

= Gertrude Barrows Bennett =

Gertrude Barrows Bennett (1883 ? 1948) was the first major female writer of fantasy and science fiction in the United States , publishing her stories under the pseudonym Francis Stevens . Bennett wrote a number of highly acclaimed fantasies between 1917 and 1923 and has been called " the woman who invented dark fantasy " .

Her most famous books include Claimed (which Augustus T. Swift , in a letter to The Argosy called " One of the strangest and most compelling science fantasy novels you will ever read ") and the lost world novel The Citadel of Fear .

Bennett also wrote an early dystopian novel , The Heads of Cerberus (1919) .

= = Life = =

Gertrude Mabel Barrows was born in Minneapolis in 1883 . She completed school through the eighth grade , then attended night school in hopes of becoming an illustrator (a goal she never achieved) . Instead , she began working as a stenographer , a job she held on and off for the rest of her life .

In 1909 Barrows married Stewart Bennett , a British journalist and explorer , and moved to Philadelphia . A year later her husband died while on an expedition . With a new @-@ born daughter to raise , Bennett continued working as a stenographer . When her father died toward the end of World War I , Bennett assumed care for her invalid mother .

During this time period Bennett began to write a number of short stories and novels , only stopping when her mother died in 1920 . In the mid @-@ 1920s , she moved to California . Because Bennett was estranged from her daughter , for a number of years researchers believed Bennett died in 1939 (the date of her final letter to her daughter) . However , new research , including her death certificate , shows that she died in 1948 .

= = Writing career = =

Bennett wrote her first short story at age 17 , a science fiction story titled " The Curious Experience of Thomas Dunbar " . She mailed the story to Argosy , then one of the top pulp magazines . The story was accepted and published in the March 1904 issue .

Once Bennett began to take care of her mother , she decided to return to fiction writing as a means of supporting her family . The first story she completed after her return to writing was the novella " The Nightmare , " which appeared in All @-@ Story Weekly in 1917 . The story is set on an island separated from the rest of the world , on which evolution has taken a different course . " The Nightmare " resembles Edgar Rice Burroughs ' The Land That Time Forgot , itself published a year later . While Bennett had submitted " The Nightmare " under her own name , she had asked to use a pseudonym if it was published . The magazine 's editor chose not to use the pseudonym Bennett suggested (Jean Vail) and instead credited the story to Francis Stevens . When readers responded positively to the story , Bennett chose to continue writing under the name .

Over the next few years , Bennett wrote a number of short stories and novellas . Her short story " Friend Island " (All @-@ Story Weekly , 1918) , for example , is set in a 22nd @-@ century ruled by women . Another story is the novella " Serapion " (Argosy , 1920) , about a man possessed by a supernatural creature . This story has been released in an electronic book entitled Possessed : A Tale of the Demon Serapion , with three other stories by her . Many of her short stories have been collected in The Nightmare and Other Tales of Dark Fantasy (University of Nebraska Press , 2004) .

In 1918 she published her first , and perhaps best , novel The Citadel of Fear (Argosy , 1918) . This lost world story focuses on a forgotten Aztec city , which is " rediscovered " during World War I . It was in the introduction to a 1952 reprint edition of the novel which revealed for the first time that " Francis Stevens " was Bennett 's pen @-@ name .

A year later she published her only science fiction novel , The Heads of Cerberus (The Thrill Book ,

1919) . One of the first dystopian novels , the book features a " grey dust from a silver phial " which transports anyone who inhales it to a totalitarian Philadelphia of 2118 AD

One of Bennett 's most famous novels was Claimed (Argosy , 1920 ; reprinted 1966 and 2004) , in which a supernatural artifact summons an ancient and powerful god to 20th century New Jersey . Augustus T. Swift called the novel , " One of the strangest and most compelling science fantasy novels you will ever read ") .

= = Influence = =

Bennett has been credited as having " the best claim at creating the new genre of dark fantasy " . It has been said that Bennett 's writings influenced both H. P. Lovecraft and A. Merritt , both of whom " emulated Bennett 's earlier style and themes " . Lovecraft was even said to have praised Bennett 's work . However , there is controversy about whether or not this actually happened and the praise appears to have resulted from letters wrongly attributed to Lovecraft .

As for Merritt , for several decades critics and readers believed " Francis Stevens " was a pseudonym of his . This rumor only ended with the 1952 reprinting of Citadel of Fear , which featured a biographical introduction of Bennett by Lloyd Arthur Eshbach .

Critic Sam Moskowitz said she was the " greatest woman writer of science fiction in the period between Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and C.L. Moore " .

Because Bennett was the first American woman to have her fantasy and science fiction widely published , she has been recognized in recent years as a pioneering female fantasy author .

= = = Novels = = =

The Citadel of Fear (1918 ; reprinted in Famous Fantastic Mysteries , February 1942 , and in paperback form in 1970 , [NY : Paperback Library] and 1984 [NY : Carroll & Graf])

The Labyrinth (serialized in All @-@ Story Weekly , July 27 , August 3 , and August 10 , 1918 ; later reprinted as a paperback novel)

The Heads of Cerberus 1st book edition . 1952 , Cloth , also leather backed , Reading , PA . Polaris Press (Subsidiary of Fantasy Fress , Inc .) ill . Ric Binkley . Intro by Lloyd Arthur Eshbach (Thrill Book , 15 August 1919 ; reprinted as a paperback novel in 1952 and 1984)

Avalon (serialized in Argosy , August 16 to September 6 , 1919 ; not reprinted)

Claimed (1920 ; reprinted in 1985 , 1996 , and 2004) 192pp , cloth and paper , Sense of Wonder Press , James A. Rock & Co . , Publishers in trade paperback and hard cover .

= = = Short stories and novellas = = =

" The Curious Experience of Thomas Dunbar " (Argosy , March , 1904 ; as by G. M. Barrows)

" The Nightmare , " (All @-@ Story Weekly , April 14 , 1917)

" Friend Island " (All @-@ Story Weekly , September 7 , 1918 ; reprinted in Under the Moons of Mars , edited by Sam Moskowitz , 1970)

" Behind the Curtain " (All @-@ Story Weekly , September 21 , 1918 , reprinted in Famous Fantastic Mysteries , January 1940)

" Unseen @-@ Unfeared " (People 's Favorite Magazine Feb. 10 , 1919 ; reprinted in Horrors Unknown , edited by Sam Moskowitz , 1971)

" The Elf @-@ Trap " (Argosy , July 5 , 1919)

" Serapion " (serialized in Argosy Weekly , June 19 , June 26 , and July 3 , 1920 ; reprinted in Famous Fantastic Mysteries , July 1942)

" Sunfire " (1923 ; original printed in two parts in Weird Tales , July ? August 1923 , and Weird Tales , September 1923 ; also reprinted as trade paperback in 1996 by Apex International)

= = = Collections = = =

Possessed : A Tale of the Demon Serapion (2002 ; contains the novella " Serapion " , retitled , and the short stories " Behind the Curtain " , " Elf @-@ Trap " and " Unseen @-@ Unfeared ")

Nightmare : And Other Tales of Dark Fantasy (University of Nebraska Press , 2004 ; contains all Stevens ' known short fiction except " The Curious Experience of Thomas Dunbar " , i.e. " The Nightmare " , " The Labyrinth " , " Friend Island " , " Behind the Curtain " , " " Unseen @-@ Unfeared " , " The Elf @-@ Trap " , " Serapion " and " Sunfire ")