

The Heads of Cerberus

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 01 Jun 1998

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adam louis stephanides — 01 Jun 1998, 16:02

I've also been reading a book entitled The Heads of Cerberus, by "Francis Stevens" (a pseudonym for Gertrude Bennett). It was originally published in 1919, I would guess in magazine form, but the copy I read is a small-press reprint from 1952. It's about three people from the present who are transported by some strange dust into 22nd-century Philadelphia. It's very much the sort of pulp Wolfe parodied in "The Last Thrilling Wonder Story," and it's pretty bad, so much so that after I got halfway through I just skimmed the rest. But, though there are no thematic or structural similarities I can detect between Heads and FHC, there are a few odd points of similarity which make it possible that Wolfe read Heads and incorporated some allusions to it. These are:

- 1) A society frozen in stasis and ruled by a tyrannical government
- 2) People designated only by numbers (in Heads, everybody but the elite in future Philadelphia)
- 3) A library which the protagonist(s) are forbidden to enter.

I can post or email a description of the book if anyone's interested.

--Adam