ALL-STORY, MUNSEY'S, SCRAP-BOOK, CAVALIER, ALL-STORY-CAVALIER, ARGOSY-ALL-STORY and back to ARGOSY. Oh, yes, don't forget ALL AMER\*-

ICAN FICTION, which was almost half fantasy yarns... The above, incidentally, is probably not the correct order of appearance; my files are in another part of the county, inaccessible for checking at the moment.

Then there was a long list of BLACK CAT fantasy, which, by the way, I shall publish some day. This was not complete, since I have never found any person with a complete collection of BLACK CAT. Its issues ran well over the two hundred mark.

In a small but many-paged leather-bound book, there was a table of contents to every science and fantasy magazine ever published. WEIRD TALES, of course, led the list in number of issues.

There was also a complete index of all authors who had ever written fantasy fiction. I began the listing of all their stories in chronological and alphabetical order of appearance, but after working down to the letter "H" and Edmond Hamilton, my energies played out.

Then there was the time, some years ago, when I conceived the notion of compiling and publishing a complete biographical work, covering all living authors of fantasy. For a period of several months, I wrote to a hundred or so, collecting, absorbing, and arranging data for the project. The idea was lovely --the cost of the printing, as I found to my dismay, was not.

Anent that early day printing splurge: at the time of collecting the various tables of contents, I ambitiously borrowed an antique stamp-pad type of mimeograph duplicator and turned out a hundred or so copies of a table of contents to WEIRD TALES, from the first issue in 1923, up to the March, 1933 number, which was the latest out at that time.

So, then, it has gone, through these years of chasing after the weird and the fantastic. Never have I stopped being a rabid statistician. Neither, I imagine, has any fan worthy of the name. It adds zest and spice to our hobby.

Too, I suspect there's a little of the miser in most fans, which makes them want to gloat over the treasures fantastic that have come into their hands.

Or perhaps, and this may be more truth than fantasy, we're vaguely akin to those mumbling, muttering unfortunates who sit themselves quietly down in their little padded cubicles and gleefully clip out paper dolls without end....

Psmith.

# Darkness



I had a dream which was not all a dream:  
 The bright sun was extinguish'd and the stars  
 Did wander darkling in the eternal space,  
 Rain'd and pathless, and the icy earth  
 Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air:  
 Morn came, and went—and came, and brought no day,  
 And men forgot their passions in the dread  
 Of this their desolation; and all hearts  
 Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:  
 And they did live by watch-fires-- and the thrones,  
 The palaces of crowned kings--the huts,  
 The habitations of all things which dwell,  
 Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,  
 And men were gather'd round their blazing homes...  
 To look once more into each other's face.  
 Happy were those who dwelt within the eye  
 Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch:  
 A fearful hope was all the world contained;  
 Forests were set on fire--but hour by hour  
 They fell and faded--and the crackling trunks  
 Extinguished with a crash--and all was black.  
 The brows of men by the despairing light  
 Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits  
 The flashes fell upon them; some fell down  
 And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest  
 Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smiled,  
 And others hurried to and fro, and fed  
 Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up  
 With mad disquietude on the dull sky,  
 The pall of a past world; and then again  
 With curses cast them down upon the dust,  
 And gnash'd their teeth and howled: the wild birds  
     shriek'd  
 And, terrified, did flutter to the ground,  
 And flap their wings; the wildest brutes  
 Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd  
 And twined themselves among the multitude,  
 Hissing, but stingless--they were slain for food:  
 And War, which for a moment was no more,  
 Did glut himself again; each meal was bought  
 With blood, and each sate sullenly apart  
 Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;  
 All earth was but one thought--and that was death,  
 Immediate and inglorious; and the pang

Of famine fed upon all entrails--men  
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;  
The meagre by the meagre were devour'd,  
Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,  
And he was faithfull to a corpse, and kept  
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,  
Till hunger clung them, or the drooping dead  
Lured their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,  
But with a piteous and perpetual moan,  
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand  
Which answer'd not with a caress--he died.  
The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two  
Of an enormous city did survive,  
And they were enemies; they met beside  
The dying embers of an altar-place  
Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things  
For unholy usage; they raked up,  
And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands  
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath  
Blew for a little life, and made a flame  
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up  
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld  
Each other's aspects--saw, and shriek'd, and died---  
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,  
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow  
Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,  
The populous and the powerful was a lump,  
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless---  
A lump of death--chaos of hard clay.  
The rivers, lakes and ocean all stood still.  
And nothing stirred within their silent depths;  
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,  
And their masts fell down piecemeal; as they dropp'd  
They slept on the abyss without a surge---  
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,  
The moon, their mistress, had expired before;  
The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,  
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need  
Of aid from them--She was the universe.

....Lord Byron

In presenting Byron's great but little-known poem to the fan world, we do so with the feeling that we are being of a service to those who love fine fantastic verse. The reprinting of the bit in these pages is not an endorsement or announcement of a reprint policy. We shall use new work only by

contemporary fan writers. Only in the case of something by an author now dead and ill-remembered, or some classic bit generally unknown shall we make any exception to this rule.

Byron is more generally known for such great effusions as CHILDE HAROLD, DON JUAN, and others too numerous to consider. The present poem, though less bathed in fame than many of his others, is every bit as beautiful in structure and as deep and arresting in thought. It has ever been one of my favorites...

L.C.S.

"These lips have kissed-- "

... Damon Knight, in Alchemist





MALIANO-44

# OPEN LETTER:

This dilly - dallying about with the idea of a systematization of fantasy has gone on now for any number of years, and it is high time a little something was done about it.... For one thing, if the matter is not gone into now, when fantasy is, figuratively speaking, at a low ebb of production and activity, the thing will get entirely out of hand and beyond the efforts of any person or group of persons to tabulate. Now is the time, if ever, for a concrete, urgent effort to be made to compile and publish, and preserve for all time a comprehensive bibliography of fantasy..

As Boucher said in the July issue of SHANGRI-L'AFFAIRES, Peter Schuyler Miller made a slight motion in the affirmative some two or three years ago. But that, as any who have followed this subject for the past decade must know, was a late, late, entreaty. As long ago as 1931, or even before, there were some who tried to keep a complete, sensible listing of things.

Julius Schwartz, in FANTASY, ten years ago began a fine program which died only with the death of that great magazine. There was a listing, chronological in presentation, of all the fantasy in Munsey Publications; then there was a listing of fantasy in non-fantasy magazines. A memorable effort, but too incomplete in scope, and too far in the past as things fantastic go, to be known today. I am not aware of the exact number of copies of FANTASY circulated but from the rarity that old classic enjoys today, it was far insufficient to be a medium of enlightenment to the general fan world of today.

Among others who spread the gospel of bibliomania in the past, there were Charles Hornig, of eternal fame as master of THE FANTASY FAN, H. C. Koenig, the ultra-collector, Robert Barlow, F. Lee Baldwin, and others almost beyond mention. Of course, I do injustice to such fen as Forrie Ackerman, Don Wollheim and Claire Beck and others of the amateur immortals, by not giving them stellar mention but at the moment I am only concerned with things bibliographical...If that is the word

And then there was Willy Ley. We understood that he was engaged in the compilation of a bibliography of science fiction that had achieved book publication. What has happened to that? Has Ley given up in disgust? Has he found the task too much for one mortal? Has he lacked cooperation in his research? Whatever the reason, let's find out now why he has been unable to bring his work into the public eye. If it is due to the fact that no orthodox publisher will touch such a ticklish item, let us understand just why it is that united fandom cannot see to the publication of such a monumental effort. Even small amounts of money, from many purses, can total a sizeable amount.

It is very fine to speak of a method of filing the accumulated results of a research into the fantastic, to tell of the method of tabulation, and the system of card indexing; but what of the period before that indexing: the research, the study, and above all, the opportunity for study? Only a few, a very few, out of the great multitude of fans are able to reach the material necessary to an exhaustive research and compilation and study of things fantastic.

SO:

I therefore believe that no more time should be wasted by we who have had such opportunity...

I believe that we should make immediate efforts toward the coagulation of our various lists, and files, and card indices, to bring into being that dream-thing called by Boucher "The Great Bib."

Every one among us has some specialty, some one magazine, group of magazines, or group of authors, in which he or she has taken particular interest. Several fans have already publicized that interest by having their compilation of stories or books appear in print. The ESQUIRE fantasy list, for example.

So, why can't we get together on this, all of us, and collate our material?

The selection of a head bibliographer for this undertaking can be worked out between collective fandom. That is the second step to be taken.

The first, the foundation stone, is this article you are now reading. As a method of beginning, I offer to perform the following functions:

1. For the time it requires to get this thing fully under way, I will issue a four- to eight-page leaflet detailing the various phases of progress;
2. To start things, I offer my address as

communications center until a bibliographer can be selected. This means that I want all who wish to partake in this research to write to me, telling me what they have to offer; of what phase of fantasy, science fiction, or what you will, they have made a listing. Also, any and all ideas, suggestions, etc., that may come to mind. The first leaflet will contain these letters.

3. As a small beginning toward the great bibliography, I present within the next month a table of contents and cross-index to UNKNOWN, which will go out with TELLUS as a separate supplement. And Bill Watson and I are working on the WEIRD TALES table of contents. Just the table of contents at present; the indexing will come later. (Twenty years of WT is a terrific lot of listing, fellows.)

So there it is. I want to hear from every fan who receives this first issue of LETHE concerning his or her ideas. Whether or not you give a damn about this little publication, please let us hear from you about the bibliography idea.

REMEMBER: fantasy as a form of literature is in its infancy. This that is now proposed will at some future day be looked upon as one of the greatest historical landmarks in fantasy's lifetime... if it can be done. And it can be done.

It's up to us.

Louis C. Smith.

AN ADDENDA: To clarify just the type of material needed, here are a few suggestions for starters: Stf. and fantasy books (classified by subject); the Munsey Publications; Blue Book; Detective Fiction Weekly; Black Cat (the old magazine); The American Weekly (of the Hearst Papers); the slicks, such as Ladies' Home Journal, Woman's Home Companion, New Yorker, Century, Harper's, Cosmopolitan; the youth publications -- American Boy, Boy's Life.... Well, you can go on from there.

L. C. S.