

STEAMPUNK MAGAZINE

NEW AND FUTURE WORLDS

LIFESTYLE
MAD SCIENCE
THEORY
FICTION

#7

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

- *Rita Mae Brown*
Sudden Death

“Calm down, Maston,” said Mr. Barbicane. “I merely said it was impossible. I never said we wouldn’t find a way to do it.”

- *Molly Brown*
The Selene Gardening Society

My dear punks of steam,

Lords and ladies, doxies and dandies, workers, rakes and fakes. Have I insulted everyone? Let me know if I've missed you and I shall correct the error at my earliest convenience.

I think we have all felt that persistent itch under our skin. The feeling that things here, the world that we live in ... somehow isn't right. The feeling, in fact, that something is *wrong*. But no matter how broken or tarnished you feel our society is, you'd be a damned fool to throw it away. As foolish as you would be to discard a broken chest of drawers, or a pocket watch with a smashed face. These things aren't suddenly devoid of function, rather their function has changed. A broken watch becomes jewellery and a broken chest of drawers becomes a writing desk. We're Steampunks: Putting things to good use that others have discarded as broken is what we do.

At the moment, the path of least resistance for Steampunk is for it to become an aesthetic: A meme devoid of meaning. It's a path that leads to buying Steampunk Halloween outfits in Wal*Mart and Tesco in five years time, and yet another song about Victoria's glorious Empire conquering Mars playing on MTV. Individuality in Steampunk is paramount. We're not insisting everyone obey our 'vision' of Steampunk, but if I ever see anyone in a 'sexy clockwork automaton' costume they picked up off a supermarket shelf I'm going to beat them to death with their plastic cog mini-skirt. I digress

...

The future isn't some kind of diffuse thing that will happen the day after tomorrow. The revolution started yesterday. We have to scratch that itch, but what kind of society do we want to live in? What kind of society do we want to create for our Steampunk community? Do we want a vital, sustainable community or do we want a group of usernames on a message board? Who are we, where are we,

where are we going? The only way we can lead is by example: By getting out of our houses, by recycling, upcycling and reimagining; by supporting the live artistic performances of musicians, actors, dancers, all of the above or something else entirely; and by knowing our own flaws and breaking through them.

So think of this issue not as a map, but as a set of tools. We have lessons of cultural domination from the past, both through politics and war, and through the far more insidious medium of popular fiction. We have some lessons from the present, too, suggesting we might not be as clever and classless and free as we like to think we are. And, of course, we have plenty of suggestions about what to do with the future: From dancing the night away to literally raising your own country from the deathless oceans.

The simple truth of human nature is that you can not bully or coerce people to change, that is, if you do not want to stoke their fears and their prejudices. The only thing you can do is inspire them. If we inspire you, then go out there and infect others. You know the great thing about inspiration? It's a system driven by positive feedback: The more of it there is, the more of it there is!

So tell me: What have you done to change the world today?

—Dylan Fox

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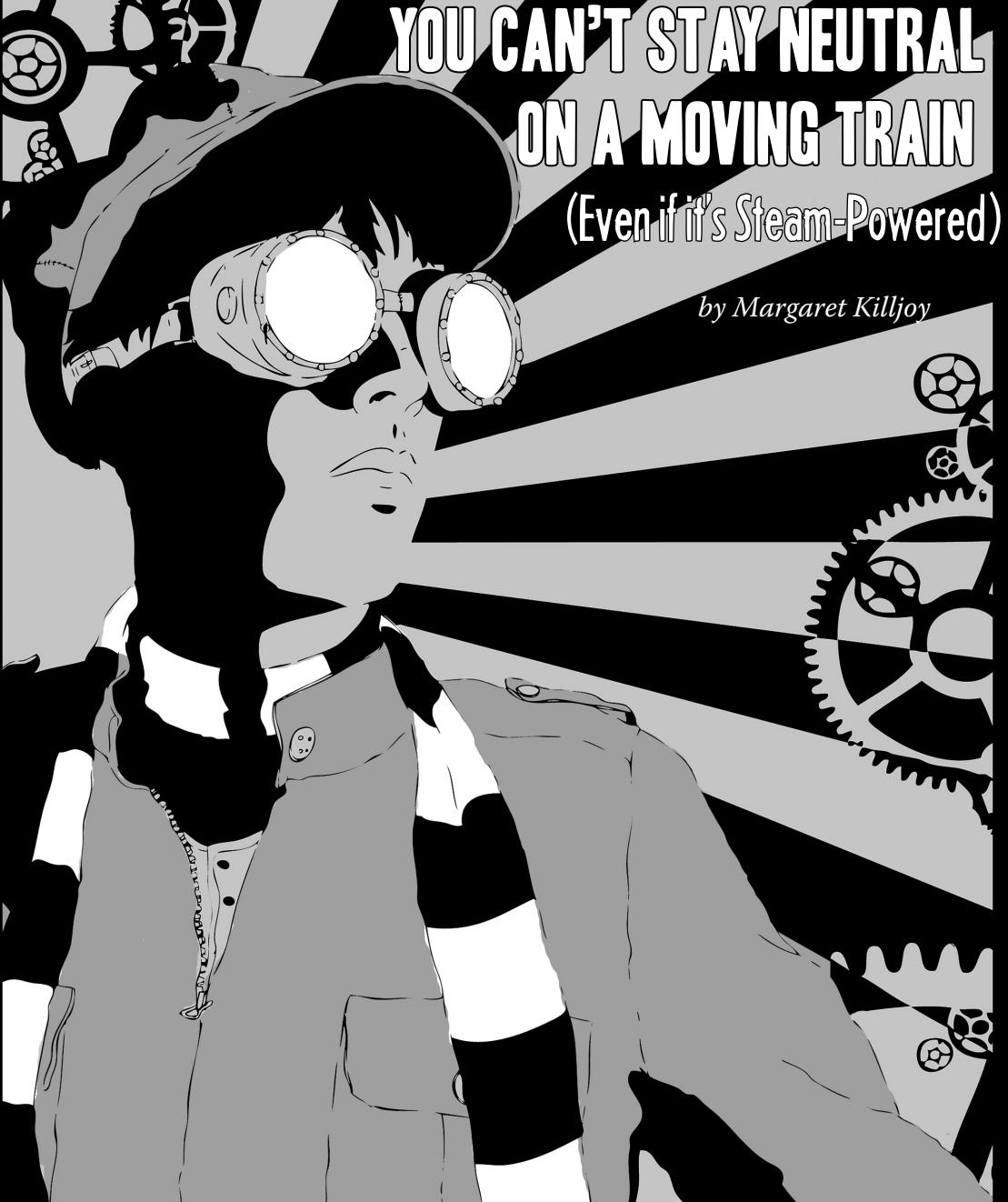
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YOU CAN'T STAY NEUTRAL ON A MOVING TRAIN

(Even if it's Steam-Powered)

by Margaret Killjoy

Illustration by K. W. Moore

Much has been said in the past few years about steampunk and politics. Is steampunk political? Is it radical? If it's political, is it anarchist or socialist or democratic or techno-utopian or neo-luddite?

Yes. On all counts.

Since day one of *SteamPunk Magazine*, months before the first issue saw the light of day, we've been under attack for our explicitly political position. "We have no interest in publishing pro-colonial, racist, homophobic, sexist, or otherwise useless work," has been in our submission guidelines since *SteamPunk Magazine* was a static webpage and a fantasy.

"How can you be against colonialism and be steampunk?" asked the comments in one particularly vitriolic LiveJournal thread.

How indeed? Well, for one: by being steampunk, not neo-colonial or neo-Victorian. As the former editor of SPM, I can say assuredly that I didn't set out to subvert steampunk towards politics: I was simply responding to what steampunk was (and, I would like to argue, should be again). Steampunk began as a radical strain of fiction (albeit a somewhat satiric one), and it truly breaks my heart to see what it has become.

This is not to say that steampunk is or should be about politics. Steampunk is not a party platform, and *SteamPunk Magazine* has never intended to be a propaganda tool for any position (aside the steampunk one). I believe that this is partly what people are confused about.

Apolitical is a Political Position

Howard Zinn died a few weeks ago. He doesn't really have anything to do with steampunk (aside from learning his politics as a poor kid in early twentieth century New York, which is pretty steampunk if you ask me). But he wrote a book called *You Can't Be Neutral On A Moving Train*, the title of which you've no doubt noticed that I've appropriated for this article.

Apolitical is a political position. Apolitical is a vote for the status quo. The status quo, you might have noticed, is doing a fine job of destroying the earth (and with it, all of us).

I think people get confused by this because when they hear, "You should be political," they think they're being told to (in the USA, at least) be active as a democrat or a republican. Or if you're really out there: A libertarian or a green. That isn't politics, that's a puppet show, a bread and circus.

It's the difference between watching the superbowl and playing a game of football with your friends.

If we can dream up alternate worlds full of scheming scientists and smoking machines, are we really so bereft of imagination that we

can only imagine politics on the convenient “liberal vs. conservative” axis that’s been provided for us?

When we talk about politics, we talk about being concerned with the over-arching systems of control. About the ways that we organize society.

Our Political Roots

To be blunt, steampunk has always been political. The finest and most important works of steampunk have been, perhaps without exception, influenced by anti-authoritarian or anti-colonial trends in society.

Jules Verne wrote his breakthrough novel *Around the World in Eighty Days* about his friend Nadar—a radical Parisian socialite who pioneered hot air balloons and put them to use during the Paris Commune (and took the first aerial photographs, and many of the radical milieu of his time, such as Peter Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin). Verne wrote Nemo, an anti-civilization touchstone. And he wrote a sympathetic, explicitly anarchist protagonist in his book *The Survivors of the Jonathan*. I mean not to claim Verne as a radical himself—he was a nuanced politician, but no firebrand.

HG Wells, however, was. He was an outspoken advocate of socialism, believing that society should eventually reach a single world state and dissolve into an intentional anarchism.

Skip forward to the 1970s, and Michael Moorcock’s influential proto-steampunk novel *The Warlord of the Air*. Containing the historical Ukrainian anarchist Makhno as a prominent character in these alternate histories, the stories set anti-authoritarian anti-heroes against the forces of colonialism and racism. As for Moorcock himself, in an interview with me for my book *Mythmakers & Lawbreakers, Anarchist Writers on Fiction*, he said:

“I’m an anarchist and a pragmatist. My moral/philosophical position is that of an anarchist. This makes it very easy for me to make a decision from what you might call a Kropotkinist point of view.”

And then there’s steampunk proper: The first generation that consisted primarily of K.W. Jeter, James Blaylock, and Tim Powers. In the article *The Nineteenth Century Roots of Steampunk* that serves as an introduction to the 2008 anthology *Steampunk*, (edited by Ann & Jeff VanderMeer), Jess Nevins writes, “Steampunk, like all good punk, rebels against the system it portrays (Victorian London or something quite like it), critiquing its treatment of the underclass, its validation of the privileged at the cost of everyone else, its lack of mercy, its cut-throat capitalism.”

Into more contemporary steampunk, look at Alan Moore, author of *The League of Extraordinary Gentleman*, which is by far one of the most influential steampunk works. Alan Moore is also an anarchist (which, by the way, is no more realistically represented by bearded men with bombs than “communism” is by the Soviet Union). I asked him about the central question of this article, about how politics are a part of everything we choose to do. He told me:

“We don’t really live in an existence where the different aspects of our society are compartmentalized in the way that they are in bookshops. In a bookshop, you’ll have a section that is about history, that is about politics, that is about contemporary living, or the environment, or modern thinking, modern attitudes. All of these things are political. All of these things are not compartmentalized; they’re all mixed up together. And I think that inevitably there is going to be a political element in everything that we do or don’t do. In everything we believe, or do not believe.”

Our Lamentable Present

Jess Nevins, in the introduction to the aforementioned *Steampunk* anthology, sums it up quite well: “second generation steampunk authors have changed steampunk from an argument to a style and a pose, even an affectation ... This abandonment

of ideology is an evolution (or, less charitably, an emasculation) that is inevitable once a subgenre becomes established—witness how cyberpunk went from a dystopic critique of multinational capitalism to a fashion statement and literary cliché. But its loss is nonetheless to be mourned.”

And that’s the thing. Lewis Shiner, one of the cyberpunk pioneers, told me in my book *Mythmakers*: “I think it’s inevitable that if a certain perceived movement becomes successful, it’s going to get commodified and people are going to try to jump on the bandwagon. And cyberpunk, like magical realism, had the misfortune of being easy to imitate. Mirrorshades and implant wetware in the one and butterflies and ghosts in the other.”

Michael Moorcock told me: “I was attracted to Fantasy originally because it wasn’t a defined genre. Like rock and roll, you could make something of your own out of it. If I was a young writer today, I’d have absolutely nothing to do with it.”

Which is all pretty doom and gloom for the future of steampunk, to be honest.

Punk Isn’t Dead

I can’t seem to find the quote, but I’ve read Bruce Sterling talking about how punk was neat at the time, but that punks today are clinging to the past, are essentially anachronistic. And this shit has been said forever: “Punk is dead.” But it’s not. It’s just underground now. Actually, it has been this whole time. It never went away. Punk is a vibrant, dynamic subculture. The punks today don’t, by and large, look like the 70s punks. They don’t look like the 90s punks. Green Day and Blink 182 went on the radio, but it didn’t stop the underground. Punk will never die. Our critics are, by and large, completely and utterly ignorant of who and what we are.

Punk isn’t dead, and steampunk isn’t dead. There are people who put a shiny brass cog on something and call it steampunk. But sticking goggles up your butt doesn’t make you a chicken.

At the risk of sounding absurd, if you don’t want the punks showing up to your party, don’t throw a punk show. You’re the ones who called yourself

punks. Don’t get upset when anti-authoritarians with blue hair make an appearance.

I love you all, it’s been a pleasure. For fuck’s sake, keep it real. ☀

THE GREAT STEAMPUNK DEBATE

1st May - 30th June 2010

WWW.GREATSTEAMPUNKDEBATE.COM

A few months ago, SPM got together with a whole bunch of other people who run steampunk magazines, websites, events and communities and began to talk about the elephant in the room: The small matter of politics and personal beliefs in steampunk.

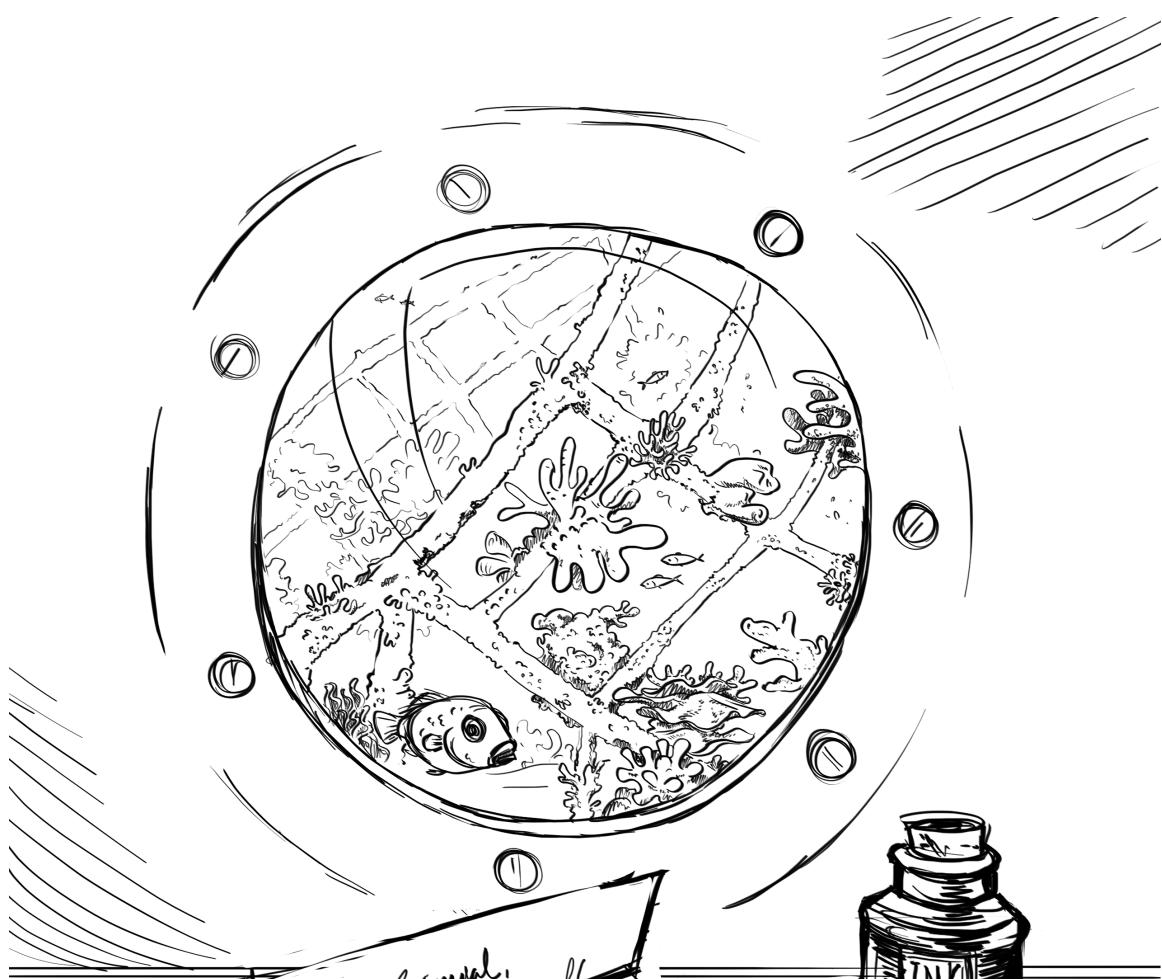
Whether you’re an anarchist, a capitalist, a liberal, a conservative or staunchly apolitical, steampunks have never really had the opportunity to talk about how they mix their personal beliefs with their steam.

Well, my friends, that is about to change because for two full months this year, steampunks from all across the board will be given the chance to come together to discuss politics, ideology, the Empire, discrimination, inspirations, environmentalism and, most importantly, steampunk.

The debate will also serve as an opportunity for steampunks of all different camps and creeds to come together and set our differences aside, in recognition of the fact that we are all part of the same community, and that our community is important.

Whatever your own personal beliefs may or may not be, we hope to see you all there for the ride, because it sure as hell is going to be a lot of fun!

For more details (or to register an account) please go to: WWW.GREATSTEAMPUNKDEBATE.COM



TOWARDS A BRAVE NEW LAND

(and the Making Thereof)

by Professor Offlogic
illustration by Sarah Dungan

“A courageous Future lies ahead of us. We wave goodbye, on no uncertain Terms, to the invisible Workings of the cyberian World. Our Future lies in an honest Technology, a Technology that is within our Reach, a Technology that will not abandon us, a Technology that requires not the dark Oils of subterranean Caverns.”

-A Steampunk's Guide to the Apocalypse

Past attempts at colonizing the high seas have usually remained at the conceptual level, with plans running aground due to “inside-the-corporate-box” thinking, high up-front costs of marine superstructures or outright chicanery.

Capital has been very leery of investments in a field of uncertain precedent such as creating Free Enclaves in international waters. While there is at least one “residency” cruise liner (*The World* of ResidenSea was launched in 2002), no claims of sovereignty are made for it, and the sticker-price limits it to multi-millionaire residents.

Might a more ad hoc, low-cost and Low Tech approach to creating a new nation on the High Seas fare any better?

Terminology & Pejoratives

The term “**micrstate**” isn’t branded with the same giggle-factor as the term “**micronation**”, which has come to be used in a pejorative sense to refer to abortive and/or crackpot schemes to usurp the “rights” of “legitimate statehood” from presently recognized “nations” of the status quo (AKA ‘The Old Boys’ Network’).

The term “neostate” might be applied to a newly declared independent nation and the human population proclaiming allegiance to it, but since the “state” part of neostate still carries the usual baggage of intrusive regulation of personal behaviors, public morality, excessive taxation etc, the term “**Free Enclave**” will be used in this

writing, as it is the author's hope that anyone going to the trouble of creating a New Land will not be taking with them the outmoded ways of the Old Lands (including racial, ethnic, economic, spiritual/religious or gender disparities). Any entity achieving this is a truly Free Enclave.

Microstates: Where Size Doesn't Matter
Let's look at present-day examples of internationally recognized microstates, with an eye for common traits. Most are remnants of the consolidation of European states, or former island colonies.

State of the Vatican City

A landlocked, walled sovereign city-state within Rome, the Vatican holds the current record for smallest cost of carpeting. Contrary to the popular, it didn't officially exist as a sovereign state until the Lateran Treaty of 1929 (a good year if your name begins with "His Holiness"). As the smallest sovereign squat on the map, at just over 0.17 square miles, it has a unique economy based on a "spiritual protection racket".

The crime rate within the territory measured against the resident population of some 824 persons would seem enormous: Civil offences committed each year corresponding to 87.2% of the population, with penal offences running at a staggering 133.6%. The most common crime is petty theft—purse-snatching, pick-pocketing and shoplifting. "The Vatican—soft on crime? You be the judge!"

Reason for statehood: Fear of being sent to Hell.

The Republic of Nauru

Basically a small rock in Micronesia, it is currently the smallest island nation, just 8.1 square miles, and the least populated member of the United Nations. Declared a colony by Germany in the late 19th century, it was then passed around between Australia/New Zealand/England, briefly the Japanese Empire then back to the Aussies again, until gaining independence in 1968.

Nauru was good for only one thing: Mining phosphate rock. While that lasted the Nauruans

boasted the highest per capita income in the world. Once the phosphates ran out they dabbled at being a tax haven, experimented with money laundering and for a bit ran an outsourced detention center for Australia (the *Pacific Solution*). That cash-cow recently gave out as well.

Reason for Statehood: Depleted of all resources, nobody wanted it anymore.

The Most Serene Republic of San Marino

Bar none, the oldest sovereign state and constitutional republic in the world, having been founded on 3rd September 301 by Marinus of Rab, fleeing the religious persecution of the Roman Empire. San Marino was the world's smallest republic from 301 to 1968, until Nauru gained independence. It is devoid of natural level ground, landlocked and completely enclosed by Italy.

If one gets elected to head of state there, one must accept or be jailed (wow, drafting politicians, what a great idea!). Even Napoleon refused to conquer them, saying "*Why? It's a model republic!*" and continued his devastation on states with less model republics.

Reason for statehood: San Marino was a refuge for those supporting Italian unification in the 19th Century, so in appreciation, Italy left them alone. What with being way the hell up in the mountains and having nothing worth going to the trouble of taking (except for a wonderful view) everyone was happy.

The Principality of Monaco

Completely enclosed by France, Monaco—occupying about .76 square miles—is largely regarded as a tax-haven, with around 84% of its population made up of foreign (and wealthy) citizens. Monaco retains its status as the world's most densely populated sovereign (and smallest French-speaking) country.

Starting with a land grant from Emperor Henry VI in 1191, Monaco was re-founded in 1228 as a colony of Genoa. It has been ruled by The House of Grimaldi since 1297, when Francesco "The Malicious" Grimaldi (disguised, coincidentally as a

Franciscan monk, or “Monaco”, in Italian) and his men took over the castle on the Rock of Monaco. It’s been an up-hill battle ever since. The French Revolution swallowed them up, and then they got assigned to the Kingdom of Sardinia, which made a lot of patriotic Monegasques very surly.

Reason for statehood: As part of the Franco-Monegasque Treaty of 1861, the ruling prince ceded some 95% of the country to France in return for four million francs and sovereignty. In 2002 a new treaty with France removed the stipulation that Monaco would remain independent only so long as the House of Grimaldi continued to produce heirs.

Micronations & Pitfalls to Avoid

Now we’ll briefly survey both ends of the micronation spectrum, their strengths and weaknesses.

The Principality of Sealand

Located on a former World War II sea fort (HM Fort Roughs) about six miles off the coast of England, Sealand is ruled by Prince Roy and Princess Joan (and *de facto* Prince Regent Michael, since Prince Roy retired to the Suffolk). Total ‘land’ area is a whopping 0.000193 square miles (about 500 square meters). Although Sealand is held in dubious regard as a micronation and is without acknowledged diplomatic relations, its existence has resulted in the closing in certain loopholes in the United Nations Convention on The Law Of The Sea (UNCLOS 1982, Article 60 sub 8, relating to artificial structures *within an Exclusive Economic Zone*, with Article 80 applying mutandis to artificial islands, installations and structures *on the continental shelf*).

Reason for statehood: Not worth the trouble, and has arguable standing of sovereignty under established legal precedents at the time of its founding.

The United States (Under Emperor Norton I)

Perhaps the most unruly, rebellious, and treasonous micronation, it occupied the approximate space between Emperor Norton I’s ears between 1859 and 1880.

Eccentric, yes, perhaps even insane, but Robert Lewis Stevenson’s step-daughter, Isabel, wrote that

Norton “was a gentle and kindly man, and fortunately found himself in the friendliest and most sentimental city in the world, the idea being ‘let him be emperor if he wants to.’ San Francisco played the game with him.”

Reason for statehood: Pre-existing condition that ignored the “Emperor of these United States and Protector of Mexico” (those treasonous curs!).

Common Threads & Loose Screws

From the point of view of the Old Boys, it is easier to leave a small state with insubstantial natural resources alone than bother with taking it over. Geographic remoteness or being otherwise inaccessible helps in retaining independence, as does payola and/or the ability to dole out anathemas. Providing useful services like being a tax-haven or money-launderer can be a double-edged sword if you don’t do it for the ‘right’ people.’

As regards to micronations and their rulers, bestowing yourself a royal or imperial title may severely dent your credibility in the area of establishing formal relations, either with other countries or your own.

The Electric Reef: A New Approach

Professor Wolf Hilbertz developed a process for accretion of mineral structures by electrolysis of sea-water in the 1970s. As BioRock, the electro-deposited minerals are comparable, if not surpassing, the compressive strength of reinforced concrete ... and self-repairing, as long as the power supply is maintained. Hilbertz and his colleague Dr. Tom Goreau established programs to use the BioRock to repair and sustain damaged coral reefs in 15 countries around the world.

Mimicking the way clams, oysters and coral produce their shells from the minerals in sea water (though far less sophisticated), low voltage direct current is applied to a metallic frame (rebar, chicken-wire, metal mesh) submerged in sea water. Calcium carbonate accretion (as the mineral *aragonite*) occurs at up to 5cm per year on the submerged frame, sequestering CO₂ in the process. Power requirements are modest, about 3 watts per square meter.

The Autopian Dream

Hilbertz went on to survey suitable sites located on undersea mountains that met certain desirable criteria: Locations in international waters, relatively shallow, easily harnessed ocean currents, good prospects of aquaculture and sea floor resources. His aim: Creating autonomous, self-assembling island micro-nations.

Two likely sites were identified as prime locations for the project, to be known as Autopia Ampere, on the Mediterranean sea mount of Ampere (about halfway between the Madeira Islands and the tip of Portugal) or Autopia Saya, on the Saya del Halha Bank (east of Madagascar and southeast of the Seychelles) in the Indian Ocean.

In the 1997 *Popular Mechanics* article, Hilbertz said the fact that ocean-grown cities could stand on their own economically and become independent and self-governing entities poses what he believed to be one of the biggest barriers to their creation: There is no legal precedent regarding national ownership of a newly formed island that is beyond a nation's territorial waters.

His plan: "We'll establish our presence there and stake a claim, and see what happens. If anyone challenges us, we have lawyers ready to argue our case. We've had so many legal opinions that we decided just to go ahead and see what happens."

Sadly, the Autopia project was interrupted by the sudden death of Dr. Hilbertz in August 2007.

Et Tu, Nemo?

Suppose an anarchist collective, tired of the oppression of those land-lubber states, decide to pool resources and head out for the Low Frontier of the High Seas to found a Free Enclave?

Site selection for a Free Enclave is a matter of "looking for loopholes" (as W.C. Field explained of his leafing through the Bible); in this case the term for "loophole" may be "terra nullius", a place belonging to nobody else.

At one time, a nation's territorial waters were defined by the range of their cannons (the *Ultima Ratio Regnum* principle). Nowadays, cannon-shot

goes a lot farther, and every 'budding democracy' (or junta) with a few yards of beach-front property can declare an "Exclusive Economic Zone" out to 200 nautical miles of their sea-coast baseline. In addition to this, the Old Boys' rights to resources on or under their slice of continental shelf are codified in the Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Assuming you've done your homework ahead of time, you've located a likely sea-mount or bank that is not in an Exclusive Economic Zone or on the continental shelf of a nation signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (this is the loophole you are looking for, since there is no Article dealing with artificial structures/islands except in those two cases).

The Plan

1. Sink metal forms connected to low-voltage power sources as discretely as possible (to avoid 'Imperial entanglements');
2. Accrete artificial coral foundations for at least a year;
3. Establish your outpost on the BioRock structures, then expand the Enclave to your heart's content;
4. Establish sustainable economic activities to support the Enclave.

Load up supplies (metal framework components, windmills, diving equipment and maybe a VIVACE array or two) and make the first expedition to, say, a suitable site bordering one of the North Pacific Gyres.

The initial metal framework could be installed within a week, with the placement of sacrificial anodes, floating windmills or submerged VIVACE arrays (to keep the framework power flowing) could take a bit longer. After this, it's a waiting game, but time is on your side.

The artificial coral will continue to slowly accrete a nucleus for your new Free Enclave. The denser your metal framework, the faster the

structural strength will improve (though at the cost of a higher power level to keep it growing). More BioRock frameworks over time would improve the stability and permanence of the Free Enclave, as well as provide a better habitat for future aquaculture.

'Soylent Black' and Its Deadly Legacy
Even though Providence chose to secrete the bulk of Liquid Petroleum at great depths inside the Earth or under the vastness of the Seas (surely a major hint to "use sparingly"), few resources of such diverse potential have been squandered so blithely, most of it having gone literally "up in smoke" via Infernal Combustion. Much of that which was not used to darken the Skies Above still haunts us in the form of Petro-Plastic, esteemed so lightly that it was considered disposable, to be cast off without a second thought, imagining that what was out of sight was out of mind.

In Shelley's words:

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains: round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

We may now reassess the true meaning of "out of mind": The formerly 'lone and level sands' of once pristine beaches, even on the most remote archipelagos on Earth, are covered many feet thick in plastic flotsam, jetsam and dead sea creatures, with the enduring plastic legacy remaining sea-born clotting expanses of the ocean so thickly that it surpasses the mass of marine life, in some regions by seven-fold or more.

Down and Out in the Growing Enclave
A budding oceanic Enclave can harvest many things from the seas, including the hundreds of tons of free-floating plastic debris. Plastics don't *biodegrade*, per se, but they do *photo-degrade*: The UV rays of the sun break plastic masses down into smaller bits and pieces commonly

referred to as "nurdles" or "mermaids' tears". These granules, typically under 5mm in diameter and resembling fish eggs, are responsible for the deaths of millions of birds and other sea creatures ... all in the name of disposable plastic "culture".

A harvest of mixed plastic nurdles can be sieved from the water by the proprietors of a Free Enclave and separated from fish and zooplankton (plastic isn't generally phototropic, doesn't instinctively swim up-stream, etc) in skimming troughs. Nurdles can be sorted by type of plastic using a series of vats containing fluids of decreasing specific gravity. The first vat will allow the heavier plastics (and other debris) to sink, the next heaviest plastics will settle out in the second vat, and so on.

Solar collectors could be used to heat the harvested plastic batches (for recycling into a variety of items useful for the Enclave) or desalinating water without wasting the precious electricity needed for mineral deposition.

Pontoons made of recycled plastic could be arranged into a grid around the ever-accreting base structure, with salvaged fishing nets strung over them to give your Enclave a little more elbow-room. If these pontoons were to be equipped with simple two-stroke pumps (perhaps bellows molded into them during manufacture), the energy of the waves could be easily captured to provide additional electrical power.

"Growing" construction panels on metal mesh would be a natural progression for the Enclave. These could comprise solid floors and walls connecting the coral columns, as well as provide an exportable product.

With a little ingenuity and recycled plastic, frameworks for submarine quarters could be grown, sealed and inhabited, with access via BioRock elevator shafts: Picture a "sea-scraper" as a sky-scraper in reverse. Like a medieval fortress, the subsurface quarters could provide submerged refuge in times of trouble.

So, What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

Technology, as usual, is the easy part. Dealing with the Old Boy network of traditional states is likely going to be the major hurdle faced by the new Free Enclave. Since Hilbertz's *Autopia* plans were interrupted without firm precedent being set, the usual tools remain available for dealing with conflict that may arise:

Lawyers: If you do create a new island, better be prepared to spend years in court defending your title to it, unless you have plenty of ...

Guns: Sealand has had to rely on force of arms to protect their claims of sovereignty a time or two. In general, anything you can do to make yourself indispensable or more trouble than you are worth to annex (rhythms with "Switzerland") is worth the cost, which brings up ...

Money: The universal lubricant. The more "bread" you have ... the better tasting your sandwiches will be (to put it politely). Engage in sustainable aquaculture, BioRock panel exports, etc. to build financial reserves.

The Free Enclave, artificial or not, will be private property, with any attack viewed internationally as an act of piracy. The international community/Old Boy network will likely write the pirates a *very sternly worded memo* (stained with their crocodile tears) if your Free Enclave is attacked.

The Nemo Doctrine

Existing clauses of the UNCLOS-1982 state that artificial islands and structures have no claims to territorial waters, so a prudent level of defensive capabilities within a reasonable radius of the Free Enclave is probably advisable to make moot that point of contention. The mechanics of maintaining territorial integrity are beyond the scope of this text, though the "Nemo Doctrine" that freedom hinges on nullification of the power of any state to subjugate, should be a guiding principle. Remotely triggered buoyant "aquatic RPGs" placed in a series of defensive radii on the sea floor might be worth investigating. Augmentation of these relatively passive perimeter defenses with super-cavitating torpedoes, MANPADS, "Phalanx" type air defenses and selective jamming of SATNAV signals would likely ensure de facto sovereignty of a Free Enclave.

Playing Nice

Building on shallow water sea-mounts/banks the Free Enclave will sidestep any “hazard to navigation” clauses in the UNCLOS (the hazard being well known and charted), and if anything, the Enclave on top diminishes the hazard by increasing visibility and provides another trading port for commerce. The beneficial bioremediation of coral destruction and CO2 sequestration will lend you emotional resonance with the populace outside the Enclave and generate political ‘brownie-points’ (or even swing a lucrative CO2 sequestration outsourcing contract from members of the Old Boys network in the process). “Doing well by doing Good” is at least karma neutral and would be a ‘no harm—no foul’ alternative to the tax-dodge/data haven/money laundering schemes usually resorted to by other microstates. ☀





ON RACE AND STEAMPUNK

A Quick Primer

by Jaymee Goh
Illustration by Juan Navarro

“Race! The final frontier. No matter what channel you watch, no matter what feed you aggregate, it seems like everybody is talking about race right now. And when everybody everywhere is talking about race, it means sooner or later you’re gonna have to tell somebody that they said something that sounded racist.”

- Jay Smooth, How To Tell People They Sound Racist

Introduction to the Concept of Race

There are three very important things you need to know about the concept of race. The first and least important of the three is that race is a construct. It has no true biological basis. A man who is considered “black” can very much resemble a man who is “white”. In fact, the term “Caucasian” does not actually refer to “white” people, but rather to a range of peoples covering European, African and Asian geographical ranges. In the American context, the terms “white” and “black” were created to polarize working-class people after slaves were emancipated, with goalposts moving around—Italians, Jews and Irish were not considered “white” at first. Even the term “Oriental” was applied first to the Middle East and India. Over time, it spread to encompass the Far East, but it is only called “Oriental” insofar as it refers to the Occidental point of view, and thus, still centers one specific experience over another.

The second, more important thing you need to know about race, is that we all see it. This isn’t that cute little “everyone’s a little bit racist” refrain, but a reminder that racism benefits or harms whole groups of people. You (the general you), whether white or non-white, may claim that you “don’t see race”, that it isn’t important to you, or that you don’t discriminate based on skin colour. When you do that, you erase what is possibly a large part of who I am and my history, deny what is important to me, and ignore the fact that this racism thing isn’t just about individual me and individual you: it’s an institutional thing that encompasses much more than just how you think you see or treat me.

The third, and most important thing you should know about race is that, even though it is a construct and a term with fluid meanings, race has very real effects on very real people, in a very real system that most people go about without seeing. One person suffering discrimination on account of race is an exception. A few, a coincidence. But when whole groups are at a disadvantage, it is a pattern. Parts of the pattern are manifested in how, even today, employers are likely to dismiss a resume on the basis of a foreign-sounding name, or how prisons have a large percentage of African-Americans which does not reflect the general population of the USA, or the “white flight” phenomenon.

In James Joseph Scheurich and Michelle D. Young's article, "Coloring Epistemologies" (available on JSTOR), they lay out three levels of racism:

"The first is institutional racism, which 'exists when institutions or organizations ... have standard operating procedures (intended or unintended) that hurt members of one or more races in relation to members of the dominant race.'

The second is societal racism, which 'exists when prevailing societal or cultural assumptions, norms, concepts, [or] habits ... favor one race over one or more other races.' For example, the OJ trial revealed societal racism.

The third is epistemological racism, which 'comes from or emerges out of what we have labeled the civilization level—the deepest, most primary level of a culture of people. The civilization level is the level that encompasses the deepest, most primary assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) ..."

Whether or not we are conscious of it, we carry prejudices and racial biases wherever we go. It touches everything we do, say, or think. Without examining these unconscious biases, it is incredibly difficult to create a space where everyone is equal in a meaningful way.

This essay is a simplification, of course, and meant to be an introduction. The issue of race is much more nuanced. It requires a great deal of time and patience to understand, and a willingness to learn and accept that one is more / less advantaged than others, even if it's not felt.

The Presence of Race in Steampunk

Race is as difficult a topic to discuss as cultural appropriation, systemic oppression, and privilege. Many steampunks don't really think about it, and indeed, what role does race play in costuming, in DIY, or in roleplay? The excuses for not thinking about race are vast and varied—we assume that since everything is made up, we're free to create spaces as we please.

There are other realms of marginalization noted in steampunk. Discussing class is easily done: the upper-class elite oppressing the poor is well-recorded by the likes of Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Barrett-Browning and other Victorian writers of the time. Gender is also easily subverted, as many women re-imagine the steampunk world to be a more gentle time for their gender, unfettered and unlimited. There are many women who play sky captain, or other roles that would, in more realistic play, be denied to them.

However, race is a bit more difficult to discuss, and a bit more difficult to portray. If a visible minority dresses in high Victorian fashion, inspired or derived from English or American sources, is it a sign of overcoming the ills of the time period? Owning the fashion of the oppressors? Or is it a form of assimilation into the dominant culture? If a visible minority creates a steampunk persona based on his or her heritage, is s/he bucking the overwhelming Victorian trend? Exoticising themselves? Are they even recognizably steampunk? What about a member of a recognizably dominant group using fashions of the subordinate group? Is it a sign of taking inspiration from a foreign source? A respectful tribute? Is it cultural appropriation? A flippant dismissal of the importance of a cultural artifact and trivializing of a fashion as “exotic”?

We do well to ask these questions of ourselves, no matter what group we belong to. As steampunk is a pastiche made of many elements, it is difficult to categorize something as quintessentially steampunk, and thus difficult to categorize something non-Victorian as steampunk unless it incorporates elements that are absolutely recognizable. (Gears and cogs do not count.)

Then there is the obvious dearth of steampunk media derived from non-Victorian sources, often eclipsed by the overwhelming variety of Victorian-derived steampunk that feature a certain kind of people, who are clearly not a minority in steampunk. There are a few examples of steampunk works and subcultures—James Ng, for example, is heralded as a great example of Chinese steampunk. Bruno Accioly is a spokesperson for the Brazilian steampunk subculture. Yet, these examples are notable because they spring from people and places who are not immersed in Victorian / North American steampunk to begin with—James Ng only heard of steampunk after he produced his famous works; Bruno Accioly filters Victorian steampunk through his uniquely Brazilian perspective. Where does this leave steampunks of colour living in white-dominated cultures, such as North America and Britain?

Like in any other mainstream spaces, discussions of race are far and few in between. If race is even discussed at all, it is in simplistic terms—how awesome it is, for example, that there are steampunks of colour stepping up to express their heritage. The racism that is discussed is obvious: like how awful it was that slavery existed, and we certainly don’t want to reproduce those attitudes. There is very little room for more nuanced discussions about cultural appropriation, microaggressions or unconscious prejudices made manifest.

The presence of race in steampunk, for many, is often theoretical, and not a messy reality that the average steampunk has to deal with. Even steampunks of colour would prefer not to have to deal with the problems of race, because steampunk is a fantasy, a made-up world, an escape.

The Importance of Race in Steampunk

There are arguments and questions deployed to deflect honest discussions of race. The first runs thusly: If steampunk is so rife with these problems, *why participate at all?* If there is nothing for visible minorities, then why not find something else to be interested in?

This one is simple to answer: ask a woman why she participates in re-creating an era where she would have been oppressed, and she will tell you that within the re-creation, she can play as an equal. History is altered and adjusted by whole groups of participants so that women can participate meaningfully, in a way that fulfils gender-egalitarian fantasies. The actual oppression is not really all that important: Steampunk has many attractive facets, and steampunks of colour are not immune to the aesthetic, the love of history, or the love of crafting. That we can create spaces where we can participate meaningfully is a bonus. (That it is a bonus is pretty pathetic, as it is something we should be able to take for granted if the genre was as egalitarian as folks claim it to be.)

The second argument is a bit more insidious, and harder to tackle: *If steampunk is an escape, a fantasy, a made-up world, then why is it so important to discuss race?* Why bring in problems from reality and mar the fantasy?

Allow me to draw up the argument for gender again: Understanding how gender has played a role in the actual history, how gender obstructed and constructed a woman's life, and learning the boundaries, enables us to break them. It is a bonus if gender in the present day is deconstructed for further subversion in the steampunk world, and not unusual.

Whether or not we are conscious of it, we carry prejudices and racial biases wherever we go. It touches everything we do, say, or think. Without examining these unconscious biases, it is incredibly difficult to create a space where everyone is equal in a meaningful way. Without questioning how Orientalism is damaging, speculation of Asian steampunk can be tinged with racial caricaturing and stereotypes and also blot out the voices of those who are actually Asian. Without confronting how the institution of slavery has set white people at an advantage today by holding black people back, it is hollow to assert that the fantasy is in any way better than reality. In a discussion of multiculturalism, it is ironic for the voices of a single group to dominate, while the voices of marginalized groups are silenced or unheard.

If we allow the problems of reality to permeate our fantasy, we continue the marginalization of specific groups, which in turn limits the genre and playing ground, alienating the very people we claim to welcome.

Resisting Racism in Steampunk

It is incredibly difficult to prevent or eradicate racism, as racism is internalized starting in childhood. Moreover, contemporary racism is not as overt as it was before, making it harder to identify racist pre-dilections within personal interactions or public actions. Research on Aversive Racism shows that even while people vocally denounce overt forms of racism and deny personal prejudice, they can still hold negative feelings and biases unconsciously.

Yet, there are a great many things that people can do to recognize and critique racism in steampunk. With the advent of the Internet, steampunks, even those in isolation, can find ways to connect and speak to each other. We also live in an age where we can access information more easily. This same tool gives us access to spaces which exist to educate people on the possibilities. The following are Google-able phrases which will lead any intrepid adventurer into the challenges that anti-racist activists navigate on a frequent, if not daily, basis: “Resist Racism”, “Racism 101”, “invisible knapsack”, “race and pop culture”, “IBARW” (the latter term stands for “International Blog Against Racism Week”). More readings will lead to more nuanced discussions, although it is vital to understand the basics before jumping into these discussions. Persons to seek out and read include Tim Wise, Latoya Peterson, K. Tempest Bradford, and Edward Said.

It is to the imaginative credit of many steampunk participants that today we attempt to incorporate elements of cultures beyond the conventional, Victorian-era Europe into manifestations of steampunk. (Or, conversely, we attempt to inject elements of steampunk into cultures beyond Victoriana.) And yet, this must be undertaken with a strong sense of caution and sensitivity. While it is commendable for steampunks to claim that the movement is anti-racist and anti-imperialist, it is necessary to recognize the current hegemony that pervades literature and global consciousness.

Steampunks are, as a specific community, under no special onus to educate themselves. Yet as a creative community, indulging in a form of historical revisionism, we are uniquely placed to examine closely the effects that history has had on the present day. ☀

THE MARY GOLDEN



by C. Lance Hall

illustration by Juan Navarro

The ship moved through the air with her sails fully deployed, like a whale through deep water. The *HMS Mary Golden* was an older ship, a tall brigantine with dual masts and two majestic wings spreading from either side of her hull. Airships like her didn't sail much anymore, but those that survived wars were constructed well enough to remain airworthy. The steam engines bolted to the fo'c'sle thrummed like a heartbeat, steadily running two giant wind wheels set just under the Captain's cabin. The sails were not strictly needed, but the more air they caught the more pull the ship had, and that meant less work for the wheels. Running at full sail, even when inconvenient, was one of the reasons the *Golden* stayed in service so long.

This was due, at least in part, to Captain Wolfeson. He'd served under Lord Nelson at Trafalgar, personally coordinating several pivotal recce's from a command position in the Royal Balloon Fleet. Lord Nelson rewarded the young Wolfeson with command of the *Golden*. It was a proud moment for the naval officer, the proudest until the birth of his daughter. He found himself a crucial part of the most powerful fleet on Earth, and Captain of his own tall ship.

That was 25 years ago, and now commanding the same vessel seemed less grandiose, and more like steering his own oversized coffin. But this would be his last voyage, the last outing for him and his beloved ship. Both were to be decommissioned upon landfall.

"When we get to America, I want to visit New York first thing."

The Captain's daughter sat on the end of the bed that had been his on every other voyage the *Golden* made under his command. She was eighteen now, and had grown into a beautiful and intelligent woman. Sometimes he worried that she was becoming too smart, too interested in the world around her. Such things could mean trouble for a father. Captain Wolfeson smiled and twirled his graying moustache absently.

"Caroline, my dear, Florida and New York are as far apart as Glasgow and Nice. We shall plan

a trip there someday to be sure, but for now you must content yourself with the South."

"I still don't understand why we can't take the *Golden*, or at least one of the lifeboats. They'd get us there in a week or so. I hear there's so much to see in New York, I simply must visit." She slumped, resigning herself to her father's wishes. "What is there in Florida, anyway?"

"Hmmm." He thought a moment, ticking off the things he shouldn't mention.

"Swamps," he said finally.

"Swamps?"

"Well. I hear they are absolutely teeming with wildlife. Good hunting, I'd wager."

"Swamps." Caroline fell back on the bed, staring at the darkened beams bisecting the low ceiling.

She was wearing one of only three dresses that weren't packed in chests down in the hold. The pink one was her favorite of the three, but she found them all ill-suited for the daily life on an airship. Climbing the modest few stairs from the deck to the cabin was travail in itself, exploring further on the ship required extra effort, but she'd managed to find a way to the most interesting places. She spent most of her days either reading, or out on the quarterdeck, to which she could just barely navigate. She enjoyed leaning over the rail, feeling the wind in her hair and just letting her mind wander. She watched the clouds float by and listened to the hypnotic lullaby of the twin wheels humming softly beneath her feet.

It was one such outing on the quarterdeck that she had happened upon young Mr. Hawthorne. He was just a lowly sailor that she knew by name and face only because he had the unique responsibility of working on the massive engines propelling the *Golden* through the clouds. This specialty granted him a higher status than a regular airman, but only philosophically. Technically, he was still a midshipman like most other crewmen, but he had skills that the Captain and the Lieutenants needed, so he was treated better. They jokingly referred to him as "Midshipman of the Red."

When Hawthorne saw the Captain's daughter standing along the rail just over the wind wheels, his instinct was to find somewhere else to be post haste. She was singularly beautiful and he would gladly spend 10 years in a London workhouse to simply talk to her, but she was of a different station. His father was most fond of stories involving some lowly born person crossing the tempers of Nobility and the consequences that soon followed. All his life Hawthorne had been aware of the trouble one could get into attempting to get to know someone like her. He wasn't bitter about his lot, but accepted it the same way one accepts the rain.

"Excuse me. Boy?" Caroline spoke just as the midshipman turned to leave. He stopped, and turned around slowly. She was standing straight now, her pink dress blowing around her in the wind so Hawthorne could just make out what the shape of her body must be like beneath the folds of fabric.

"Yes, miss?" He mumbled, casting his eyes to the wooden-planked deck.

She took a step forward and the hem of her dress entered his field of vision. The toe of her right shoe, scuffed from shuffling around the ship, peeked out from underneath.

"Aren't you the boy who works on the wheels?"

He nodded silently.

"I'm interested in the mechanism. The tiresome days spent on board this bloody ship are driving me mad."

Hawthorne took a chance and looked up. Green eyes, the color of the meadows back home. They weren't the eyes of a spoiled Captain's daughter, but something more erudite. They were inquisitive eyes that looked through what they saw to seek the understanding beneath. He shivered. Her hair danced as she breathed, like the twisted tendrils of a man-o-war.

"So, tell me everything you know about how these wind wheels work."

"You want to know how it works?"

"Yes. I do." She leaned over the rail again, gazing down at the spinning wheels. "Is it that they move the wind, or the reverse and the wind animates them?"

"Well." Hawthorne moved cautiously beside the Captain's daughter. "It's a bit of both. In truth, each wind wheel consists of two wheels, one inside the other like Russian dolls. They turn in opposite directions."

"Why two?"

"The ones on the inside are run by the steam engines up front and they produce a continuous blast of air that's pushed out of the back."

"It produces forward thrust."

"Right. If there's a bit of wind in the sails to help the wheels along we can go as fast as 20 knots."

"I see." She wasn't as easily impressed as he expected. "The outer wheels then?"

"The outer wheels are turned by the wind as we move forward and it is transferred into more energy for the steam engine or to run onboard devices like the Captain's Analytical Engine."

"That infernal thing."

"You don't like it?" He'd had only limited access to the most famous invention in his lifetime, and thought of the devices as near-sacred objects.

She shrugged. "It's a great waste of space and time, and the cards get so easily bent or torn. Mr. Babbage is an engineer, and thought little of how actual people might use his invention."

"But that's wrong," he protested. "With respect, Miss Wolfeson, the whole reason he designed the engine was to free people from having to do all the sums themselves."

"To free Babbage from doing them, more like." She snorted, and went back to gazing at the spinning wheels. "If a seamstress, or one of those poor computers, had designed the engine instead of an engineer, then we'd have something everyone could use."

"Why would everyone need to use an Analytical Engine?"

She laughed. "My, my you do sound like Mr. Babbage! Why wouldn't someone want a better life? Make the engines a bit smaller and replace the cards with something reliable that can be used over like a metal drum with holes that can be pounded out and punched again, and then the uses of such a thing would be astronomical."

"You're a very strange girl, Miss Wolfeson," he managed.

It was the most polite thing he could think to say.

"Thank you Mr. Hawthorne."

She snuck a glance at him. He was as shoddy as the others, but the stains on his uniform were grease, not dirt. He was covered in the grime of a higher calling, she thought.

"I don't often get to speak my mind," she said.

"That is probably a good thing. You are very knowledgeable of the mechanical world for a Captain's daughter."

She put a finger to her lips.

"Don't let on. Father thinks I'm such a bore."

"Where did you learn all of this?"

"I read," she said. "And I had a great mentor. My tutor from when I was a little girl. He taught me much more than he was supposed to. But now my education is in my own hands. If I were to talk to father as I have talked to you, then he would probably send me to a convent or an influenza colony."

Hawthorne thought a long time before he spoke again. By confiding in him, she had flattered and doomed him all in the same breath.

"May I ask a question about your theoretical device? The Analytical Engine Two, shall we say?"

"Of course."

"Wouldn't the energy expended in pounding the holes out of the metal drum exceed, or at least equal, what it would take to create a new drum and therefore make it redundant?"

She turned to face him.

"Not if it was done automatically by the engine itself."

"What, with a hand crank?"

"Don't be silly. A wind wheel like this one, or a steam engine, or one of Faraday's motors could power the device, whether doing mathematical functions or trip hammering copper drums."

"I suppose, but it's hard to imagine making an Analytical Engine so small and commonplace that one could be acquired by a midshipman."

"I know that imagination can be difficult, Mr. Hawthorne. Twenty years ago it would be unim-

aginable that you and I would be having a conversation aboard a flying ship headed toward the coast of America at 20 knots."

He smiled.

"At the moment," he said, "I'm rather flummoxed by it myself."

Caroline visited the quarterdeck more often in the weeks that followed. She didn't see Mr. Hawthorne every day, but she saw him enough to learn about the inner workings of the *Mary Golden's* engines and wind wheels. She didn't think anyone noticed how often they spoke.

Her father would certainly be against the friendship, so Caroline was careful to keep her distance whenever he was on the deck.

However, today there were special circumstances. Hawthorne had mentioned several days before that it was time for the regular inspection and maintenance of the wind wheels. That meant he was going on an airwalk. The Captain would certainly be present during the tricky maneuver, but she was determined to watch Hawthorne dance on the clouds.

"What are you doing up here?" Captain Wolfeson asked as she shuffled across the quarterdeck, holding the hem of her dress.

She smiled at her father without looking at Hawthorne.

"I would like to observe, father. It's not every day one has the opportunity to observe an airwalk."

"Very well." He raised a graying eyebrow. "Just stand clear, this is a dangerous business and we can't have Hawthorne here distracted."

She glanced over at the young man, whose eyes were glued to her with a look of animal panic.

"I'll stay so quiet, you'll not know I'm here." She smiled at him.

The Captain grunted and turned back to Hawthorne, who was busy strapping on a leather harness. The straps stretched over his shoulders and down between his legs with cross straps on the chest and waist. Buckles and straps hung off the back and sides like tentacles. Captain Wolfeson lifted a metal object about the size of one of the

large photographic cameras Caroline had been fascinated by as a girl. This strange device had two metal bottles, enclosed on both ends, mounted to a copper box. Tubes ran from the bottles to the box in a way that suggested the transference of liquid. On top of the box were several dials and switches that apparently controlled the machine. On each side were hollow copper pipes that protruded a few inches.

Working slowly and precisely, the Captain connected the machine to the back of the harness. Hawthorne stood like a dressmaker's dummy as the contraption slowly took shape. With the help of a few shipmates, the Captain attached large canvas wings to either side of the machine, fitting them into the copper tubes and tightening them down with a wrench. The wings were each about a man's height when unfurled completely, but they could fold in on themselves like a giant bat. A tail, also made of canvas, was fitted to the bottom of the machine. Caroline thought the tail looked more like a vertical fin than a horizontal feather. Come to think of it, she decided the wings looked more like oversized fins as well.

Once all of this was attached, Hawthorne unceremoniously stepped overboard. Caroline gasped with shock, expecting a warning of some sort before he leaped into the empty sky. She ran to the railing just in time to see him ignite the machine and unfurl the wings. The thing on his back spat a cloud of white smoke and thrummed softly. The wings fluttered up and down in time with the machine. She saw for the first time that a rope led from Hawthorne's waist back to the deck. He used the rope to pull in closer to the bottom of the hull. The contraption strapped to his back seemed to be more for maneuvering and gliding.

He reached the wind wheels, which had been turned off for the inspection, and connected to them with two magnetic discs strapped to his knees. Once connected, he pulled in the wings and turned off the machine on his back. He stayed stuck to the belly of the ship for what seemed an age, busily working with tools produced one after the other from the numerous pockets of a well-worn leather apron.

"How long does this take?" she asked her father, who had moved to the rail beside her.

"He should be done in an hour's time," the Captain answered. "I'm sure you don't want to stand around all morning watching this, eh?"

"On the contrary, father. It's the most interesting thing I've witnessed since boarding."

"As the Captain of this airship, I'll try not to take offense at that," he said with a smile.

"Oh, you know what I mean."

She turned her attention back to Hawthorne, studying his every move. She was torn between two fantasies: One in which she was the one riding the tides of the sky, and the other where she was with Hawthorne alone somewhere quiet where they could talk freely. She couldn't decide which she desired more. Captain Wolfeson didn't look back at Hawthorne. Instead, he watched his daughter. Her frequent trips to the quarterdeck hadn't gone unnoticed. He'd hoped this was simply out of boredom, but he saw something in the way she watched the young midshipman. It was unmistakable. It was also unallowable.

"Caroline, we need to talk," the Captain announced the next evening.

They were alone in his cabin and for the past couple of hours he'd been working up his fatherly courage. Caroline had never caused him a moment's worry, or forced him to use a cross word, so this was uncharted territory.

His daughter looked up from a book she was rereading for the third time. "Certainly, father. What do you want to talk about?"

"It's about Mr. Hawthorne." He spoke in the manner he used to lecture the crew. "You are spending far too much time with him. It's unacceptable. You mustn't talk to him again. Is that clear?"

She smiled warmly.

"We only discuss the workings of the wind wheels and the engines. I'm terribly bored and it's been an amusing distraction from this cabin. However, if you think it unseemly, I'll not speak to him again."

"Thank you, dear. I'm glad you see the situation so clearly."

The conversation was a relief, but again he detected something in his daughter's eyes. It was something he'd seen there a long time ago, when he'd given her the news her mother was dead: Panic.

"Of course."

She turned her attention back to the book, but the words were a blur. She was suddenly acutely aware that she'd fallen in love. She resigned herself to comply with her father for the duration of the trip to Florida. There was no other course of sane action as long as she remained aboard the *Golden*. Once in America, she could find a way to be with Hawthorne. And, if it meant running away and living a rugged life with an engineer for a husband, then so be it.

On the main deck, Hawthorne gazed into the cloudless sky marveling at the countless stars. Of course, he was thinking of her, as he'd been almost every moment since that first afternoon. He knew every word they spoke led him inexorably closer to the ruin of his career, but whenever he thought of a way out, the scenario ended with her in his arms. He was a problem solver by trade, it was his gift. The ability to work out puzzles and figure out how to fit seemingly incongruous pieces together had come easy to him since he was a boy. This was more than a puzzle though, it was a catastrophe.

"Ship ho!" A voice yelled in the darkness, breaking his thoughts. "Starboard, three degrees!"

The voice belonged to the first lookout of the night. Hawthorne instinctively rushed to starboard and narrowed his eyes, trying to make out what the lookout had seen. Some distance away there was a twinkle of orange light, not a star, but a glowing lantern, probably in the captain's cabin of another airship.

Captain Wolfeson was immediately on deck. He watched the other ship for a long while, trying to make out the ink black shape against the stars it blotted out.

"Reduce speed." Wolfeson barked. Hawthorne had already made his way to the fo'c'sle

and immediately began turning the large hand crank that closed the boiler and slowed the inner wheels.

For the next three hours the *Golden* drifted, letting the dark blot drift away. They were just one day out of St. Augustine, and although pirates were scarcer now than in the decade previous, caution was still warranted. The Captain dared to hope the other ship was unaware of the *Mary Golden*. They were too close to landfall to take chances on an aggressive attack, and besides that, the *Golden* held a more precious cargo than ever before. Finally, he understood why it was bad luck having a woman on board.

Caroline awoke with a start to the sound of the *Golden*'s guns firing. The jolt of the blasts rocked the ship to and fro pendulously, giving the illusion that it was back on the sea rather than miles above in the clouds. She quickly pulled on the same dress she had worn the past three days, and scampered to the deck, not bothering with stockings or shoes. The deck planks were surprisingly warm and foreign to her bare feet.

A few hundred yards in front of the *Golden* was another ship. It was smaller, with only one mast. Like the *Golden*, it had two wings on either side of the hull for stability, but not the dorsal rudder that helped the larger ship stay level and true. As she looked on this small ship she saw it flash. A moment later she heard the boom of the cannon and the whistle of the lead ball that missed the *Golden* by about twenty-five feet on the port side.

"Caroline!" She heard her father's voice bellow from behind her. "What in blazes are you doing up here. Get below this instant!"

"What's going on Father? Who are they?"
"Pirates."

He said the word in a hushed tone adults use when speaking of the unspeakable around children. Before the voyage, there had been a brief discussion of piracy off the coast of the Americas and how her presence on the *Golden* would mean that surrender was impossible.

The ship would have to go down rather than give up. All the crew would be sacrificed because of her. Without another word, she did as her father asked and returned to the cabin.

The captain's cabin had two small portholes, and from the starboard side Caroline could just make out the bow of the enemy ship. The *Golden*'s cannons continued to rock her back and forth with each blast. She watched hopefully for a sign the ball had found its mark. Occasionally, she heard the whistle of a near miss. Once, there was a loud pop from the deck that was the unmistakable sound of one of the masts taking a hit. Caroline closed her eyes and curled up on the small mattress. She imagined herself far away, sitting at an outdoor café having tea with Mr. Hawthorne sitting opposite her. It was a rather modest dream, but at the moment it was as far away as a fairy story.

As the crimson sun sank over the western horizon, Captain Wolfeson knew they'd lost the battle. They would be able to hold out during the night, but come morning, the pirates would surely board. He couldn't let that happen. One of the main masts was completely gone, the dorsal rudder was all but destroyed, and one of the wind wheels was badly damaged. They were still airborne, but couldn't maneuver to starboard and could only travel at half speed. The pirate ship had looped around at full speed and was now at the stern of the *Golden*. Holding at about fifty yards. They were waiting there until sunrise when the final attack would come.

"Captain?" A voice broke the surreal peace of the sunset. Wolfeson turned around and saw young Hawthorne standing at attention. He was in his airwalk harness.

"Yes Hawthorne? What is it? Why are you wearing that harness?"

"Let me go, sir. If I'm not tethered then I should be able to reach the other ship. If I cut the pack off about half way, I'll be able to glide in."

"To what end?" The Captain watched the final sliver of orange disappear over the horizon.

"Sabotage, sir," Hawthorne answered quickly. "I can use my tools to immobilize their ship and possibly even destroy it. If I can find an accessible boiler valve to block off..."

"And how would you get back on board the *Golden*?"

"Chances are I won't need to if I get caught, sir, but if I'm lucky enough to survive, I can certainly get close enough to the *Golden* for someone to throw me a tether and reel me in. I wouldn't risk coming in full wing."

"Sound logic, Hawthorne." Wolfeson looked him in the eye. "It's very risky, and certainly beyond your duty, son. What do you hope to gain from this act?"

"My life, surely." Hawthorne held his gaze. "But I also have feelings for your daughter."

"I suspected as much. And for that, you are willing to risk sacrifice."

"Yes sir. I ask only one thing."

"Yes?"

"That you allow me to marry Caroline."

The Captain remained silent for a long time, then spoke softly.

"Yes. I will."

A few moments later, the two men were standing by the quarterdeck railing. Hawthorne was rigged and ready. Quietly, he stepped off the deck into the black sky. For a few heartbeats he fell freely, then he pulled the cord that sparked the burner in the pack, and he felt it hum to life. The wings were unfurled and beating slowly. The cool night air blew in his hair as he felt himself rising on the wind. The hull of the *Golden* was visible just above him, and he was careful to swing clear. Hawthorne took himself around in a giant loop that brought him about a hundred yards to the stern of the pirate ship. He used his legs to adjust the angle of the tail section which changed the direction of the glide. He could see the faint smudge on the starry night just ahead. He made sure his trajectory was above the level of the enemy ship's deck by at least a few hundred feet. When he was twenty yards away he cut the pack's power and unfurled the wings to their maximum span so he could glide in silently.

He hoped the lookouts were too preoccupied with the *Golden* to notice something so small coming in the other direction. It would be a tricky thing to connect to the smaller ship's single wind wheel, nestled underneath like a steel barnacle.

He could tell he was too high and too fast as he glided in, so with no room to spare he pulled in the wings and spread his arms and legs wide, like making angels in the snow. This slowed him just enough for his path to fall under the stern of the ship, but not too far away to lash onto the casing of the spinning wind wheel. When he was within a few feet of the large wheel, he threw out the grapple rope. The magnet found its target with a thud that echoed in the midshipman's ears. He pulled himself close to the wheel and went to work.

First, he removed the outer plate and let it fall into the blackness of the night. Once inside the wheel, it was child's play to disable the drive gear and remove the primary axle. The inner wheel spun to a stop noiselessly.

Using two of the bolts he'd removed from the outer plate, he successfully jammed the outer wind wheel so even the wind would not set it in motion. The pirate ship was now completely helpless and simply gliding in the sky on its hull wings. He followed the intake pipe that powered the inner wheel, and quickly located a release valve. With both wind wheels at a standstill, more steam than usual released into the night. With a quick turn of a wrench the valve was sealed, and Hawthorne let go of the underbelly of the pirate ship.

Shots rang out behind him just as he re-ignited the pack. The pirates had realized they were drifting and had at last come to investigate, moments too late. Their voices yelled curses at him as he floated away into the night. He didn't even look back as he heard the main steam engine give way to the pressure and blow a hole in the side of the ship. The ship and crew would fall back to Earth, back to the sea. The gruesome images of their fall and ultimate reunion with the Atlantic Ocean were quickly replaced with the full understanding of his accomplishment.

Caroline would be his.

As he approached the *Golden*, Hawthorne noticed her engines firing full and the hull wings set in an ascent position. He unfurled his wings and turned the valve on the front of his harness to maximum pressure. This was enough to get him close enough to the *Golden* to see the Captain standing alone on the quarterdeck. His white uniform glowing in the moonlight.

"Outstanding work!" The Captain yelled through cupped hands.

Hawthorne yelled back, even as he swooped faster toward the quickening ship.

"Throw me a tether, sir! You're getting away from me!"

"I'm afraid I can't, son!"

Hawthorne kicked off his boots, and detached the tail section from the harness, making himself lighter and faster. He was just about there. The Captain was closer to him now. He could hear his voice on the wind.

"I'm terribly sorry. It's the only way. You understand, of course."

Hawthorne didn't answer; he threw the grapple rope with all his might and felt the rewarding thud of the magnet connecting with the wind wheel.

The Captain leaned out over the rail. "What good will that do you, son? You can't get on board from there."

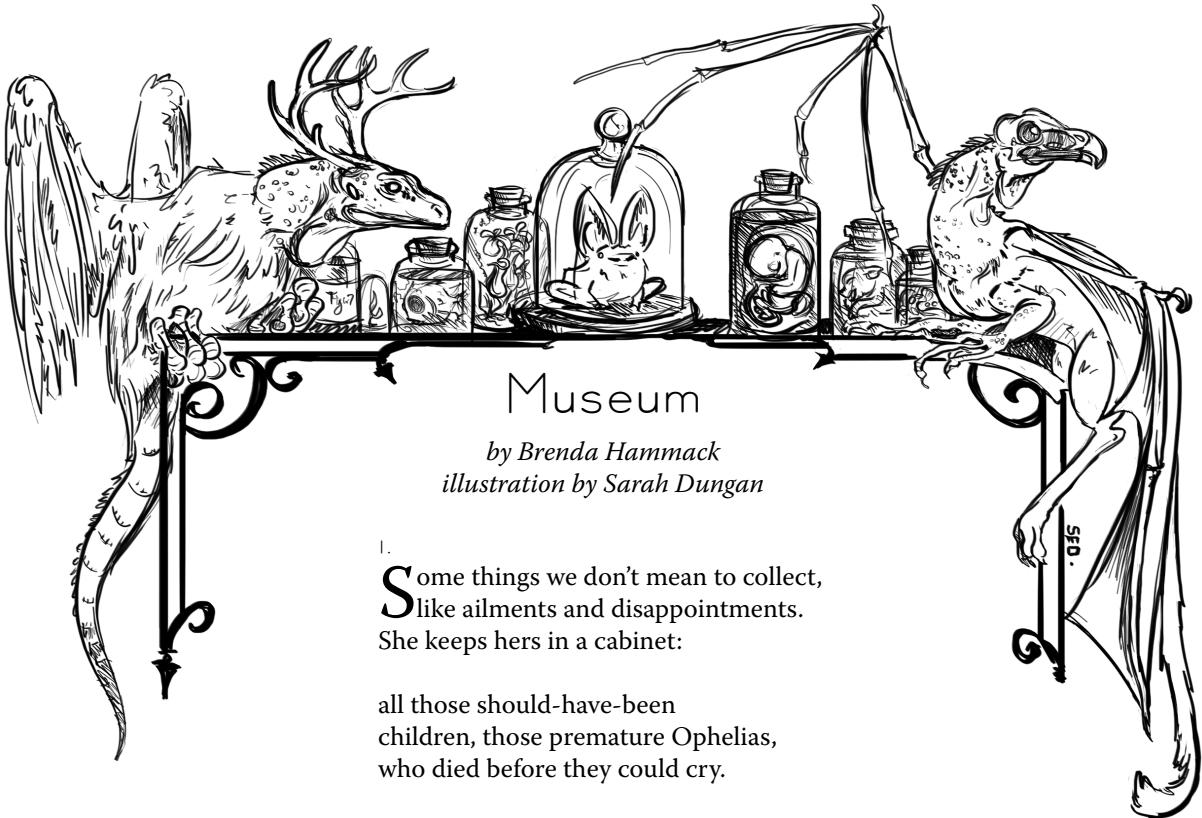
"I can do to you what I did to them," he yelled through angry tears.

The Captain shook his head.

"No you can't, son."

He stared at the wind wheels, knowing he could stop the *Golden* in her tracks and watch her crash into the sea beneath them, but that would mean Caroline too. He let go of the rope and turned off the machine strapped to his back. He watched the *Mary Golden* drift into the night as he glided there on the clouds. He would soon join the pirates in the ocean. He didn't have enough water in the pack's reservoirs to get him back to land, and the irony of falling into an ocean from lack of water made him smile despite himself.

"Farewell to thee, my *Mary Golden*." 



1.

Some things we don't mean to collect,
like ailments and disappointments.
She keeps hers in a cabinet:

all those should-have-been
children, those premature Ophelias,
who died before they could cry.

Suspended in jars like translucent
coffins, they could have been
manikins, or *objets d'art*,

some things that she'd conjured
to occupy empty space
when nature forgot.

2.

As a seeker of nebulae—ghosts—
and a maker of chimeras—goats
fused with snake, cat, and ape

from his embryo trove—he
gives her what the artist
goads into imaginal

existence. He forges bones
to buttress the gossamer,
grafts wings to uplift

her soul when prayers
aren't enough. He gives
her angels of nature.

3.

In the usual mode of evolution,
butterflies would not cluster
like cloisonné pendants

on winter evenings. Hippogriffs
would not graze the Downs of
Kent or of Hampshire. Wolves

would not wisp through cloisters
like gas flames, and orphans
would not dangle woodworms

for Humbugs to fend off incontinent
woes. Such comfort, he gives her: a child
who won't die, won't grow old.

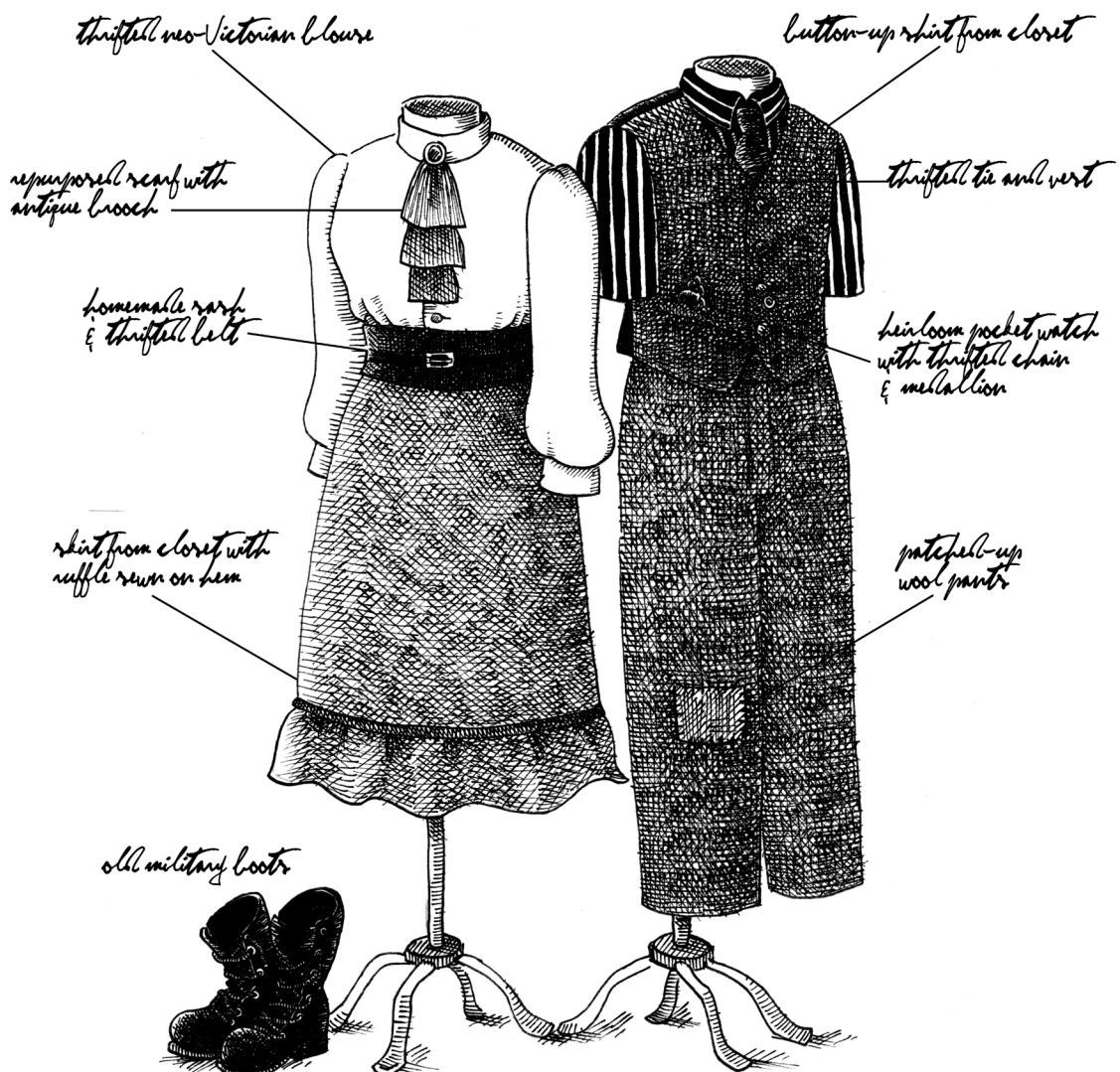
4.

The museum he lives in
is no vault of natural history,
is no tomb for fossils or rogues

set in wax. Its corridors
open on *tableaux vivant*,
or living dioramas where

mammoths and unicorns
roam amid bluestone,
where stelae keep time

by shadow, and creation does
not wait on fault, whim, or law,
and is not contingent on God. ☽



THE FUTURE OF STEAMPUNK FASHION

in Two Parts

by Libby Bulloff

illustration by Amanda Rehagen

PART ONE

Bitchin' About the State of Things

Steampunk fashion has indubitably mainstreamed. With articles describing its aesthetic in publications like the *New York Times* and internationally-distributed fashion magazine *Women's Wear Daily*, it is safe to say we'll be seeing anachronistic Victoriana on the runways and sale racks for some time to come. Hardcore steampunks seem both amused and infuriated by the attention given to them by the garment industry, claiming that the scrutiny will either assist the expansion of ready-made steampunk clothing lines (a boon to folks without the desire or aptitude to sew their own), or annihilate the inherent DIY nature of the subculture. Some voice concern that the media machine will assimilate and bastardize steampunk fashion until there's no culture left within it, or worry that trendsetters latching onto the fad will execute the look poorly.

However, I fear that it won't be the mainstream that will ruin steampunk fashion—I believe it will be those within the subculture themselves who will lower it to a mere passing trend. Steampunk clothing is often impractical, uncomfortable, and inappropriate for wear outside of conventions, parties, and formal affairs. While it has been popularized to the point where it is represented at clubs, and while it has appeared in couture lines and on celebrities, steampunk has not become highly visible as a common street fashion trend. Or,

if it has become a fashion trend, it hasn't yet entirely metamorphosed into a functional, sustainable *style*. Fashion lasts a season (if that); style is internal, eternal, and transcends time.

The only way to save steampunk fashion from being consumed and pitched away is to, ironically, casualize it. The author of the aforementioned New York Times article, David Colman, wrote about trends in anachronistic dress. "There are all kinds of societies that are about dressing up in period costume and then going back to your oversize jeans the next day," he said. "**This is about style as a way of being.**" But so many of the steampunks I see are not ready to commit to rocking the aesthetic as their regular attire, claiming that it's too difficult, expensive, or socially inhibiting. Thus, it's not mainstream interest that makes steam fashion fadlike—it's the folks within the subculture who misguidedly view only heavily embellished outfits with their goggles, functionless gears, and sepia and brown as the one true look of steampunk. We're no better than our wealthy, trendy, hipster counterparts when we cease the continuous metamorphosis of our look, when we won't fearlessly model our style at our desk jobs, and when we eschew making old garments into new, upcycled ones because it's easier to buy them from the mall. As deftly put by Walt Kelly: "We have met the enemy and he is us."

Casualizing steampunk is as simple as seeing the aesthetic as broader than just a cosplay affectation. The props involved in much of steampunk convention-wear, whilst interesting, are cumbersome and alienating, or just downright ridiculous for the office or the grocery store. Clothes can be costumes, but not all costumes are clothes. On the other hand, the inherent timelessness of all steampunk clothing is what makes it attractive on a day-to-day basis. The finest steampunk outfits are a flirtation of formal and casual, a blend of old and new. This cannot be achieved by snobby fashionistas who won't make the time and care it takes to create a sustainable, unique, nuanced wardrobe, and this is where we have the upper hand.

PART TWO: Fixin' Them

Many of us are suffering from the effects of the economic recession in the United States and elsewhere in the world, or else renouncing materialism and capitalist money systems. Therefore, steampunk's rise as a fashion aesthetic is timely, as the very best of it is handmade, upcycled, collected, and one-of-a-kind. Fighting the mainstream by DIY is both cunning and affordable. One does not have to be rich or thin to look great in casual steampunk garb, and the most fantastic items for padding your steampunk wardrobe usually don't have a little label discerning them as steampunk, either. Folks who complain that they do not know where to find steampunk clothing they can wear every day are often seeking that label, rather than looking at the clothes they already have with an eye for modification. Don't limit yourself to wearing only clothes with a Victorian flair. Other antique, vintage, and ethnic influences definitely bring new interest to your wardrobe, and keep the mainstream from copying your look.

If your closet is bare, nipping over to your local Salvation Army, Goodwill, thrift or vintage store and digging in the bins for treasures is a thrilling and inexpensive way to acquire new looks. Sometimes whole pieces can be gathered as they are directly from secondhand stores (I am notorious for finding the most gorgeous embroidered Indian tunics at Value Village).

If you can't find perfect clothes right off the rack, look for basic items that fit your body that can be fixed up. My close friend, Finn von Claret (ex-member of Abney Park and a professional dancer and designer), is an absolute expert at creating her own steampunk clothing, and she has no ability to sew from a pattern. Her secret is an uncanny ability to look at a vest and see in its seams a belly dance choli with a hood, or to view a pile of old curtains as a potential walking skirt. She looks for garments with quality, interesting fabrics for modification. Finn drapes

clothes on her own body, sometimes enlisting a friend to safety pin pleats or trim in place, and the finished product fits and looks worlds better than whatever the fashion industry tells us to buy.

Much of the clothing that we've upcycled is still completely appropriate to wear to work, to play, to worship, and to family events. Keeping things simple, and leaving the goggles and ray guns at home legitimizes the look. Accessorizing carefully with boots, neckties, jewelry, hats, scarves, and socks (often in colors other than brown) pulls the whole aesthetic together.

In sustainable steampunk fashion, the needle is mightier than the dollar. If you can use a needle and thread, you are well on your way to having totally unique garments (and if you can't, learn). Adding beaded fringe to a boring jacket, sewing a pocket over a stain on a vest, or raising a hem into a bustle can morph a basic garment into a work of art. Sometimes all a coat needs to look steampunk is a different set of buttons.

Finn and I stockpile grommet tape, bits of velvet ribbon, feathers, thread and embroidery floss in brilliant colors for quick, inexpensive alterations. I save my used tea bags for tinting faded beaters and dingy tops. Our friend, Bergen McMurray (of www.deviantdesign.org), screenprints and paints graphics onto upholstery samples she acquires for free to make incredibly unique patches. We use onion skins and turmeric to brighten unbleached muslin to a monk-friendly shade of saffron, and drop old trousers and dress shirts into steaming RIT dye baths. Finn's favorite tool for making an army surplus jacket look tattery is oddly enough, a cheese grater. Shredding the sleeves and splashing bleach up the back gets upcycled thrift store finds mistaken for Dolce & Gabbana.

Not only are you doing yourself a favor by recycling cheap clothes into wearable art that fits your body and style, you're thwarting the passionless fashion industry, and you're adding to the integrity of steampunk as a style that is here to stay and can't be taken away from us. ☀

The Man Who Ate Germany

by Dylan Fox

illustration by Ivo Gregurec

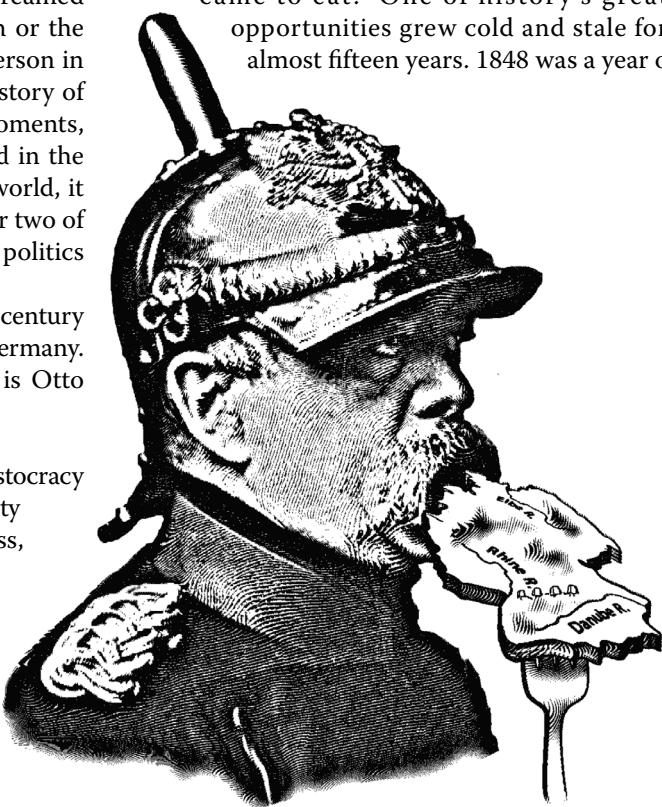
London's pea-soup-filled streets and huffing smokestacks—with secret revolutionary societies in its cellars and murderers in its shadows—is a wonderfully evocative place to play. Tower Bridge housing vast government difference engines, Zeppelins drifting through the skies, and the chance to escape to the country and breathe Brighton or Bath's clear, clean air. Since the French Revolution, the placid waters of Britain remained largely unruffled until the Great War. Just across the water, though, what we understand today as Continental Europe was being forged in fires of revolution and war. The national borders we take for granted moved like flags in the wind. The revolutionary societies of Britain looked across the waters and dreamed of following in the footsteps of the French or the Germans. It would only take a different person in the same place at the same time for the history of Europe to be changed utterly. At some moments, all it would take would be a different word in the same place. If you wanted to change the world, it wouldn't take more than moving just one or two of the irons that were in the fires of European politics and warfare.

Dominating the history of nineteenth century Europe is the coming together of modern Germany. And dominating the birth of that nation is Otto von Bismark.

Otto von Bismark was a glutton. Landed aristocracy from Prussia's social elite, he spent the first thirty years of his life eating and drinking to excess, duelling and running up debts. Despite being a crack shot and able sportsman, reports had him smoking 14 cigars a day and stating it was his ambition to drink over 5,000 bottles of Champaigne before his death. He was hard-headed with a violent temper, and prone to over-emotional outbursts. His weight dropped from

114 kilos to 89 after being put on a herring diet by his doctor, but his unscrupulousness and ruthlessness remained unaffected. Perhaps not surprisingly, he could also be witty and charming, entertaining and a wonderful conversationalist. This was a man whose appetite demanded great things. Bismark would have to become a great man to ensure he controlled it, and not it him. By the end of his life, he had consumed the disparate collection of Duchies and kingdoms which had been the Holy Roman Empire and branded the resulting meal 'Germany'.

Bismark didn't sit down at the table until 1862. The meal had been served in 1849, but no one came to eat. One of history's great opportunities grew cold and stale for almost fifteen years. 1848 was a year of



revolution in Europe, and the states of the German Confederation were swept up in the revolutionary tide. Peasants and workers took to the streets after two disastrous harvests, demanding food and reasonable working conditions. Middle-class political idealists hitched their chariots of socio-political change to the lower-classes, determined to make life fair and reasonable.

The fruit of their vision was the Frankfurt Parliament, a body that contained one representative for every 50,000 'economically independent' citizen 'of age' in the German Confederation. This parliament was to draw up a constitution for a united Germany. By uniting the German Confederation into a new country, they could start fresh and build a country which represented its people, and was fair and free. The German people would be freed of their bickering monarchs and would have a shared identity. For those starving in the streets, a sense of their suffering being shared with 'their people' was almost as welcome as actual food.

In Prussia's capital, Berlin, the riots turned into a civil war: Barricades were erected in the streets, the army was called in to bring order, and the workers fought back. Despite being armed with two-by-fours and wood axes, the workers made the army pay for every cobblestone. By the evening of 16th March 1848, the streets of Berlin were a bloody mess. At three a.m. on the morning of the 19th, Prussian king Fredrick William IV wrote a heart-felt plea to his 'dear Berliners' which was immediately copied and stuck to every available post in the city. On the 21st, he rode through the streets of Berlin, proudly displaying the red, gold and black of a united German people. He spoke of Prussia being dissolved in Germany and told his subjects how humbled he felt by their outpouring of desire for union with their German brothers.

Fredrick William safely withdrew from Berlin, smarting and speaking of how he had been humiliated. Nevertheless, he did organize elections for an assembly to draw up a constitution for Prussia, and appointed a few liberal ministers to his cabinet. Where Prussia (the largest and most powerful state of the German Confederation after Austria) led, the other states would most likely follow.

Sure enough, concessions were made and constitutional bodies planned for in other German states.

The Frankfurt Parliament was elected indirectly. Those who were of age and economically independent elected representatives to elect people to the parliament for them. Women were, of course, excluded from the vote as were servants, farm labourers, those on poor relief and anyone else who didn't own property. The parliament which assembled was mostly composed of middle-class moderates who wanted their united Germany ruled by a monarch, answerable to an elected body, and subject to a constitution which guaranteed rights to the people. The first question they addressed was whether they should include the German-speaking parts of the Austrian Empire and make Austria the dominant state, or exclude the Austrian Empire and hand dominance over to Prussia.

The Frankfurt Parliament was directionless. It was a house of oarsmen with no one to beat the drum, a group of idealists who lacked the firm hand of a charismatic and determined leader.

Without any form of decisive leadership, the parliament bickered for months. People went back to work, and the monarchs were free to repeal the concessions that the revolutionary riots had won. Of all the concessions granted, every monarch was careful to ensure they maintained control of their army. The army existed to enforce the will of the state, and the will of the state was the will of whoever controlled the army. The armies appeared on the streets, reintroducing press censorship, dispersing political gatherings and arresting those who spoke against the monarch.

The Frankfurt Parliament had no army, no administration and apparently no sense of urgency. When it finally produced its constitution in March 1849, the states of the German Confederation were free to ignore it, and promptly did so.

Perhaps strangely, the constitution wrestled from Fredrick William's reluctant hand was allowed to stand, even after all the dust had settled. It provided an upper and lower

house of representatives. Both would have a say in legislation and, importantly, the budget. The lower chamber was the first place in Europe to be elected by universal manhood suffrage, and the upper chamber was elected by men over thirty who owned enough property that they probably hadn't come by it honestly. Perhaps the king allowed the parliament to remain because the constitution also allowed him to make any change to the way the country worked, whenever he felt like it.

When Bismark entered political life in 1847, it didn't take long for his star to rise. During the 1848 uprisings he busied himself with counter-revolutionary plots. In 1850 Fredrick William was forced to back down from armed conflict with the Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph, and Bismark gave a magnificent speech in the king's defence which was widely carried by the newspapers and earned him a promotion to the Prussian envoy of the German Confederation's meeting body, the Federal Diet. He stayed there for the next nine years, gaining a reputation for being rude and arrogant and becoming more and more convinced that in order for Prussia to thrive, Austria must be 'dealt with.' In what would become signatory of his time in charge of Prussia, he proposed alliances with France, Russia and anyone else he thought would destroy Francis Joseph's influence in the Confederation.

In September 1862, History knocked on Bismark's door. Bismark berated it for being so late, downed his brandy and lit a fresh cigar as he marched onto the international stage.

Always a bit flaky, Fredrick William had been declared insane in 1857 and succeeded by his younger brother Wilhelm I. The Army Reform Bill was before parliament, and they refused to pass it. Wilhelm was threatening to resign if the bill didn't pass. It was his country, and if he couldn't rule it the way he wanted, then what was the point? Bismark assured the distraught monarch that he had a plan, and left as the Minister-President of Prussia.

Bismark stood before the elected parliament and told them it was none of their damned busi-

ness how the army was organised or how long the conscripts served for, withdrew the bill and signed it into law. The liberal parliament declared his actions illegal and urged people not to pay the taxes which sustained the army. Bismark pointedly reminded the people that if they had any trouble paying their taxes, then he was sure his 200,000 soldiers would be able to help them.

Although Wilhelm was thoroughly pleased with his new Minister-President, the people he ruled were less than thrilled about the destruction of their illusions of democracy.

Throughout the 1850s, the standard of living of the workers and farmers had slowly risen under the paternal hand of Otto von Mauteuffe. With an able and willing workforce, Prussia's industry grew. At the same time, Wilhelm—a military man from epaulettes to spurs who had never expected to become king—set about reforming the army from the embarrassing disaster zone it had been under his brother. Bismark inherited a country with a strong economy, and a strong army. In 1863, Francis Joseph gave him the chance to show it.

The Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein had been under Danish rule for over 400 years. Schleswig was mixed German and Danish, and Holstein almost entirely German and a member of the German Confederation. When the King of Denmark died without issue, the Austrian court and Prussia monarchy clashed over the future of the Duchies. Bismark, Minister-President of Prussia was able to convince Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria, to occupy the Duchies with military force. The Austrian-Prussian army rolled into the lands with relative ease. A series of conferences were arranged and promptly broke down as the occupying forces argued over what to do with the spoils. Francis Joseph wanted to install one of the claimants to the Danish throne, and Bismark wanted the Duchies to be granted independence and made part of the German Confederation. The two countries glared over the borders, fingers twitching over their holsters while Bismark's *agent provocateurs* encouraged resistance from the occupied Danes and made promises of help from the English.

The truth was that neither country wanted war. Despite Wilhelm's almost monomaniacal army reforms since taking the throne, Bismark wasn't sure his army was in a fit state to win, and Francis Joseph simply couldn't afford it. It also allowed diplomatic relations between Austria and Prussia to become hostile without Prussia bearing the blame. Bismark had laid the table for his first meal of the German Confederation.

At the Convention of Gastein in August 1865, administration of Schleswig in the north was handed to the Prussia monarchy, and Holstein in the south to the Austrian court. The new Danish king shut up and took his medicine. Outright war between Austria and Prussia had been postponed, and Bismark didn't waste a moment of the time he'd bought.

Having been assured of Britain and Russia washing their hands of Continental Europe, he started work on the French Emperor Napoleon III and the newly-unified Italy's monarch, Victor Emmanuel I. Whereas the British and Russian governments were content so long as Germany remained divided and therefore no threat to their power, Napoleon and Victor Emmanuel had territorial interests in the German Confederation. In April 1866, Bismark signed a secret treaty with the Italian premier declaring that if Prussia found itself at war with Austria, Italy would follow. Bismark would settle the question of dominance in the German Confederation—one way or another—and Victor Emmanuel would walk away with Venetia. The treaty put Bismark on a very tight schedule: Victor Emmanuel's promise lapsed after only three months.

Napoleon was far harder to tie down. Bismark extracted verbal promises of French neutrality, and Napoleon extracted promises of the Rhine frontier as 'compensation' for French neutrality. Napoleon struck an almost identical deal with Austria's Francis Joseph.

The hardest ally for Bismark to win over was Wilhelm. The king hated the idea of waging war on his 'brother Germans' and his sense of honour couldn't conceive of the idea. Bismark's relation-

ship with Wilhelm was tempestuous. Their meetings would often be fraught, emotional affairs with both sides shouting, crying and throwing around small furnishings. Bismark was an intelligent, forceful creature who loved his monarch and wanted the best for him. Wilhelm was chosen by God to rule his people. Up until Wilhelm's death 1888, the monarch never exercised his power to replace, circumvent or publicly speak against Bismark. When Bismark died 1898, his grave was marked with the words, 'A faithful German servant of Kaiser Wilhelm I.'

Eventually, Wilhelm gave his consent to Bismark to make arrangements, should Prussia need to defend herself.

While the ink was still wet on the Italian treaty, Bismark introduced a Reform Bill proposing an assembly elected by universal manhood suffrage. Predictably, the Austrian representatives objected. Fearing a surprise attack by Prussia, Francis Joseph ordered his antique army mobilized in April 1866. Wilhelm responded by mobilizing Prussia's the next month. Much to Bismark's chagrin, the British, Russian and French foreign offices offered to broker a peace between the two states. Bismark couldn't refuse without losing the moral high ground. Luckily for him, the Austrian foreign minister Count Mensdorff did refuse. Bismark held his nerve and kept his war dogs on the leash.

On the 1st June, the Count Mensdorff decided to break off the torturous negotiations with the Prussian ministers over Schleswig and Holstein. Bismark responded by letting the leash slip and sent the Prussian army in.

Again, to his chagrin, his war stalled. Francis Joseph simply watched.

Bismark introduced an extended version of his Reform Bill to the Federal Diet that represented the German Confederation. In response, the Diet censored the Prussian government for aggression in sending its army into Holstein.

The increasingly ravenous Bismark seized on the opportunity again: He withdrew Prussia from the Confederation, drew a line and demanded that the other German states pick a side. The next day,

Prussian troops marched into the states whose representatives had supported the Austrians in the Diet: Hanover; Hesse-Cassel; and Saxony. As the Italians attacked Austria from the south, Bismark was finally able to bury his moustache in the German pie.

The battle for Germany was decided on the 3rd July at Sadowa in the modern Czech Republic, then part of the Austrian Empire. The battle involved nearly half-a-million men and the landscape still bears the scars.

Prussian military technology won the day. The Austrian infantry were armed with traditional muzzle-loading rifles. In 1836, the son of a German locksmith had invented a new breach-loading rifle which allowed for far more rapid fire. By 1864, it was standard issue in the Prussian army.

Numbers are disputed, but the Austrians lost in the region of 44,000 men (either to the Prussian guns or as prisoners of war) to the Prussian's 9,000. The Austrian army shattered like a discarded brandy glass, and the road to Vienna—the capital of the Austrian Empire—was wide open.

With Austria at their mercy, Bismark and Wilhelm clashed again. Flush with military victory, Wilhelm wanted to be Cain to Francis Joseph's Able. Bismark wanted to live and let live.

In the end, Bismark got his way. Once Francis Joseph agreed to have nothing more to do with the Confederation, Bismark wanted to keep him as a possible friend and ally. The Italian King Victor Emmanuel, though, got his pound of flesh and was given Venetia.

The northern states of the German Confederation weren't so lucky. Hesse-Cassel, Nassau, Hanover, Frankfurt, Schleswig, Holstein and Saxony were annexed and made part of a 'North German Confederation,' which amounted to Prussia by another name.

In truth, Bismark could have taken as much as he wanted. The doors to the buffet were open and Wilhelm was egging him on. But as much as he was a glutton, Bismark was well aware of the dangers of over-indulging. Each of the states of the German Confederation had its own culture, its own

history and its own traditions. Every territory Bismark ate would be a threat to Prussian culture. If he ate too many at once, Prussian culture would be overwhelmed and Germany would end up eating *him*. Far better to allow some time to digest what he could manage before moving on. This wasn't the unification of the Fatherland yearned for by the revolutionaries of 1848 and the Frankfurt parliament. This was conquest.

The Battle of Sadowa is one of the most decisive in modern European history. If Prussia had lost, Bismark would have been ingloriously kicked to the curb. But with a decisive victory, he returned to Berlin a national hero. Parliament voted him £60,000 and he was appointed to the rank of Major General. From then on, he never appeared in public without his uniform.

Napoleon's reward for French neutrality was a Germany still divided on France's east border and, rather than the Rhineland territory he lusted after, suggestions from Bismark he go after Belgium, or maybe Luxembourg.

After Prussia's unexpected victory, French press and parliament demanded some show of strength to prove that she was still the dominant power in Europe. Although small, Luxembourg would be better than nothing, and was a safer bet than Belgium.

But it turned out Bismark's intentions were far from honourable. In the German states, he appeared in the newspapers referring to Luxembourg as 'German' and talking of the 'age old enemy of France.' Any strike against Luxembourg, he contended, was a strike against the German people. It was a strike against German culture, German history, against the founding principles of what it meant to be quintessentially German. Abroad, he presented himself as a man striving for peace who would have to be pushed into armed conflict with France. 'I strove for peace then, and I will do so as long as may be; only, remember German susceptibilities must be respected, or I cannot answer for the people not even for the King!' he told a Times of London journalist in September 1867. Like the

revolutionary liberals of 1848, he was hitching his chariot to the desire of the German people for a united Fatherland. Unlike the Frankfurt Parliament, he had no problems whipping his horses into submission.

Napoleon suggested to the Dutch king that he should protect himself from probable Prussian aggression by allying himself with France, and that they seal the deal by selling Luxembourg to him. The Dutch king agreed ... but only if Wilhelm consented. Napoleon was humiliated at home and Bismark's second war became only a matter of time.

The wounds festered until July 1870. Popular opinion in the German states was slowly absorbing the idea of France as their natural enemy, Bismark's rhetoric shouting far louder than any historical evidence. Importantly, France wasn't the natural enemy of Prussia, or Saxony, or Bavaria ... but of *Germany*.

An otherwise minor spat about who would inherit the Spanish throne provided the spark for growing Franco-Prussian animosity.

The new Spanish Government was looking for a monarch, and approached Leopold Hohenzollern. In 1849 the Hohenzollern lands had become part of Prussia, and Leopold's father wouldn't give consent unless Wilhelm did. Wilhelm wouldn't, and Leopold didn't want to go to Spain anyway.

Once again, Bismark had other ideas. Having a Prussian on the Spanish throne to the south of France and a recently enlarged Prussia to the east was a temptation he couldn't resist. In mid-June, Leopold accepted the candidature and on the 21st Wilhelm—upset by the skulduggery behind his back—gave his consent.

There was uproar in the French parliament. The new foreign minister, Duc de Gramont, raved in the chambers at the insult to French honour. De Gramont telegrammed Berlin, demanding to know if they'd known about it. He then sent the French Ambassador to ambush Wilhelm as he was 'taking waters' in Ems, making it clear that if he supported Leopold then France would be left with no choice but to declare war. Already annoyed at whole af-

fair, Wilhelm consented and tried to return to his spa.

Bismark rushed back to Berlin, angry and threatening to resign. De Gramont, presumably in the name of French honour, wanted to grind Prussia's nose in his diplomatic triumph. Dramatically overplaying his hand and giving Bismark an early *Nikolaustag* present, he sent his ambassador back to Ems to demand an apology from Wilhelm, and a promise to never, ever endorse Leopold ever again. Insulted, Wilhelm refused and sent the ambassador on his way. Later that evening, Wilhelm sent a telegram to Bismark to pass on to the press and Prussia's ambassadors.

Bismark's subtle reworking of the Ems telegram is a masterpiece of editing. When Wilhelm saw it, he shuddered and whispered, 'this is war'. French confirmation of that fact followed six days later.

The south German states reluctantly followed Prussia into war against France. Francophobia in those outside the North German Confederation was balanced against a hatred of Prussia. But in the summer of 1866, the heads of the south German states had entered into a secret military alliance with Bismark: If Prussia became involved in a war which threatened her borders, the south German states would place their armies under Prussian control.

The 400,000 French soldiers squared off against the 850,000 Germans. The equipment, training, management and tactics of the Prussian troops outclassed the French. On September 1st, Napoleon personally led his army at the Battle of Sedan. That night, he was Bismark's guest, discussing the terms of France's surrender.

However, the war lasted another six months. Revolution had broken out in Paris, the Second Empire toppled and a Third French Republic was proclaimed. The Prussian troops advanced and, by mid-September, were getting comfortable as they starved the city into surrender.

The new French Minister of the Interior, Leon Gambetta, rose out of the besieged city in a hot air balloon and toured the country, raising a peasant

army to fight the invaders. The first President of the Third Republic, Alphones Thiers, toured the courts of Europe, looking for support. Guerilla armies nipped at the encamped Prussians, and Jules Favre—the new Foreign Minister—declared with a heart of French pride that not a centimetre of their country would be ceded. The siege of Paris captured the imagination of Europe.

On the 18th January 1871, Wilhelm I was proclaimed the first Kaiser of Germany. His coronation was held not in Berlin, but in the French palace of Versailles, in the Hall of Mirrors.

Gambetta failed to fire the imaginations of the European courts enough to win any substantial help. Thiers's peasant army was enthusiastic and patriotic, but lacked proper training, discipline and equipment. On the 28th January the government offered its surrender.

By the time the news was reported in the German states, Bismark's hopes had been realised. Shared victories, shared defeats and ceaseless propaganda against the French had brought the people of the German states together in shared hatred. Prussia entered the war, and Germany left it. Bismark had manipulated, contrived and bullied the states of the German Confederation into a new land of his designing. He picked up his napkin and dabbed the blood off his chin. As he leaned back, his chair creaked under the weight of his bloated stomach.

A nation on paper is not a nation in practice, and Bismark was well aware of the dangers of indigestion. The revolutions of 1848/9 had shown that—no matter the machinations of their princes and principles—a nation could not be ruled unless the people allowed it. Power was sucked up from individual provinces and into the growing gravitational body of Berlin, and in their place were ejected standard bodies with standard practices, and standard lines of communication and decision-making leading back to Berlin. Rail lines were built all over the country. Within a few years, the people of Saxony could easily swap their lives with the people of Bavaria or Hohenzollern. With everyone

working to the same system and railways making transportation of goods easy and reliable, capitalists could treat the new country as a sandbox, and became very rich very quickly.

Despite the new German nation being recognised by the powers of Europe as someone to be reckoned with, Bismark still saw enemies which needed to be defeated. Firstly, he targeted the Catholics of the new German nation, and later the Socialists. Both groups had a loyalty to something above and beyond their nation. If push came to shove, they would side with their Pope or their comrades over Germany. He pushed laws through curtailing their rights and filled the newspapers with inflammatory rhetoric. In both cases, the campaigns had the opposite effect.

In March 1888, Wilhelm I died. He was replaced by his grandson Wilhelm II. Wilhelm II was young, headstrong and convinced of his divine right to rule. He had no need for 'the old man' Bismark. In early 1890, Bismark, by then aged 75, resigned under the cloud of a bitter and personal struggle with the young Kaiser. He died on 30th July 1898.

To take a cursory look at Bismark's life and political career, it seems he crawled fresh from the womb with a plan to unify Germany and fought his whole life to see it realised. It was a view that Bismark himself did much to promote while writing his memoirs. Having carefully constructed the German nation, he busied himself constructing the legend of Otto von Bismark: The first and only true German.

The truth is that he was an opportunist, a schemer and a man utterly without scruples. He kept Napoleon as an ally against Francis Joseph, and then Francis Joseph as an ally against Napoleon. He kept Francis Joseph and Tsar Alexander II suspicious of each other. Against both Francis Joseph and Napoleon, he was prepared to wait and work until Prussia could appear the injured party.

No matter what happened, Bismark seemed to have a plan for it, and made sure it played out in his favour.

It wouldn't take much to change the course of history. Like the present, it is little more than

certain people manipulating events in certain ways—with greater or lesser degrees of success. Bismark's success wasn't all of his own making. It required the Prussian military strength built by Wilhelm, the distractions of the Austrian Empire on Francis Joseph, the woolliness of Napoleon and a dozen other things utterly out of his control. Each of the things Bismark used and abused was built on the foundations of a thousand other things.

What if Napoleon III had never taken control of France in 1851, and instead the French had been lead by someone more in the mould of Napoleon I? Or if Fredrick William had been treated for his mental instability instead of deposed, and the Prussian army had remained weak and unable to fight? What if the inventor of the Prussian breach-loading rifle had been born in Austria, or Russia? Or if Bismark had been killed in one of the duels he was so fond of in his youth? What if one of the assassination attempts on Wilhelm had been successful?

If Britain had been dragged into a European war, then her resources would have gone into weapons and not telephones and steamships. The stability that an empire relies on to thrive would have been destroyed and the echoes felt in Africa, China, Australia ...

Bismark leans over the history of Continental Europe as much as—maybe more than—Napoleon I. Without any of the thousand things which made Bismark's vision possible ... what if? ☀

Alice's Tumble

by Katie Casey

What if, instead of tripping down a hole
(after watching the White Rabbit run by
with sleepy, stupid eyes)
Alice, clever schoolgirl that she was,
had paused, considered,
and crawled carefully in after—
never minding the grass stains on her skirt—
pulled on by the promise of adventure?
Would she pause to practice curtsying
in mid-air as she tumbled:
thoughts drifting like cotton-topped
dandelion seeds, or like the words of
a book printed without pictures?



If she'd solved the poison's puzzle
and made it through the garden door,
and was never swept away, red-faced,
by that sea of tears;
(It would have been best anyway—
Women are so unattractive
when they cry).
If she had refused to babysit the piglet,
and instead explored the woods
beyond the house with the fish in livery;
if she had demanded the Queen
play croquet fairly,
charming her flamingo into cooperation
as Aesop's fox charms crows,
would she have wished so fervently
to abandon wandering
for home, and lessons in
manners and in needlepoint
and in how to read those books
that are printed without pictures?
(But not too many, because reading
might lead her to hysteria
in tight-laced corsets).

“We’re all mad here,” the cat said,
disappearing into a white grin,
but poor Alice protested, because
to go among these madmen
she would have to wear pants.

illustration by Eric Orchard

The White Rabbit's Other Story

by Dylan Fox

You remember our old friend, the fussy page,
With his fur a royal white,
With his strange manners and the odd habit that he had
To keep his pocketwatch wound tight,
His tatty jacket and his muddy paws ...
Oh, what a dashing sight!

Let us suppose then, on that sleepy summer day,
His watch wound down.
Let's make believe his senses faltered
And that he was lost in town.
Or that he'd watched a train bully along
And gotten lost in the smoke and sound.

What would our baffled bunny do
On the wrong side of the rabbit hole?
Where knaves are swapped for kings,
And the red queen is trumped by one black as coal.
Where court is kept in parliament
And the braying asses rule the world?

Would he have kept his senses, then,
As he walked past the butchers' grim display?
Or would the bloody, hanging corpses
Send him quickly quite deranged?
Would he end his stay as pelt or pie?
And would his foot bring luck to someone's day?

Or would he try and make a life,
And take a job as banker's clerk?
Sell his days and drink his nights
For a home that he sees only when it's dark?
And all for coins he never sees
And hope as faint as match's sparks?

What would our friend say, then,
After years of playing dumb,
(For common man has common thoughts, common brains,
A common soul, and that's the poor man's sum),
Of shells and tanks and mustard gas
And the horrors that were yet to come?

Would he find his comfort then
Amongst girls in lace and men in ties?
Would he play their games of social grace
To keep his name, and cheat, and lie?
Would he tut at the rape of Africa,
Sip at his tea and say, "My ... my"?

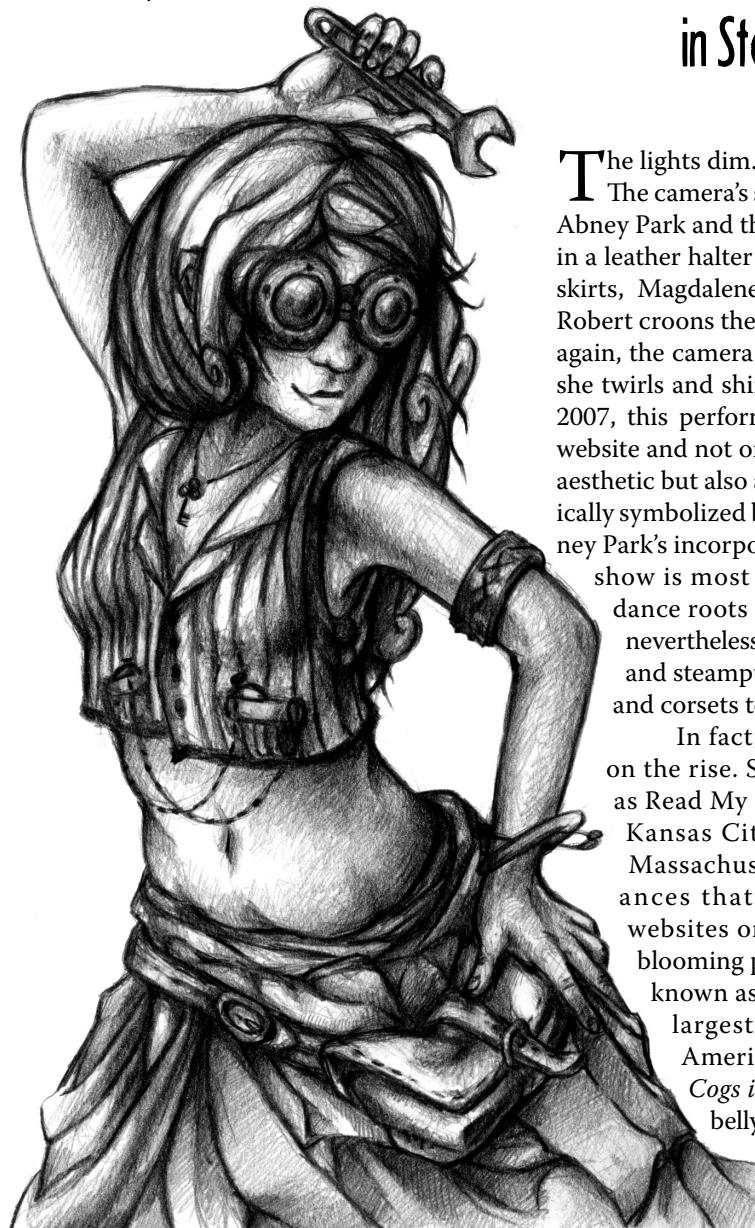
Can you see him sitting with his paper,
As he watches politicians posturing like bulls and bears,
Chittering like crickets
In their vainglorious political affairs?
Would he watch their pointless squabbling
And find some comfort there?

What would he make, then,
Of our houses of the mad?
No whim or whimsy there though,
Just the desperate and the sad.
Would he weep to see such pain in them,
Or pay his penny to witness the charade?

Perhaps the rabbit's better down the rabbit hole,
Among playing cards and croquet games.
He would be happier with tea parties,
With potions and with piscine footmen, in the main.
Amongst the people who, to give them due,
Will at least admit they're all insane. ☺

SHIMMIES AND SPROCKETS

by Ay-leen the Peacemaker
illustration by Lisa Grabenstetter



Analyzing the Use of Belly Dance in Steampunk

The lights dim. The beat of the music fills the stage. The camera's scope settles upon Captain Robert of Abney Park and the young woman at his side. Dressed in a leather halter top, an aviator cap, and voluminous skirts, Magdalene Veen sways on stage as Captain Robert croons the lyrics to *Death of a Hero*. Again and again, the camera returns to capture her lithe form as she twirls and shimmies. Taken at Convergence 13 in 2007, this performance is available on Abney Park's website and not only showcases the band's steampunk aesthetic but also adds a non-Eurocentric aspect physically symbolized by Ms. Veen's dancing. Although Abney Park's incorporation of belly dance into its stage show is most likely a carryover from its gothic dance roots and world music influences, it has nevertheless helped inspire many belly dancers and steampunks alike to add goggles, bloomers, and corsets to their dancing.

In fact, steampunk belly dance has been on the rise. Several belly dance companies such as Read My Hips in Chicago, Pavlov's Hips in Kansas City, and Troop Moirae in eastern Massachusetts have done steamy performances that can be viewed on their troop websites or YouTube. As another sign of its blooming popularity, the dancer Tempest (best known as the co-producer of Gothla US, the largest Gothic/Fusion Festival in North America) named her most recent festival *Cogs in Motion* and conducts steampunk belly dance workshops across the United States.

Steampunk belly dance may seem out of place in a genre known for its Victoriana. Historically, belly dance existed for thousands of years in northern Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Dancing techniques vary widely, with each region engaging different parts of the body in a series of various undulations, shimmies, and circles—the hips, the torso, the arms, and even through certain facial expressions and hand gestures. However, ever since European explorers made their way eastward, accounts of belly dance have been recorded in their travelogues. With the rise of Western imperialism in the nineteenth century, many travelers from Europe and America added belly dance to their Far East itineraries: The most famous account is French author Gustave Flaubert's series of letters about his intimate encounters with Egyptian dancer Kuchuk Hanem (and just one of many cases of Western associations between sex, prostitution, and the Eastern woman).

Additionally, Middle Eastern dance was showcased at many world's fairs throughout the late nineteenth century, but the dance form achieved popular recognition in the West at Chicago's Columbian World's Exposition in 1893. According to Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young, authors of *Belly Dance: Orientalism, Transnationalism, and Harem Fantasy*, Sol Bloom, manager of the Midway Plaisance, promoted his Egyptian dancers' performances as "belly dance" in order to attract audiences. Academic professor Zeynep Çelik spoke about how the press couldn't get enough of the "new obsession" at the World's Exposition. Thousands flocked to see the performers, and newspapers cheekily remarked how "the soiled devotees of Constantinople and Cairo corrupted Western morals by the seductive allurements of the danse-du-ventre". Thus, ever since its first forays into Western cultural consciousness, belly dance has been (and remains) associated with hypersexualized Orientalist imagery. Its resurgence as a popular dance form today has triggered concern within the Muslim community about popular misconceptions of Middle Eastern culture. As frequent contributor Fatemeh writes on the blog Muslimah

Media Watch, "I take offense at the presentation of Middle Eastern 'culture' through things like transparent veils, coin necklaces, and henna tattoos because reducing the Middle Eastern experience to some jingly coins and a scimitar takes the humanity right out of us."

So the position of belly dance within steampunk art is a polemical one. Dancers have interpreted steampunk as a current fad, a fashion aesthetic, and a form of neo-Victorian inspiration. Yet the intersection of steampunk and belly dance raises the concern about whether steampunk sanctions romanticized Orientalism. Not only that, but the questions over co-opting come into play. Co-opting in general is defined as the use of something from a particular culture by members outside that culture. This "use" isn't inherently bad, but can cross the line of cultural respect between the users and the originators. By applying a Westernized aesthetic to a dance form that has non-Western origins, does appreciation for the cultural roots of the dance get lost in its Europeanized glamour? Does the participation of and emphasis upon Eurocentric, Western dancers in the community overshadow the historically marginalized dancers who originated it? With steampunk, is the West "stealing" belly dance from its native culture? These questions aren't the easiest to answer, but one way to investigate them is by looking at how belly dancers interpret and use steampunk in their art and how modern belly dance itself became established as an art form.

How Belly Dance is Steampunk'd

For this article, I interviewed several belly dancers who have used steampunk as a source of inspiration. All of them identify as dancers first and foremost before steampunk, and many have practiced and performed for several years. Each dancer has his or her specific favorites when using steampunk costuming and props. Many were used to making their own outfits for belly dance, so DIY-ing their steampunk-ware was no challenge. Amidst traditional belly dance items (like fans and veils) the dancers have also constructed their own corsets, mini top hats, bloomers and bustles.

Personal styles range across various time periods as well. Several enjoy incorporating parasols and typical Victoriana items, but they also confess to mixing steampunk with other fashion influences, such as the Prohibition-era and dieselpunk. Other muses varied from saloon girls, grease monkeys, and Bollywood to the Middle Eastern film vamp Theda Bara, early modern dancer Ruth St. Denis, and Mata Hari. Similarly, a wide variety of performance music was listed: Abney Park, Dr. Steele, Vernian Process, and Rasputina were the most common steampunk staples, but others referred to more era-related music played by accordions and stringed instruments. There were even left-field preferences like Akasha Afsana's suggestion that "a lot of synth-pop 80s music works well for this genre too". Indeed, steampunk belly dancers are no different from any other steampunk enthusiast in their embrace of the eclectic.

When combining steampunk and belly dance, none of my interviewees expressed much interest in imitating the nineteenth-century style of their inspiration—the historically accurate layers of pantaloons, vests, head coverings, scarves, belts, and coin necklaces. If anything, steampunk belly dancers actively co-opt the props of Victoriana in performances which create an image of the Victorian Other, much in a way that traditional props of belly dance in the West had been used to emphasize the image of the Oriental Other. Interestingly enough, several dancers—all self-identified as white men and women—spoke about steampunk costumes and props in ways that value the foreign yet avant-guard quality of using Western imagery in an Oriental dance. Most telling is Andromacke's remark: "I think they're both exotic and they both come from a similar time period."

The classification of both steampunk and belly dance as "exotic" contributes to the interpretation that belly dancers' use of steampunk "exoticizes" Western culture and history. The perceived exoticism is what dancers find so inspirational; when asked why steampunk and belly dance seem to go so well together, many responses emphasize the creative potential of drawing from history and lit-

erature. For instance according to Salomé, a dancer from San Diego, "Steampunk is ideal for the creativity that a gifted dancer can bring to her costuming and performance."

Furthermore, the dancers consider their work to be an enactment of a fantasy world, not a reflection of reality. That is not to belittle the seriousness with which they practice their craft; in fact, many are very specific in their artistic approaches to steampunk belly dance. Movements drawn from various belly dancing schools and other dance styles like cabaret and flamenco are incorporated and modified to form character-driven choreography. Tempest, for example, has arranged performances from aggressive, stomping sky pirates, to gothic-tinted Lovecraft-inspired solos. "As long as that history is kept in mind while developing the story and character of the dance, I think it makes for a great pairing," she explained. "The key thing though is to really take the music and movements into consideration—far too many people do 'gratuitous gears' which is [when] they think adding a few keys and cogs to a costume will make it steampunk—steampunk isn't just a look, you have to consider how the music and character would affect the dance and bring that influence wholly to the piece." Performance, then, is key: Steampunk belly dance isn't all about being pretty or dancing provocatively, but acting out a persona on stage.

The Transnationality of Belly Dance

Thus, when creating steampunk belly dance, the focus lies in subversive reinterpretation as opposed to reenactment. But is this attitude typical of the belly dance community or for these steampunks in particular? Interestingly enough, all of my interviewees identified as being from the United States. Initially, this fact appeared only incidental: I had asked for interview volunteers widely, expecting a diverse response. Further research, however, revealed a correlation between the general attitude my interviewees had toward belly dance and steampunk, and how the dance developed in the United States. Therefore, in order to understand the context in which these dancers interpret their

art, we must also consider the development of belly dance in American culture as an organized dance form.

After its Western introduction during the Columbian World's Exposition, belly dance transferred from Chicago to Coney Island, becoming a cabaret highlight and appealing to America's working and middle classes. These belly dancers were usually white performers with Middle Eastern-sounding stage names who dressed in two-piece costumes popularized by Streets of Cairo dancer Little Egypt (who, mostly likely was not Egyptian at all, but a traveling American stage performer) and modern dancer Ruth St. Denis. Belly dance imagery also captured the imaginations of high culture, with a series of Orientalist ballets such as *Scheherazade* that inspired later Hollywood interpretations, including Theda Bara in film and Broadway shows like *Kismet*. Moreover, characteristics of cabaret became fused with belly dance: for instance, the formation of line dancing or wearing high heels. The use of comedic routine, wit repartee with the audience, and singing were also qualities of cabaret that were added to belly dance.

During the first feminist wave in the 1960s, women sought to reclaim their bodies from a history of male domination. At the same time, the Arab-American community was establishing a cultural space where Middle Eastern immigrants and non-Middle Easterners would end up: Ethnic restaurants. At these restaurants, non-Middle Easterners were able to participate in group and solo Middle Eastern dances led by male and female dance entertainers. Eventually, young women, looking for an outlet to express their sexual liberation, approached dancers about lessons. Jamila Salimpour was one of those dancers. Later on, she would take the techniques she learned from her fellow Arab-American friends and the moves her father learned as a young Navyman stationed in the Middle East, and fuse them with the adapted Middle Eastern culture gleaned from Hollywood and Egyptian films. Together, these influences came to establish a teachable style of belly dance. Author Danielle Giosetti became one of the first

feminists who advocated belly dance as a form of artistic expression, which celebrated the power of female sexuality. Giosetti wrote the romanticized history of belly dance *Earth Dancing*, and toured college campuses with her message. Carolena Ne- roccio and John Compton are two other dancers who, inspired by Salimpour, created their own belly dance companies. Together, all three instructors are credited with developing what is now generally classified as American Tribal Dance.

My interviewees either practiced a form of American Tribal or identified as having an American interpretation of belly dance taught by dance instructors like Jamila's daughter Suhaila Salimpour. Thus, considering this history, there is a disconnection between the dancer's mindset and the outside viewer's perspective. Sellers-Young argues that belly dancers—and Tribal dancers in particular—do not see what they do as disrespectful toward Middle Eastern culture because belly dance itself has evolved into a separate tradition endowed with its own significant meaning. Sellers-Young explained this tradition best:

“The women performing it are not attempting to allay an internalized version of the oriental *femme fatale*. They are instead creating an alternative image in which the erotic power of a woman exists with her communion with other women on stage as performers and off stage in the emotional support they provide for each other.”

Belly dance subculture in America is seen by its participants as distant—if not divorced—from its cultural roots. Sadly, the cultural meaning of belly dance in the Middle East has changed as a result of the sexual Orientalist connotations it acquired during Western European colonialism. Although belly dance is still practiced culturally, its public performance has become associated with prostitution and men and women are discouraged from dancing professionally. There are exceptions to this rule, such as the most well-known Egyptian per-

formers Fifi Abdou and Raqia Hassam, who is also the head organizer behind the international belly dance festival Ahalan Wa Sahalan. Contrastingly (and ironically), belly dance has grown in the West to become a respected art form. As Suhaila Salimpour emotionally acknowledges in a video on her website: “My Persian family doesn’t speak to me because I became a belly dancer ... Here is the best part of this country—we don’t connect belly dancing to the culture of the Middle East”.

Admittedly, Orientalist Western media shaped the evolution of modern belly dance: Sellers-Young summarizes that “American Tribal and other forms of *raqs sharqi* [belly dance] are a commodity fetish that is both a site of Orientalist fantasy and a site of self-agency for the self-realization in which the media has played a significant role in its creation and evolution”. Thus, the interplay between the oppressive fantasy and its empowering consequence has been a zone of contention in discussions concerning belly dance, Orientalism, and cultural appropriation. As belly dance continues to be identified as a solely “Middle Eastern” dance and as long as that dance and its participants are placed within an Orientalist framework in Western eyes, this debate will continue.

The steampunk belly dancers I interviewed do not aim for cultural or historical verisimilitude in their performance. Instead, they concern themselves with fostering that “alternative image”. “I think that fantasy aspect is a giant contributor to [the appeal of steampunk in belly dance],” M’chelle commented, “especially with Tribal Fusion. Steampunk is a sort of ‘turned on its head’ version of history, and there’s a huge aspect in belly dance that’s very similar—no written history so a lot of it’s assumed and made up”. This may also explain why many dancers embrace the fantasy element offered by steampunk while also choosing to interpret that fantasy as Victorian-based—an interesting reversal of how Victorians interpreted the Orient.

The use of belly dance to express steampunk subversion, however, should not be confused with disrespectful co-opting of non-Western cultures to emphasize Western aesthetics. First of all, as

previously stated, the use of Victoriana in belly dance does not promote the message of Western superiority over an Eastern art form but, instead, subverts that superiority by exoticizing it. Moreover, a common belief among belly dancers is that steampunk in belly dance is a welcome form of cultural incorporation—an attitude that’s based in modern belly dance tradition. Today, belly dance is a globalized art form where people draw from various identities and inspirations in order to create. Thus, when asked for their opinions about cultural appropriation in belly dance, some interpreted this term positively. Akasha addressed the question in terms of fusion dance: “As fusion dancers, we’re always looking for new inspirations to keep the dance fresh and exciting”. Dizzy’s response had been especially insightful, which encompasses both the progressive “punk” attitude associated with steampunk as well as her own feelings as a Cajun woman:

“I am from New Orleans, Louisiana, I’m a Cajun, and have adapted things into my costuming from my own culture, as well as symbolism from the voodoo religion and culture which I hold very dear. This being said I also adopt Middle Eastern ideas like harquis into my costuming as well. I have worn bindi dots, Afghani jewelry and turbans. The key I think is to borrow with respect. For me, it is important to take and blend all these influences together to create something new—that is, a mix of lots of different ideas and places to create something that is unique, and yet respectful to the meanings behind the cultural symbols you are adapting. You do this through sincerity and educating yourself about the cultures. This combination of curiosity and respect cause us to really try and understand the people who share our very small world with us, and go a long way towards healing rifts between people.”

This isn't to say that all dancers share this same attitude toward the complicated historical and cultural background behind their art. What modern belly dance and steampunk have in common, then, is their status as permissible areas for the creation of new histories. As Kansas City-based dancer M'chelle pointed out, both steampunk and belly dance are at least in part the product of invented histories. Despite (or, perhaps, because of) this belief that the histories of both are piecemeal and open to individual interpretation, this unique combination of Western aesthetic and Eastern form has had a definitive impact upon this ever-expanding subculture, one that will not be going away anytime soon. 

Author's Note

I'd like to thank the following belly dancers for the helpful insight and information they provided for this article: Akasha Afsana, Andromacke, Dizzy, General Malcolm Kane, M'chelle, Tempest, and Salomé of San Diego. Their profiles can be found in the tie-in post to this article written for my blog series "Beyond Victoriana" at: [HTTP://DMP.DREAMWIDTH.ORG/TAG/%20BEYOND+VICTORIANA%20](http://dmp.dreamwidth.org/tag/%20BEYOND+VICTORIANA%20)

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- Stavros Stavrou Karayanni – ‘Dismissal Veiling Desire: Kuchuk Hanem and Imperial Masculinity’ in *Dancing Fear and Desire: Race, Sexuality, and Imperial politics in Middle Eastern Dance*
- Sahaila Salimpour – ‘The Legacy’ on the *Sohaila International* website
- Barbara Sellers-Young – ‘Body, Image, and Identity: American Tribal Belly Dance’ in *Belly Dance: Orientalism, Transnationalism, and Harem Fantasy*

THE BRADY BUNCH OF CALCUTTA 1910

An interview with Sunday Driver

illustration by Lisa Grabenstetter

The seven piece, sitar-wielding spectacular that is London-and-Cambridge-based Sunday Driver, arrived on the UK steampunk scene when they played at the Asylum in Lincoln last year. The next day (while we were all a little worse for wear at the SteamPunk Magazine stall) someone put their album, In the City of Dreadful Night, on in the trading hall. From that moment onwards it was inevitable: steampunks had taken to these people, and we were not about to let them go.

The strangest thing about all of this is that they seem to be quite happy about that. But that's just Sunday Driver for you: As well as creating music that sounds like a musical production set in Calcutta under the Raj, they also happen to be some of the nicest people that we know.

A little while ago, we managed to catch up with Chandy (vocals), Joel (guitar/sitar) and Kat (clarinet/spoons et al) for a chat about their unique take on steampunk, music hall and prejudice.

SPM: *Sunday Driver*, just why are you called *Sunday Driver*?

Joel: I'll let Kat explain that one—however I will say this, before we were *Sunday Driver* we were called *Incensed!* That's rubbish ... especially if you say it quickly, it sounds like something very wrong!

Kat: We're named after a gene found in fruit flies. When we started the band I was working in a lab. Just before we went into the studio to record our first songs, I was talking to a colleague who told me about the gene and I thought it was be a good name for the band.

SPM: *Your album, In the City of Dreadful Night, has Indian influences and a dream-like feeling which occasionally seems to have come straight out of a West End musical. Was it a conscious decision to cover such a broad range of musical styles?*

Joel: I think Chandy should explain our West End influences. The breadth of styles from the boys on strings (Me, Melon and Chemise) goes back to the late 90s—think Seattle, RATM, Blind Melon, Down, Pantera—it never left us. Melon is a huge

Tool fan, I just bought tickets today to go and see Alice in Chains. Chemise was into Frank Zappa when I was just discovering Indian music in 2003. And I love classical sitar music, there's something so ... METAL about it. It's all those drones in D!

Kat: We have such diverse influences. I love modern and early 20th century classical music—Reich, Glass, Debussy, Ravel—as well as bebop jazz, electronica and hip-hop. I like to think that helps to tone down the boys a bit.

Chandy: The “West End” style is a lot to do with my musical background. I was raised on a diet largely consisting of sanskrit prayers and West End musicals (does Charlie and the Chocolate Factory count as West End?), all of which surface in our music at some point or another.

SPM: *Speaking of the West End, do you think the steampunk scene is developing a certain theatricality? Do you think it had one already?*

Joel: Definitely. I would use the word melodrama. Bands like Trousseaux and ourselves have that in bounds, even though their sound and melodies are totally different to us.

Kat: I love the theatre of it—some of us in the band are certainly drama queens anyway! We put on a big Victoriana gig in Cambridge last year with a performance poet, burlesque, comedy and music—everyone dressed up and we decorated the stage with grandfather clocks and rat traps. It's a step up from your average grimy pub gig.

Chandy: I think that theatricality is an intrinsic part of the steampunk scene. Perhaps it's to do with the fact that it draws on caricatures and is so reminiscent of the whole "music hall" era—that's why I love it!

SPM: *As pretty much the only multicultural band in steampunk, why do you think that so few people from different ethnic backgrounds are involved in steampunk at the moment?*

Chandy: Controversially I would say it is because people from different ethnic backgrounds often have to pigeon-hole themselves as world music/fusion or some other well-known niche to get established. They can't afford to take the risk of getting involved in scenes they haven't traditionally been visible in. This is all drawn from personal experience though—I don't know how many times people said to me: "Your voice is great so why aren't you doing more 'ethnic' stuff" when I first started song writing.

SPM: *Steampunk borrows the best bits from the past, and increasingly it is also beginning to borrow from other cultures as well. Do you think that borrowing means that we are in danger of the same sort of ignorance and cultural imperialism as Victoria's 'Great' British Empire?*



Sometimes I worry that by borrowing snippets of other cultures, we are in danger of thinking we understand them in their entirety, when really all we have is a snapshot.

Chandy: Not at all! Cultures have always borrowed from each other and that's what enriches them. However, sometimes I worry that by borrowing snippets of other cultures, we are in danger of thinking we understand them in their entirety, when really all we have is a snapshot.

Joel: I'll say this: The melting pot of culture in Britain is its best point, bar none. That's why *Sunday Driver* exists.

SPM: *How do you think steampunk reconciles itself with the oppression and colonialism of the Victorian era? Do you think it reconciles itself at all?*

Kat: I don't think that it needs to. To me, it's an aesthetic. It draws on stylistic influences and the spirit of adventure. It feels very inclusive and accepting as a movement.

Chandy: I am not sure if steampunk really addresses such complex issues yet, but I hope it will in future. It's very tongue in cheek, and I think the best way it can confront these issues is to make a mockery of them. It's something that I am looking forward to being a part of.

SPM: *You're self-confessed newcomers to the steampunk scene, how did you discover it and what about it attracted you?*

Joel: I think we stumbled into it, but then again we were already doing it! Basically we wanted something that blended London and the Raj. Matthew (the tabla player who performed on the album) has a grandmother in Calcutta. At one time we were thinking of going to her house and recording on her roof! She lives at Bakul Bagan Road, a name we've borrowed for a few things. Matthew's a very well read man and he presented us with JJ Thompson's poem *The City of Dreadful Night*. It's an image of London in 1870.

It opens not too brightly:

“O melancholy Brothers, dark, dark, dark!”

Kipling wrote a short story by the same name about Calcutta:

“So, at ten o’clock of the night, I set my walking-stick on end in the middle of the garden, and waited to see how it would fall. It pointed directly down the moon-lit road that leads to the City of Dreadful Night.”

When we read those two pieces, the imagery and beauty wrapped around that dark centre besotted us. I know we’re not exactly Joy Division or Korn, but there is something dark and malignant sitting at the root of a lot of Chandy’s songs, even though they are wrapped up in beautiful melodies and bouncy rhythms. ‘Black Spider’ is a good example: listen hard and think of prejudice in its many ugly forms in all walks of society. That Black Spider has to be stamped out.

One day we found ourselves having a photo shoot at Cambridge’s industrial museum dressed up like we were the *Brady Bunch* of Calcutta 1910! We were Victorians in 2009, and we were only a hop skip and jump from steampunk.

After a gig in Brighton for Refugee Radio we realised we were street urchins without a home. We needed the steampunk community, and hopefully they need us! We love the people, the flair, the fun, the history, the depth, the creativity—and the corsets!

Kat: It’s fantastic to stumble upon a whole bunch of people who really understand our influences and what we’re trying to do. For a long time we felt at odds with the music scene: We would turn up to gigs all dressed up, with sugar mice, cupcakes and these strange, melodramatic songs, but we didn’t really fit alongside the usual indie rock bands or singer/songwriter groups. And I do love wearing corsets!

SPM: *Will steampunk influence the sort of music that you make now that you’ve discovered it?*

Joel: Hard to say. I think creativity is a result of your surroundings, so I guess it will, but it won’t consciously dictate our directions.

Kat: I recently started writing a song about a spaceship made of brass, but it needs some work!

SPM: *Finally, if you were all involved in a mortal-combat-style deathmatch, which one of you would be the one left standing at the end?*

Joel: Chemise—he’s silent but violent. He’d do a fatality with his right eyebrow.

Kat: Yeah, it’s the quiet ones you’ve got to watch.

You can listen to Sunday Driver on their MySpace page: [WWW.MYSPACE.COM/SUNDAYDRIVERINUK](http://WWW.MYSSPACE.COM/SUNDAYDRIVERINUK) and also via their website: WWW.SUNDAYDRIVER.CO.UK where you can pick up a copy of their album.



All Fashions of Loveliness

WOMEN IN VICTORIAN PENNY DREADFULS

by Allie Kerr
illustration by Ms. Scary Boots

Stay away from them: They'll turn you to crime; they'll wreck your virtue; they'll make you steal horses from the livery stables and go riding through the streets at midnight.

Introduction: The Penny Dreadfuls

In the late 1800s, London literary critics raged against an unlikely foe. The culprit was a new form of popular entertainment, steeped in "sentimentality and sensational supernaturalism": The Penny Dreadfuls. Brewed from a blend of Gothic novels, true crime chapbooks and the pirated works of Dickens, the dreadfuls were printed on thin, cheap paper, and sold weekly in installments of eight to ten pages. At a penny an issue, the dreadfuls were among the first reading materials accessible to a working class audience. They were an immediate success: Dickens' bestselling *Pickwick Papers* sold about 40,000 copies a week; the same year, publisher Edward Lloyd sold over 100,000 penny dreadfuls a week.

The dreadfuls have been neglected by historians because few have survived in their entirety. They were printed to be disposable, and issues were literally read to pieces. Historian E. F. Bleiler says:

"[Dreadfuls] were hawked by newsboys, sold by vendors, shipped by train to the factory towns, smuggled home by boys, read by candlelight by workers, who sometimes had one person read aloud to them while they worked ... and then thrown away."

Of the hundreds of penny dreadfuls published in the late 1800s, only a few stories still exist in their entirety. Some of the most popular dreadfuls have been reprinted, including *Varney the Vampyre* and *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

In spite of, or perhaps because of their popularity, they became targets for moralists, who claimed that the genre's sensationalism put the wrong ideas into the heads of London's youth. This sensationalism is what makes them so invaluable as historical sources. As an early form of popular literature, they offer an on-the-ground perspective on Victorian gender roles and sexuality. Two dreadfuls in particular offer volumes on these subjects: *Varney the Vampyre* and *Wagner the Wehr-Wolf*

Varney the Vampyre

Easily the most popular of the penny dreadfuls, *Varney the Vampyre* was first published in 1845. It runs a full 237 chapters in length, for a total of 868 closely-printed, exhausting-worded pages. In fine penny dreadful form, the text is long-winded, rambling, and often contradicts itself. Occasionally, the story loses whole characters, who walk out of climactic scenes, never to return.

Women in *Varney* are depicted as well-intentioned, delicate and beautiful. They are also irrational and generally dependent upon male support and protection: The ultimate Damsels in Distress. In an interview with another male character, Varney refers to women as "that fairer half of ... creation which we love for their very foibles." At one point, when Flora attempts to argue with her fiancé, she declares: "I have not power of language, aptitude of illustration, nor depth of thought to hold a mental contention with you." Men are described by their clothing and their bearing, particularly as it denotes their class or profession; women are described according to their

emotional state, their beauty, or their sexuality. Floral comparisons are particularly popular: after Varney's first attack on Flora, her fiancé notes that her beauty has changed—"the flower that to his mind was fairer than them all, was blighted, and in the wan cheek of her whom he loved, he sighed to see the lily usurping the place of the radiant rose." Women, like these flowers, are part of the scenery in *Varney*.

In crisis situations, the men of *Varney* respond with trepidation, but remain in control of their faculties; women descend into swoons, a panic, or madness. During the opening of the first chapter, Varney attacks Flora Bannerworth and then leaps out the window. Four women appear on the scene, and each responds to the vampire's attack upon Flora with hysteria. Flora is petrified with fear, but only after giving a small speech about her horror does she think to call for help, and by this point, she is too terrified to do so effectively: "That one shriek is all she can utter—with hands clasped, a face of marble, a heart beating so wildly in her bosom, that each moment it seems as if it would break its confines, eyes distended and fixed upon the window, she waits, froze with horror."

Sexuality in *Varney* is a fearsome, violent force, and Varney's predations carry now-familiar sexual overtones, particularly the opening scene of the dreadful, which resembles a rape. However, the focus of the scene is not the attack itself, but the fear of becoming a "ruined woman." Later in the story, a character expresses concerns that Flora's "condition" will make her an undesirable match:

"The family [your nephew] wishes to marry into is named Bannerworth, and the young lady's name is Flora Bannerworth. When, however, I inform you that a *vampyre* [sic] is in that family, and that if he marries into it, he marries a vampyre, and will have vampyres for children, I trust I have said enough to warn you upon the subject."

This warning, particularly the part about vampire children, carries racial allusions as well. The letter writer is concerned that Flora is no longer marriageable, not only because she is "ruined," but also because she has associated with an undesirable group.

Flora's distress escalates over the course of the first few chapters, until she begins expressing a fear that she will go mad. At several points in the story, Flora lapses into a trance in which she loses all touch with reality: Not only do the women of *Varney* fragment under pressure, their sexual purity is directly tied to their sanity and self-identity.

Wagner the Wehr-Wolf

In *Wagner the Wehr-Wolf*, George William MacArthur Reynolds introduces the role of the Femme Fatale to the genre. Reynolds used eroticism and exoticism to maintain a fantastical narrative environment. The story of *Wagner* is set in 1520, in the style of a "costume opera": what we would now identify as historical fiction.

Women in *Wagner* may be either active or passive, but their roles are limited regardless. Femme Fatale characters are socially dominant, outspoken, capable in verbal or physical conflict, and generally in control of their own affairs. They are always antagonists: Dangerously fanatical, usually seductive, and murderous. Nisida, Wagner's lover, is an epitomical Femme Fatale. She is obsessively devoted to Wagner, but in her jealousy she imagines rivals for her lover's affection (including Wagner's granddaughter Agnes, whom she kills). Nisida spends the better part of the story pretending to be "deaf and dumb," a role she constructs to exact pity from men she wishes to control. Nisida also uses her sexuality as a tool on several occasions, to visit Wagner in prison, and to secure revenge upon others.

Women who play passive roles, such as Agnes, are dependent upon male assistance in crisis situations, and are portrayed as "good", if ineffective characters. These Damsels in Distress are in constant danger and active, evil female characters will often attempt to take advantage of the passive, pure

women. Passive women may take a temporarily active role, if motivated by piety or by love. They invariably triumph at the end of the story, usually with the last-minute assistance of a male lover or relative. In *Varney, the Damsel in Distress* is pure but helpless; in *Wagner, the Femme Fatale* is powerful, but tainted with evil.

Social Responses

While these roles seem limited to a modern reader, in the mid 1800s they broke new ground. Wealthy publishers and concerned literary critics spearheaded the moral outcry against the dreadfuls. Edward Salmon, usually a strong proponent of women's education, was concerned by the impact of penny literature on working class girls. In *Juvenile Literature As It Is*, Salmon's choice of phrasing is particularly telling:

"If we were to trace the matter to its source, we should probably find that high-flown conceits and pretensions of the poorer girls of the period, their dislike of manual work and love of freedom, spring largely from notions imbibed in the course of a perusal of their penny fictions ... indeed, there is hardly a magazine read by working-class girls which it would not be a moral benefit to have swept off the face of the earth."

The "dislike of manual work and love of freedom" that Salmon feared may have been in part a product of the gender roles portrayed in the dreadfuls. In *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta Rap, 1830-1996*, historian John Springhall notes that the gender roles occupied by young women in the dreadfuls were more lenient than those depicted in conventional literature:

"Women in 'penny dreadfuls' were, none the less, allowed a more independent, even aggressive, role than could be occupied by the polite middle-class heroines of most adult three-decker novels."

Springhall calls the heroine type of the dreadfuls a "virago." As it was used during the Victorian period, virago could mean either "a man-like, vigorous, and heroic woman; a female warrior; an amazon," or a "bold, impudent (or wicked) woman; a termagant, a scold." While there is a clear link between agency and wickedness in these female characters, the Femme Fatales and Damsels in Distress of the dreadfuls were free to act out in ways their high-brow counterparts could not. Furthermore, the female characters in the dreadfuls lampooned depictions of women in higher literature and mocked traditional Victorian gender roles. The wild success of the dreadfuls indicates that their readers found such satire satisfying entertainment. The critical response of the upper middle class to the dreadfuls may have been anger—not at the poor literary quality or immoral themes they represented—but at the truth concealed in their grotesque caricatures of real Victorian social mores. ☀

Author's Note

This article is drawn from excerpts of a broader thesis, which may be found in its unabridged form in the digital archives of the Lewis & Clark College Library.



Liberty

by C. Allegra Hawksmoor
illustration by Sam Haney

These papers were first published in the *The Liberty Journal of Chandisha Chattopadhyay*, 1800.

Letter to Caroline Herschel, 30th November 1799

'Lina,

Doubtless by now someone—perhaps even our mutual friend at the Royal Society—has informd you of my arrest along with that of Mr Darvell. For now, he and I are accommodated together at the Borough Compter, although I fear that it will not be long before we are separated, or else transferr'd to Newgate.

I may not have long, and this letter must be sent in haste. It will likely only be through the kindness of our friend Sir J. that this letter reaches you at all. I urge you to convince him of our cause: He may be the only hope that we have of escaping this disaster before it goes too far!

The King holds you and your brother in high regard, and if the three of you were to speak to him, then I am certain that you may convince him of the futility of funding this second venture to the moon.

You yourself have seen what good the B.E.I. Co. has done to Mysore and Bengal. England must not repeat her mistakes. She must let the Selenites alone! Sir J. will help you, I am sure of it. He still feels keenly enough the situation of his making in the South Pacific, and if you are willing to incite him with that then he will be easily convinc'd.

I was able to bring little with me at the time of my arrest. But a few fragments of my lunar journal, and the three-foot telescope that Ozias has convinced our captors to allow us. He has set it up beneath the window, and in the last two nights he has only desistd from staring up at the moon for long enough to complain about the haste with which she moves across the narrow window through which we are afford'd a view of the sky. I can only guess that he is searching for some trace of *she* that he has left behind—as surely as you must have search'd for me during my long weeks of absence. Perhaps he has just gone out of his mind.

You must now think only of convincing your brother and Sir J. to assist you in preventing this madness from going any further.

I have included what disorder'd scraps I was able to salvage from my journals, and also a letter that I addressd to you three days ago. Perhaps Ozias was hoping to dissuade me, because he did not send it.

I hope that these fragments help, if only a very little. If nothing else, then it should make sense of all of this for you, beloved.

Do not delay. Not when we have so very much at stake.

Yours forever,
Eesha

From Journals, 13th April 1799

Sir Joseph Banks has ask'd that I begin to keep a journal, now that my passage upon the *Liberty* has been agreed. It is his insistence that Mr Davell and I are both to document our findings down to the finest of details, so that this first historic voyage to the moon (I could not help but notice that he failed to mention the fates of Mr Blanchard and Mrs Sage) may be shared with the wider public.

This morning, Sir Joseph request'd my presence for breakfast at his residence in Soho Square. On my arrival, I found that Mr Ozias Darvell—whom has financed and overseen the construction of the *Liberty*, and upon whom my passage on her was dependant—had been there for some time, as he was already deep into discussions with Sir Joseph.

Both regard'd me with the peculiar sort of fascination that I have become accustomed to in the short time since we arrived here from Madras, although Sir Joseph at least had the common decency to pretend otherwise.

He is far from what I imagind he would be from your fervid descriptions of him, 'Lina. I cannot help but wonder if age and illness have bested him in the years that you have been away. Now, he appears to be confin'd almost entirely to a wheel-chair, overweight and swollen with whatever sickness that has put him there. Still, there is some of the fire you have spoken of behind his eyes. True to your word, I found him to be more polite and kind than any man that I have yet met in England.

Mr Darvell is young (I should even say *too* young), able, dark-haired, and crackling with energy in the peculiar way that appears to be fashionable here. He began our conversation by referring to me with that vile moniker "The Calcutta Tigress" that was award'd me by the officers of the British

East India Company. He seem'd unimpressed to learn that we had travell'd from the Madras Observatory aboard one of Meusnier's dirigibles. He then proceed'd to inform me that the *Liberty* is quite a different beast from any simple hydrogen balloon ship, and that I should have to learn again how to navigate the skies.

However, he did at least agree to my accompanying him so that I may take the astronomical observations which you and William require, and in which Mr Darvell has predictably little interest.

For now, I shall have to take some comfort from that fact.

From Journals, 10th July 1799

It is now but two days before Mr Darvell and I are to be borne aloft by *Liberty* to risk our fate upon the Heavens. Over the past weeks I have found myself increasingly anxious to be at it and have done with it, so that I may know if we are to live, or die in the attempt. My anxiety has led to my often wondering what I am doing here with you, 'Lina—about to embark upon the British Empire's first ascent up to the moon. I often feel as though I should still be in the hills and lakes of Mysore, risking my life to a different sort of fate.

They say that Tipu Sultan is dead, did you know that? Kill'd by the those dogs of the East India. I cannot help but feel the burden of not having died beside him. I am not ungrateful for your taking me out of India. You doubtless sav'd my life in doing so, but still...

I tell myself that now at least I may continue to fight for freedom for Mysore and Bengal, when I would do them little good were I dead with Tipu Sultan.

Tonight, these thoughts would not leave me alone, which is why I left you sleeping, 'Lina, and walked along the Thames. I had intend'd to find some solace in Nature, but there is so little that is natural left within this city. And so I came to the Strand, where the Lyceum is selling three-shilling tickets to see the *Liberty* before her launch.

Even so late into the evening there was quite a crowd about the theatre, although I was able to avoid them and get inside before being intercepted.

I saw the *Liberty* for the first time as I secret'd myself along the Grand Circle above the crowd. Or rather I saw the balloon itself, since the *Liberty's* gallery had prov'd too large to fit into the Lyceum, much to Mr Darvell's disappointment. Yet, even the envelope alone is spectacular—drap'd from stage to ceiling in the candlelight. I stood for quite some time in silent awe at this mass of silk and rubber that will, by the good grace of Parvati, bear us to the moon.

After perhaps an hour I was interrupted by Mr Darvell, who had happen'd upon me in my airial hiding place.

He told me that he had heard about my unpat-riotic (although he did not use the word) exploits in Mysore, and ventur'd that he did not know what business a Hindu woman would have in fighting for a Muslim king. To begin with, I assumed that he was ignorant, and did not know that the division between Hindus and Muslims only exists because it has been driven there by the East India Companies so that they may better fight us both. However, as it transpires, his concerns were of a different nature.

When he was a child, his father went missing in Persia while en route to an expedition into the African interior. The moment that he reach'd adulthood, Mr Davell himself spent much time out there in search of him and now counts himself a Sufi. It would seem that his concern was that I may persecute him for it.

I will admit that over the passage of the last few weeks I have heard much more about his exploits of a different sort—particularly those which involvd his experiments with Mr Davy's nitrous *gaz*, and the many rumours about how exactly the son of a Wiltshire surgeon manages to find the funds to build the *Liberty*. Once I assur'd him that he need not view me as some sort of natural enemy to him on account of his religion or his nationality (which doubtless all the rumours of the Calcutta Tigress did little to assuage), he became far more animated with me.

I believe that we must have spoken for a full hour on the design and functioning of the *Liberty*.

He has constructed her after the kind developd by Monsieur Pilâtre de Rozier (under whom Mr Davell has studied), and is of the same sort which de Rozier used to cross the channel some several years hence.

As such, the *Liberty* combines both the control of the Montgolfier brothers' hot air balloons (in the lower, cylindrical section of the envelope), as well as the superior lifting power of the Charlière, or hydrogen *gaz* balloon (in the larger spherical portion above it). The design will, when she is inflat'd, give her all the appearance of a mace or of a sceptre.

Mr Darvell has also designed a system of many hundred miles of coil'd rubber tubing which is to be attachd to the *Liberty* on one end, and on the other to a vast set of bellows which he has had construct'd on the Artillery Grounds in Moor-fields. The bellows shall provide us with breathable air for much of our ascent, and once we are cut free from them, the *Liberty* should hold sufficient momentum and breathable *gaz* for us to reach the moon before we are forc'd into exhausting either. Once there, he insists that it shall be a simple matter of signalling when we wish to return, so that the guide balloon may return the umbilicus (for so he terms our breathing tube) to us so that we may descend back towards the Earth. Simple, he says! As though Britain has not already lost two of her explorers in the attempt of it.

On this matter, Mr Darvell remains unconvinced. Rumours, he insists, still persist of Mr Blanchard and Mrs Sage's survival—perhaps strand'd somewhere on the lunar landscape. Mr Darvell has a limitless capacity for hope, but I cannot help but feel as though these rumours about Mr Blanchard and Mrs Sage will prove to be as unfounded as those which once led him out to Persia.

Perhaps I am too cynical, and Mrs Sage really is still alive up there amongst the lunar forest—looking towards the Earth for her salvation.

Presently, neither of us have any way of knowing. However, perhaps in weeks from now we may be able to say for sure.

From Journals, 12th July 1799

We are now two miles over London with the thousand lights of the city beneath us and a million stars above. The *Liberty* rises, only now it is impossible to tell which is up and which is down. We have cut loose into this island universe, and now can only fall into the sky.

For the first two hours of our ascent, Ozias was detained within the gallery consulting maps of the fix'd winds so that we could be sure to rise directly upwards, and not risk being swept northwards to the pole. I instead stood on the balcony (while I still had opportunity, for we soon were forc'd to seal up the doors) and watched as the whole of London reced'd slowly into the aether beneath us.

At first, the roar of the crowd unsettd me, but it soon lapsed into the faintest of rush of sound, like the murmur of the ocean. Eventually, I could no longer make out the pale thumbprint of your bonnet, 'Lina, in the lamplight beneath the trailing cord of the umbilicus.

The people below (on Ozias's encouragement, I am certain of it) released hundreds of tiny paper balloons to accompany us on our foray into Heaven. For perhaps half an hour afterwards I watched them rise around us, until they burnt themselves out and fell back down towards the earth. Perhaps their short and desperate flights should have given me cause to worry over the far larger flying lantern to which Ozias and I have entrustd ourselves, but all I could think was how much they looked like a bloom of luminescent sea blubbers that were swimming in the ocean of the sky with us.

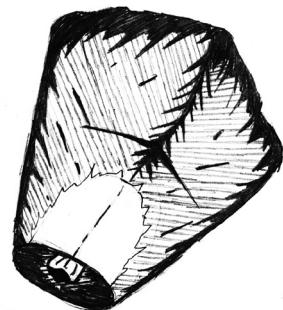
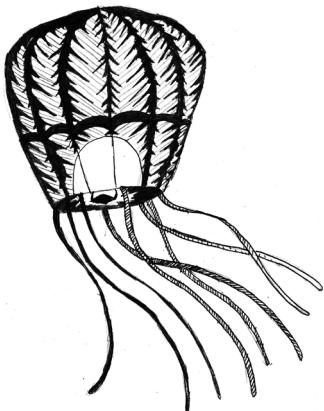
Oh, how I wish that you could see it up here, 'Lina. It is like that first night at the Madras Observatory all those years ago, when you shewed me how to look into the telescope and for one terrifying moment I felt as though I were falling through the tube to be drown'd amongst the stars.

It is so quiet! So immense! There is an awful stillness which Ozias tells me can drive people out of their minds—stamping their feet and laughing or clambering out of the basket to plummet to their deaths, just so that they can escape it.

Now the windows are fill'd with a million swimming points of light, and Ozias and I have seal'd ourselves within the gallery to wait out the rest of our ascent.

After sev'n weeks of taking pleasure from his unending struggle to call me "Miss Chattopadhyay", I now have acquiesced to "Eesha" with him as well as you and William. If I am to live, and to return to England, then I suspect that I shall have to content myself to settle for it any way.

Conditions within the *Liberty* are cramped and dark, for Ozias does not suffer to have even a single candle flame in such close proximity to the straw and wool which we must continually feed into the brazier.



For now, we must be power'd by straw and by starlight alone, and see what fate will do with us. I do not know if we will live, but, my dearest Caroline, there is an awful beauty in the firmament which I am beyond the ability to explain to you. I am floating amongst ghosts of light in a graveyard full of stars that are extinct beyond our island universe.

If I still live tomorrow, then I shall begin to document these readings for you and write them in the tables that you laid out so precisely. If I do not, then do not mourn for me. Say only that I died o'er leaping this parapet of stars.

From Journals, Approx. 5th August 1799

It never rains upon the moon, but the wind is always blowing—chasing this thin atmosphere across the wake of sunlight.

We have land'd upon the Mare Tranquillitatis—although the only kind of water here is frozen amongst great valleys, or else in the forests that rest in the lee of the mountains. There, it seems to vary from the thinnest dusting of frost, to frozen waves of unimaginable scale that seem to have paused, hesitant in breaking.

Oh, 'Lina! You can tell William he was right! The large, circular impressions upon the surface moon are structures which have been constructed to catch the half-reflectd light. But whatever civilisation that there once was here is waning, even as our own island universe is waning—that is to say, if the peoples that built these enormous circuses have not already been extinguish'd all together.

The pale pillars and archways are overgrown with strange plants and vines. I am reminded of the painting of the moon over the Acropolis that you once shewed to me. How strange to think of that solitary artist seat'd there amongst the ruins in the moonlight, while now here I am amongst these lunar ruins in the earthshine.

The structures are enormous, and in the openings there appears to be sails of the sort that you may see on a mill. These sails were still turning in the never-ending lunar wind. We can only guess at the fact that they must once have harnessd it somehow.

In the planetshine, everything is bath'd in a perpetual twilight of blew-green that sparkles on the ice-flats and upon the crumbling and vine-coverd circuses.

We have neither of us slept in many days now. How many, I do not know as 'day' and 'night' no longer hold their meaning away from the quixotic rotations of the Earth.

We have to sleep.

Our expeditions beyond the Ocean of Tranquillity and into the lunar interior shall have to wait for now.

From Journals, Approx. 6th August 1799

We woke (I shall not say this morning, for there is no morning here but the kind that comes once every twenty-eight terrestrial days) to find ourselves surround'd by a sort of people which no one on Earth has ever seen before.

These Selenites are taller than any human being on the Earth. Their skin at first appears to be chalk-white, but over prolongd inspection it seems to be akin to that of a cuttle fish—as the pigmentation seems to shift and alter itself in tune with the their mood and inclination. In fact it is more than this, because the shifting colours of their skin seem to be a passive form of communication—conveying unspoken thoughts and feelings just as the sky conveys its moods through the colour and the patterning of the clouds.

They have ridg'd, fin-like protrusions running the length of their arms, and others which begin just below their jaw and curve about their faces to meet at the crown of their heads. Behind these, they have a profusion of fleshy head-tresses, decorat'd with beads of silver and of turquoise.

They are long-neck'd and high-ankl'd, and they move with a light, fluid sort of grace in the gentler lunar gravity.

Each of them has a band of blew-black pigmentation about the eyes, which Ozias is certain must be some form of tattooing. Their lips are of a similar hue, and many of them—particularly the men—are further decorat'd with banding, markings and strange, geometrical patterns that are drawn in the

same ink. The men are also differentiated from the women through the wearing of silver torcs of the kind that antiquarians may find at ancient burial sites. I cannot help but wonder, then, if we are indeed the first human beings to see the Selenites, or whether this may indicate some ancient kind of contact between our people and theirs.

Their society is evidently rul'd by the women of their species, for it was they who shewed the far greater interest in us as we withdrew from the *Liberty*—while the men mostly remained at the back of the group and observ'd us from a distance. They barely seemed to move or speak to one another, while the women did both constantly as they circl'd us, discussing our sudden appearance in their lands in a strangely melodic tongue.

We were outnumbered, unarmed, and easily overpowered and yet ... and yet we were as fascinated by them as they were by us. Ozias could barely contain his elation at what we had discovered.

We walk'd for several miles with them to one of their circuses which is far from being abandoned and overgrown like the one we saw before sleeping.

On entering one of the structures, we were shewn into the company of a female Selenite. She sat beside a rent that had open'd in the lunar rock, through which a thin haze of heat and smoke was rising. This Selenite introduced herself to us as Aper'chi, for she spoke English very well indeed. Ozias was at once incredibly excited to hear from whence she had learn'd it (and whether this could mean that Mr Blanchard and Mrs Sage still yet surviv'd somewhere) but Aper'chi simply bade him sit, and Ozias was oblig'd to obey her.

For now, Aper'chi has seen to it that we have been given space to sleep and work alongside the other members of her tribe. We have been well fed and cared for, and even as I write this, Ozias is consulting further with our host so that we may learn about her position in the tribe, and of the culture that he and I have discover'd up here upon the moon.

When he retires, I have concluded that I shall talk with her myself. Then may I tell her some stories of the Empire which Ozias may not be counted on to share.

From Journals, Unknown Date. Approx. Early September 1799

Today, Ozias and I finally found relics of the previous expedition, which appears to have ended in disaster. He has struggled to collect the desir'd botanical samples through the past period of sunlight (I am beyond considering it in terms of days and weeks now, but neither am I yet quite able to accept it for what it truly is—a single lunar day). Now that the sun has set and we were once again bath'd in this cool kind of evenshine, he has been much occupied.

Conversely, while the light and heat had previously afforded me much opportunity to document and map the landscape in the area around the circus (as well as around the Sea of Tranquility where we have left the *Liberty*), the drop in temperature and light which accompanies the shift from day to night as left me without either the facility or the inclination to continue with any further cartographic endeavors.

Ozias continues to spend his every spare moment with Aper'chi, placing himself entirely at her convenience and whim. I find more and more that he is adopting Selenite habits of dress and decoration—the former of which he insists is insulating against both the lunar wind and the shift in temperature which accompanies our 'monthly' change from night to day. I am convinc'd, however, that it is about more than him simply adapting to our environment. He has begun to wear a Selenite torc about his neck, and has even consented Aper'chi to mark his wrists with the blue-black bands and tattoo'd markings that is the fashion amongst the other men.

On rising, I found him to be occupied in the great forest that lies in the lee of one of the larger glaciers. Here, the trees are enormous—akin to the pine trees that you may see on Earth, but green-black in colour and over three times in height.

It was in this murky, emerald twilight that he had located the remains of Mr Blanchard and Mrs Sage's balloon. The envelope had been reduc'd to mere tatters (although the Union Flag was still evident in its colours even so), and the gallery had

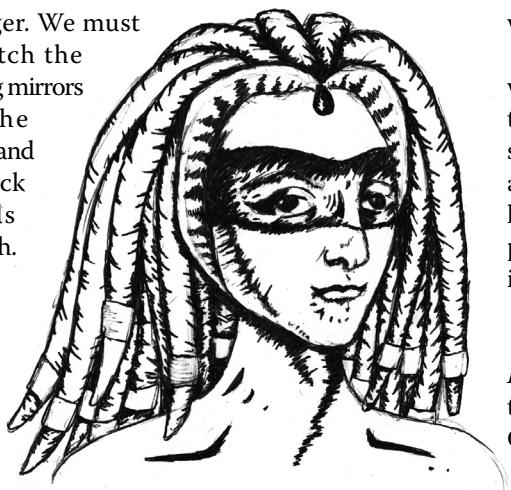
for the most part been absorb'd into the under-growth.

Beside the wreckage there was evidence of a grave that was mark'd with a crude crucifix and a scattering of lunar flowers. The cross had been fashion'd from the windfall, and tied together with a few thin slivers of balloon silk. There was no indication of whether the grave belonged to Mr Blanchard or to Mrs Sage, but Ozias and I had little stomach to unearth the remains simply to satisfy our sense of morbid curiosity.

There was no sign of a second grave—which, aside from all else aren't known to dig themselves—and so we must assume that the *Comet's* second occupant surviv'd for long enough to bury their companion and teach English to the local tribe. Although we now have no chance of finding them, I cannot help but wonder if they may still survive some-where, just as Ozias once insisted that they must.

He was, of course, reluctant to admit that with the coming of the lunar night we must turn back towards the *Liberty* and prepare ourselves to leave. In fact, I think that, if I did not need him to navigate the fix'd currents of the wind on our descent, then perhaps he would have stay'd.

Aper'chi may be aggrieved to lose him (and he all the more for losing her), but ultimately, he understands that we have already erred too long and that we can wait no longer. We must now fetch the signaling mirrors from the *Liberty*, and turn back towards the Earth.



Letter to Caroline Herschel, 12th November 1799

'Lina,

We must undo all of this talk of taking the moon from the Selenites for our own gain and profit. The longer that I spend bound back to the Earth (and believe me when I tell you that after the sheer weightlessness and silence of the lunar landscape, returning here has all the sensation of having my wings torn away from me) the more that I am glad that I spent that time around the fire-rent with Aper'chi and her tribeswomen. At least now they will have some idea of what may come for them, even as I write to you. At least now they have been warn'd about the wedge of hatred that the despicable colonists of their lands will try to drive between them and the other tribes. I pray that the state of affairs which you and I have seen in Bengal or in Mysore may somehow—I know not how yet—be avoided with the Selenites.

This morning, Sir Joseph request'd we meet with him for breakfast at New Burlington Street, in the apartments where Ozias has put on a public exhibition of our lunar specimens.

Sir Joseph was wheeled into the reception room as though he were the latest exhibition piece to be brought in for display. He looked older, somehow. Gruer. All his talk of how well the lunar saplings have been growing at Kew Gardens did not disguise the heaviness in him—heavier than even he had right in being, earthbound and dropsical in his wheeled wicker basket.

Many times over the course of breakfast, he would pause and look at the Selenite jewelry, their tools and their musical instruments, or else the skins of lunar animals or the hundreds of carefully annotat'd maps and diagrams we made. He would look at all of this, and sigh, and make some further paltry effort at conversation before he would lapse into silence once again.

Then finally, he told us.

He told us that the King has agreed to have the *Liberty* refitt'd and renamed as the *Resolve*. In fact, the process has already begun out on the Artillary Grounds from which we launch'd ourselves into the stars. This second expedition will be led by

Captain Hatley, and will settle for nothing less than the establishment of a trading outpost amongst the Selenites. It is clear enough that they plan to claim the moon in honor of King George. Apparently, the French have already begun construction of their own lunar vessel in the wake of our success, and the King is eager to beat them to it.

This cannot be right, Caroline! Within the year, we shall have lunar animals in the Royal Menagerie alongside the giraffes, and enslav'd Selenite dancers on display in Drury Lane! It does not matter how well the Selenites defend themselves (and they are more than capable of doing so), the damage to their tribes, to their way of life, to their very *civilisation* is unavoidable.

Even if they are not enslaved and subjugat'd to a woman as we have been in India, then we will see this struggling civilisation wiped out by some terrible European venereal disease, or else dominat'd by the British *Lunar* Company.

Do you not think that Banks would have rescued his belov'd Ota-heite from the curse of his Endeavour if he only had some idea of what was to become of paradise because of it?

Ozias still wears his Selenite torc and tattoos despite all of his attire as a British gentleman-explorer, and although his heart must long to take up the place upon the *Resolve* that Captain Hatley waves beneath his nose, *he must know that we cannot do this*.

We must act swiftly before the *Liberty* has been transformd and is ready for her flight. I can convince Ozias to help me, and Sir Joseph, too. If I cannot, then I can at least make sure that they look the other way *while it is done*. I am only sorry that I cannot wait for you to read this before I take what action that you surely know I must.

By the time we are finished with her, the *Liberty*—or the *Resolve*—will be going nowhere at all, least of all to see the Selenites.

However all of this ends, 'Lina, I pray that you will understand.
Yours forever,
Esha.

From Journals, 30th November 1799

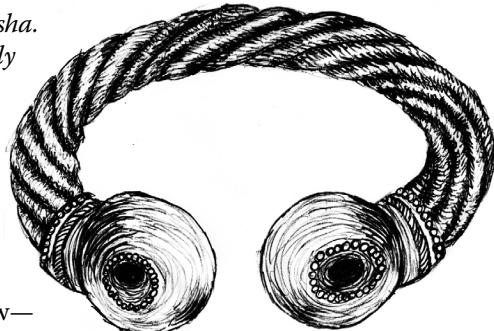
Another breakfast with Sir Joseph, only this time under slightly different circumstances.

Bread and water only, and not a morsel of it touch'd—not quite the warmth of the reception rooms at Soho Square.

Ozias is asleep beneath the telescope—spread out on the straw with Aper'chi's torc still around his neck. I cannot help but be reminded of him standing in those lunar forests in the oppressive shade with the tiny moon-birds singing in the needl'd canopy.

I remember how he plac'd his hand across his throat—across the small opening in the torc—when I told him we must leave.

*This is the narrow passage of my life, Eesha.
The space between the head and the body
through which all breath must come.
All blood flows through it. Without it,
all life is impossible. It is the umbilicus
of breath and blood, and I desire
nothing more than to wear her clasp
around it. Do you not understand me?*



This morning he seems alter'd somehow—crumpled upon the floor as though he is still sleeping in the straw-loft of the *Liberty*. Only now the *Liberty* has burnd to ashes and her soot is on our hands. I can still smell it upon my clothes and in my hair. All chance of seeing *she* for whom he wears a clasp about the narrow life-passage of his neck, is gone.

Sir Joseph was push'd into our miserable cell along with the bread and water. He brought me paper, pen and ink, and the promise of a desk at which to write. Regardless of what became of us, he said, we cannot abandon the duty to document our findings for the public. He assur'd me that what he may salvage from our journals (doubtless after Captain Hatley's men have had their fill of them) will follow.

I understand his meaning well enough, no matter how callous it may seem: Without public support for Selenite freedom from imperial rule, they are doom'd to fight and die for it and so, perhaps, are we.

Burning the *Liberty* will only delay the inevitable, or else it shall hand the lunar colonies to French endeavors.

If we are to win this war, then we must also convince the whole of the world to listen.

I dared not to wake Ozias yet. Not with news like this.

Instead, I thank'd Sir Joseph and shook him by the hand. He will do what he can in all of this, I know he shall. And I shall use this paper first and foremost to write a letter that he shall take to you, my 'Lina.

Then, I know that you shall do the best you can, as well. ☀

The Jews are
The men that
will not
be Blamed
for nothing

No. 108 to 119



LESS BRASS GOGGLES, MORE BRASS KNUCKLES

An interview with The Men That Will Not Be Blamed For Nothing

A narcho-cockney grindcore-and-musical-saw outfit The Men That Will Not Be Blamed For Nothing need little introduction to those familiar with the emerging steampunk scene in the United Kingdom. Funny, angry, sarcastic, and producing more noise than should be possible for four guys and a drum kit. Cornering all four of the Men for long enough to interview them was a challenge, but after the recent London Steampunk Spectacular we managed to lure them into a small room with a dictaphone and the promise of beer.

Here is what Andrew (guitar/vocal), Andy (vocal/saw), Marc (bass) and Ben (drums) had to say for themselves ...

SPM: *Most obvious question out of the way first: What exactly made you choose a name like The Men That Will Not Be Blamed For Nothing?*

Andrew: I did a stand up show called *Winston Churchill Was Jack the Ripper* a few years ago, and as a result got slightly obsessed with the Ripper murders. In a fun way. Not in a morbid way. And it's part of the Ripper story: "The Juwes are the men that Will not be Blamed for nothing". Someone wrote it on a doorway on Goulston Street in Whitechapel and the Ripper put a piece of Catherine Edowes' apron underneath it. Idiots think that they were done by the same person, but my theory is that the Ripper was a little bit too busy fleeing the people that were looking for him after he did two murders to be doing graffiti.

SPM: *For those of us that haven't heard you, can you describe what you sound like?*

Ben: It's starting to get a bit more metal and punky and raucous, but it started off just playing between the guitar and vocals, which lends itself to something that's slightly more folky.

Andy: There are two versions of the band ... The full on punk electric version with drums and bass, and a stripped down acoustic alter-ego that plays in cabaret, burlesque and fetish clubs ... It's a sign that the songs are strong that they sound good both ways!

Andrew: There's lots of music hall, major key influences in the songs we wrote originally. And then with 'Moon' I wanted to write a fairly serious song that was slightly musically better. 'Blood Red' is me pushing it as metal it can go without really, really alienating the other people in the band or the people that come to see us. It's good to have a balance and a mix. I've never been in a band before where no one said 'No' to a stylistic input, and that's really nice. Everyone brings stuff to the table.

SPM: *What convinced the four of you to form a band together, and what drew you to steampunk once you had?*

Andy: It started when me and Andrew were living in the same place. He was doing a comedy show called *Andrew O'Neill's Spot On History Of British Industry*, and we did a complimentary set of Victorian-themed songs to go with it.

Andrew: We went to see The Black Heart Procession, and off the back of that Andy bought a musical saw. I was living in Andy's spare room, and we just started writing some songs. We sat in Andy's garden just jamming. There wasn't a particular focus to it, we just did a couple of gigs and that was good fun. This is our last gig with Ben, but Marc sort of came on as a session musician. Now he's sort of a full member of the band. He essentially has the right of veto

SPM: *So you've been accepted into the family, Marc?*

Marc: Apparently so. Actually, I didn't realise that I was initially a session musician until just now.

Andy: Nor did I!

Andrew: I did my *Industry* show over four nights in London, and we put a band together to play that. It sounded about a hundred times better straight away, because we had an electric guitar and that sounds a bit odd when you don't have a drummer behind it. So that's how we got together as a four piece, and then what drew us to steampunk ...

Ben: Nothing.

Andrew: Ben doesn't like steampunk.

SPM: *You're not a fan, Ben?*

Ben: I'm a big comic book fan. Absolutely love fantasy... *in my head*. I mean, each to their own, but I just think that when you start believing the fantasy you're ignoring the normal problems in life. You can say that it's escapism to get away from them, but a lot of the time there's so many other things out there to care about.

Andrew: Also, we're all very averse to the class-role-play element of steampunk. We're not pretending that we're anything other than middle class, but Ben and I have played in punk bands for years and to do a gig where, when the lights come up, people shout "Huzzah!" just dicks me right off. We're not particularly politically motivated, but to me personally that stuff really rankles. I've always been a big fan of Victoriana, but the part that interests me is the nasty underside of it. Proper throwing bombs at monarchs anarchism came out of the Victorian era, and that's far far more interesting to me than regimental insignia.

Marc: You never do see battle re-enactments with Chartists, do you?

Andrew: No. No, you absolutely don't. I mean, we know that the punk in steampunk doesn't mean 'Punk', but to me what it does mean is a subversion of Victoriana. It's not Neo-Victorianism, there should be some sort of subversion there. I suppose it's the convention end of things and the cosplay end of things that's just not my thing.

Andy: I love some of that, though. Modding keyboards and shit. What attracted me to the steampunk scene was the sense of elegance, style and creativity—there's a real feeling of community drawing in writers, artists, clothing- and jewellery-makers, engineers and now musicians. I've been struck by the open friendliness of the people involved ... It makes a real change! It also means I can indulge my love of sci fi, history and dressing up! I am a huge geek and exhibitionist, so really the scene is tailor-made for me.

Andrew: Oh, I love dressing up. I'm probably more committed to that than most of you, but I like bands who burn churches down.

Marc: What's going to be quite interesting is when we go to America where the cosplay angle of steampunk is the primary aspect of it, from what I can gather.

Andrew: I do wonder how many Americans are going to be disappointed by the fact that we're English but we talk like this. You know, we're not saying, "Good evening" and doffing our hats, we're going: "Where's the fucking bar?" The cosplay side of things is just not what we're used to. We're quite used to being the *least punk* people in the room when we do a gig.

Ben: I play in a particularly fast, crusty band, and the point that I was going to make is that it's the same there. I have the same feelings towards the stupid punks with their nine-inch Mohicans that they've spent hours on.

Andrew: But the thing that you're overlooking there is that, in constructing that Mohawk, they're putting cracks in the foundation of the system.

Ben: True. Doctor Martin's, for example, have always been such a non-profit, radical organisation. So, yeah, I have exactly the same problem with that as I do with this. It's just that I'm more used to that situation.

SPM: *Is that why they're throwing you out, though?*

Andrew: We're not throwing him out. Ben's in eighteen other bands and despite his efforts, he's got no fucking money. For me, it's been really nice just because Ben's a good friend of mine. Because I do stand-up, my social life is completely fucked. It's been nice to have an excuse to spend time with each other. I mainly see people who hang out with comedians, and they're generally cunts.

Ben: And that's my point, it applies to pretty much any kind of subculture. It's just that this one is more alien to me. I mean frankly, there's a lot of positives to be said for it. There's an amazing kind of community spirit.

Andrew: There are elements of the steampunk subculture that are completely punk. The DIY ethic, the fact people are getting out the house and doing stuff is just fucking brilliant. That's the thing that I always liked about punk as averse to metal. Metal is the music I most like, but there's a massive division between the people on stage and the people in the audience.

SPM: *How so?*

Ben: Because the people on the stage are rock stars.

Andrew: Yeah, and when I was in hardcore bands, the people in the audience would just get up and be the next act. There's no division. The people are active and get involved, but with metal there are bands and there are people who consume what the bands do. Steampunk seems to be far more about people getting involved, and that's fucking great.

Marc: What indicates that is that there are no set rules for what a steampunk band sounds like—because they are just people that like steampunk, who are in bands.

Andrew: Exactly. It's like punk before the Sex Pistols.

Ben: And that's quite interesting as well, because you think that we've just played a show with three completely different bands, and the lady with the awesome steel drums. Especially with the harder songs that we've got, most of the people there won't have any music like that in their collections, but they're still going to watch us and cheer and have a go, which is great.

SPM: *Do you consider yourselves full-time steampunks, or is it an outfit that you put on now and again?*

Andrew: In terms of mentality, definitely. I mean, I'm a transvestite so I wear girl's clothes. Well, they're my clothes, but they were built for girls. Most of the time I just dress like a metaller, but if I've got an occasion to dress up for then I'll quite often dress steampunk. This waistcoat was made for me for my *Industry* show. I didn't actually have to buy anything for the band.

SPM: *So the dressing up aspect doesn't bother you?*

Andrew: I love it. I fucking love dressing up. I mean, probably five days a week I'm dressed very feminine anyway.

SPM: *What about you, Marc? You haven't said very much.*

Andrew: Yeah, shut up, Marc. What you have said has been shit.

Marc: What I think is quite interesting is that I sit somewhere between Ben and Andrew. I don't consider myself a steampunk, I consider myself someone in a steampunk band. But the only difference between how I dress most of the time, and how I'm dressed now in my steampunk garb is I'm wearing trousers and not jeans. I've been in punk bands and worn eye liner for about ten years, so actually it syncs quite nicely into how I see myself anyway.

The Empire was essentially us raping the world, and anyone who is supportive of the Empire and racist needs to fuck right off. At the very least we owe the Commonwealth the ability to come and live in a country that is only rich because we stole everything of value from the places we invaded.

SPM: *How about you, Andy? Do you consider yourself a full-time steampunk? Certainly the bright pink mutton chops would seem to indicate that you do.*

Andrew: The band has grown out of mine and Andy's interests and obsessions. The way we approach it is a very exact representation of who we are and where we come from.

Andy: Yeah. I mean, I dress like this most of the time anyway. I always dress like this when I go out, I love people's reactions to it... They accept punks, goths, emos and chavs, but really cannot work out how to deal with someone in Victorian garb! At home I like to relax in a smoking jacket and fez, and put my gouty foot up on a stool in front of the open fire! I love that hunting—searching for the perfect item of clothing for an outfit... But the whole thing is starting to be marketed as an off the peg style, and that kills the individuality. Have you typed steampunk into Ebay recently? A few months back you would only get one or two results...now you can buy an entire look with no effort. Stick a bit of a broken watch on to a tatty old hat and sell it to a mug, seems to be the attitude.

SPM: *Tell us a little bit about your influences.*

Andrew: 'The Talons of Weng-Chiang'. And I had a tape that my brother gave to me called *One More Time* that was recorded in this working club. 'They're Moving Father's Grave To Build a Sewer' is from that. It's a D-90 full of fucking cockney songs. It's amazing, and I've never really had a chance to do anything with it. Music hall, British punk, and like I say, I listen almost entirely to metal, but we've all got quite varied tastes.

Andy: A sticky mess of *Doctor Who*, Alan Moore, Marie Lloyd, HG Wells, Jules Verne, Lovecraft, *The Good Old Days*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Oliver* and the V&A mixed up with a big dollop of cynical humour.

SPM: *A lot of your songs are quite humorous, but are we supposed to be laughing at you, or at ourselves? Who's the butt of the joke?*

Andrew: Andy.

SPM: *Andy, you should say something to defend yourself.*

Andy: They never told me that. All this time, you've just been laughing at me?

Andrew: Well, with 'Steph(v)enson' it's you, mainly, because you play it dumb.

Andy: Yeah. And we've got a really nice creationist song: 'Charlie'.

Andrew: 'Goggles' is an explicitly feminist song. I'm a pretty radical feminist. 'Blood Red' is fairly political. It's weird, because there's a lot of post-colonial writing about the Empire, but it doesn't seem to have seeped into the consciousness of British people. We kind of think that we went there and gave them trains and roads. Yeah, and then we left with *all their stuff*. We were in charge of Zimbabwe and we took everything of value and then people say: "Oh, look, but we left and they're killing each other". Yeah, they're killing each other because we took *all of the valuable things* out of their country. The Empire was essentially us raping the world, and anyone who is supportive of the Empire and racist needs to fuck right off. At the very least we owe the Commonwealth the ability to come and live in a country that is only rich because we stole everything of value from the places we invaded.

SPM: *So you do have a political ethic that you're trying to convey?*

Andrew: In that song, yeah. But our politics are all different. I'm approximately anarchist.

Ben: I'm a BNP voter.

Andrew: Ben is *not* a BNP voter, for the record.

Ben: That's what you think. It's a secret ballot, my friend.

Andrew: Ben's a disillusioned ex-anarchist. Andy's got a mortgage.

Marc: And I'm a wooly liberal.

Andy: Yep, in Victorian times I would have been in the Marshalsea debtors' prison by now. Politically I'm as far left as I can get, but I do feel nowadays that you have to vote tactically to keep the right-wing scum out of power. That's where me and Andrew disagree: He won't vote, whereas I think that just lets other people win. You've got to play the system from inside to pervert it!

Andrew: We're all pretty much left-wing. It's fairly clear when you look at the Victorian era that there were things that were right and things that were wrong. It's not hard to write a political song, all you've got to do is put some of your opinions into a song as opposed to your feelings.

Ben: Just get something you're angry about and write a song about it, that's a punk thing to do. Also, I think in any sort of walk of life, always be prepared to lose an argument and be convinced by someone else.

Andrew: It's really, really good to argue, because it tests you views. When I was eighteen or nineteen, I reckon I could have picked any ideology and been vehement about it, but looking at it now I think that anarchism is the least nasty way of living, because it's about removing concentrations of power. It's removing people's ability to screw each other over. State communism is a lovely idea, but when you put it into practice it ends up fucking loads of people over.

Ben: We don't want to get into a big political discussion, anyway. Next question?

SPM: Yeah, we could be here all night. Ok, next question: what would you like to see more of in steampunk, and what would you like to see less of?

Andrew: Steampunk's great as it is. It can carry on. We don't want to destroy anything, but we would like to bring in a few more people that are more into music, I suppose. There isn't a big music side of it yet. I'd like more punks and metallers to come out to our gigs.

Andy: And people who aren't put off by the fact that other people are dressing up. People can just dress normally and come and see us. It can be a mental thing rather than an outwardly dressed up thing.

Andrew: I don't want to see less of those people. I just want to see more of the people that are into it in a political or subcultural or subversive way.

Ben: Less brass goggles, more brass knuckles.

SPM: You've got an album out in the very near future. Tell us a bit about it.

Marc: It pretty much represents all sides of the band.

Andrew: Yeah, because it's *all of our songs*. You know the songs we play? *It's that*.

Marc: There are metal songs on there and there are incredibly catchy pop songs, and I genuinely think that it's a brilliant album in that respect. A lot of my favourite albums have that balance. There's a great mixture of pop songs and more interesting stuff going on.

Andy: It was recorded nice and quick so there's no sort of overdubs and messing around. It's all pretty raw.

Marc: Basically the bare bones of the album we did in a day. We just set up microphones and played the songs through.

SPM: Do you think that gigging is important for a band then?

Andrew: Yeah. It's the thing. It's all there is. The record is basically there so that people can learn the songs and sing along when we play them live.

Ben: We're a raucous live punk band. That's the point. That's why we started doing it.

SPM: So do you think that steampunk should be more of a live experience and less of an online one?

Andrew: Yeah. Definitely. Get out of your house! I mean, steampunk attracts geeks and geeks are online and that's the nature of it, but it should be more about socialising and getting out in the world. But then everything should be like that. I spend far too much time on my computer, and I'd far rather be outside with my mates having a laugh and creating something. We're not creating anything important, but our lives are a little bit richer because we've gone out and are actually doing something rather than just consuming stuff.

Marc: Live music is always going to do that. That's the one thing that you can never fake and the one thing that's never going to be digitised and taken online. That experience of watching a live band, or a live comic, or a piece of theatre, or a piece of performance art. That's kind of the purpose of what we do.

SPM: Ok, well, that's it. Thank you.

Andrew: I particularly like the fact that you recorded your thanking us.

SPM: Fuck off. ☹

You can listen to the Men on their MySpace page: [WWW.MYSPACE.COM/BLAMEDFORNOTHING](http://WWW.MYSSPACE.COM/BLAMEDFORNOTHING). Their debut album, Now That's What I Call Steampunk Volume 1, will be available for purchase and download from May. And, if that's not enough, then you can check the back pages of this very magazine for a review.

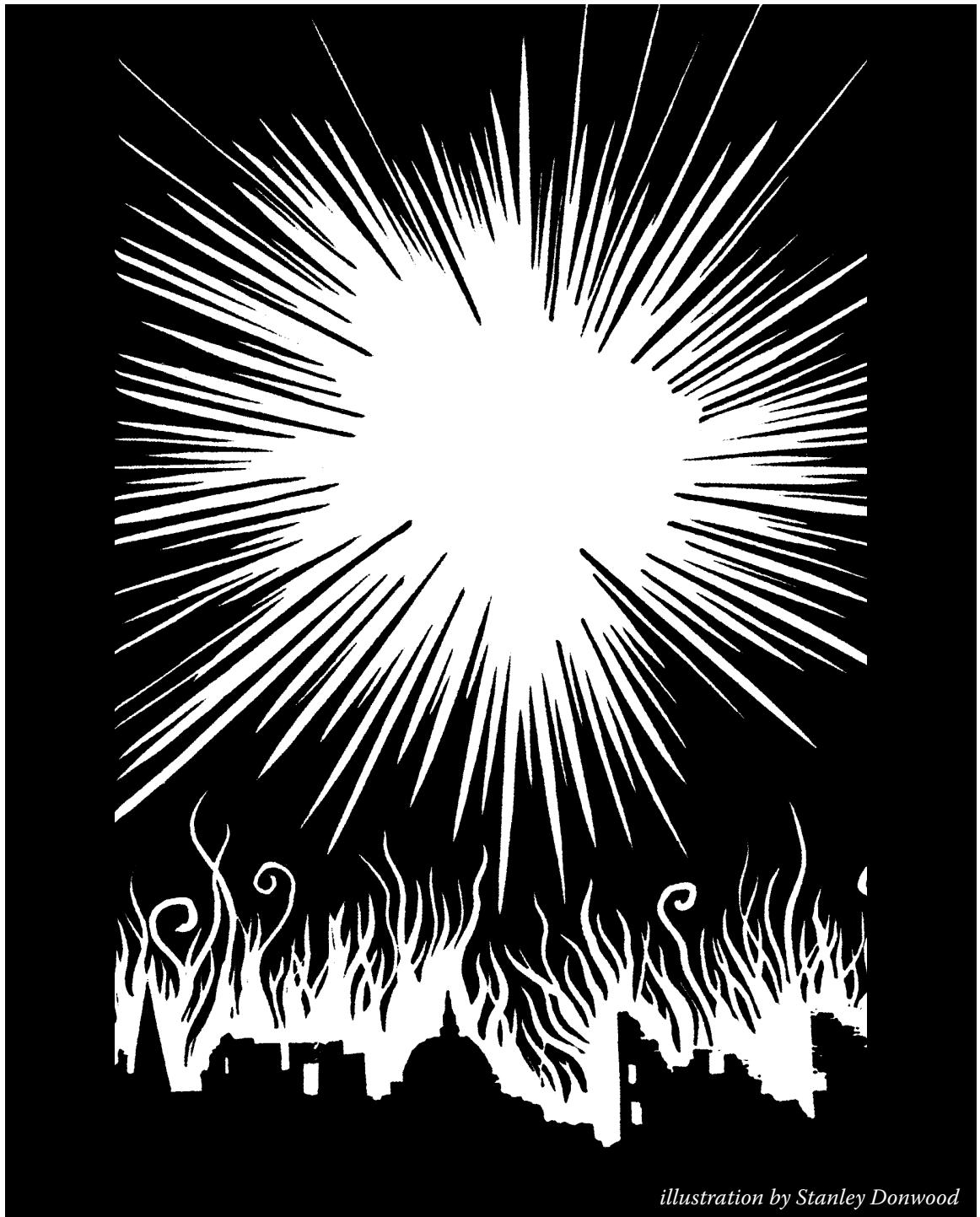


illustration by Stanley Donwood

HARTMANN THE ANARCHIST

a novel by Edward Douglas Fawcett

If he is remembered at all, Edward Douglas Fawcett is probably known for his essays on metaphysics. A few people may have heard of the popular adventure books he wrote. Most people will probably remember him as the elder brother of Percy Fawcett: The celebrated Edwardian adventurer, who disappeared without a trace on an expedition to find the semi-mythical Lost City of Z in the Brazilian rainforest. Before all that, when he was just sixteen, Edward wrote *Hartmann the Anarchist*.

In 1892, when *Hartmann* was first published, socialists were distrusted and anarchists were the enemy. They were the Communists, the Middle-Eastern terrorists, the spectral monsters that all good-thinking members of the civilised nations needed to be on their guard against. Fawcett saw through all the crap and found the heart of the matter—that socialists and anarchists are, above all else, human beings.

The novel's dynamic comes from the interaction when the protagonist, Stanley, talks first with his friend Burnett, and then with Hartmann.

Stanley is a local politician and socialist—trying to walk the middle ground of evolution not revolution, he's attacked by the moderates for being too extreme and the extremists for being too moderate. The passion of the debate in Fawcett's time is personified in Stanley's:

"I had spoken for about half an hour when the audience refused to let me proceed ... [A] violent uproar arose, the uproar led to a fight, and a rush was made for the platform ... I had the pleasure of knocking over one ruffian who leapt at me brandishing a chair."

If only modern ruffians felt so strongly ...

Despite being presumed dead, the shadow of Hartmann still looms over the anarchist movement after a botched attack on Westminster Bridge ten years ago which killed over fifty people. Burnett entices Stanley to a clandestine meeting and teases him with the chance to prove he's not all talk. Stanley shortly learns that Hartmann is still alive and joins him on the *Attila*, a genius device which Hartmann is going to use to bring down civilisation.

The *Attila* is something between an airship and an aeroplane. Made of a magical metal which weighs almost nothing, its lift is

provided by compressed hydrogen, height controlled with sand ballast, propulsion given from giant propeller screws and its direction controlled by riding the thermals of air like a bird of prey. Fawcett dwells on the details as Stanley is overcome by the beauty and freedom of riding in the craft, and changes the experience of riding in an aeroplane for the modern reader.

Hartmann, however, plans to use the *Attila* to raze Western civilisation to the ground. “We are Rousseaus who advocate a return to a simpler life,” he explains, and of the faceless workers at the heart of civilisation: “They are like the creatures generated in a dying body. The maggots of civilisation.”

So no desire to win over the hearts and minds, then. Anyway, it’s for their own good:

“The victory in view is the regeneration of mankind, the cost will be some thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands or millions of lives ... On how many massacres has one ray of utility shone? ... At worst we can shed no more blood than did a Tamerlane or a Napoleon.”

Hartmann’s arguments and the passion in which he believes them are compelling, and it’s easy for Stanley to see the threads of logic. Riding through the skies, it’s also easy for him to forget that Hartmann’s followed those threads a little too far.

Soon the *Attila* is flying over the skies of London, bombs raining down on the political and economic heart of the state as gangs of sympathisers rampage through the streets with flaming torches. He doesn’t expect to destroy the whole city, but expects to bring down civilisation nonetheless:

“His aim was to pierce the ventricles of the heart of civilisation, that blood that pumps the blood of capital everywhere, through the arteries of Russia, of Australia, of India, through the capillaries of the fur companies of North America, mining enterprises in Ecuador and the trading steamers of African rivers.”

With the city of London in flames, it’s not politics or dynamite that decides the fate of Hartmann’s revolution. Instead, it is Stanley’s desperate attempts to find his fiancée among the flames and Hartmann’s attentive love for his mother. In the midst of a war of ideas, it’s something very human and very personal which decides the outcome.

There are flaws with the novel, to be sure: Casual conversations become vehicles for political debate and the social dallying of the first couple of chapters seems awkward and strange; Hartmann takes great pride in all men on the *Attila* being equal, and yet reserves private spaces for himself; there are two female characters, and although both are intelligent and articulate, both are passive and incapable of taking action on their own. But quibbling over these things seems like being handed a million pounds in cash, and being upset that the notes are creased and dirty.

The question of what is to be done with the working-class masses—who make up the backbone of the tyrannical state—isn’t wrapped up in a neat bundle by the last page. How can it be? Victim, conscript or co-conspirator, each of those faceless multitudes is a human being who baulks at the idea of being labelled and put in a neat box. That’s a point Fawcett makes with a subtlety a writer of any age would be pleased with.

Between the airships and the anarchy, *Hartmann* is a novel which needs a place on any Steampunk’s bookshelf. Publisher Bone’s reprint comes with an insightful and provocative introduction by Ian Bone, and beautifully evocative illustrations by Stanley Donwood which ape those which the book was first published with. Discovering it feels like finding a great-grandfather the family had forgotten about: One who’s life runs along an eerie parallel to your own. ☀

REVIEWS

We are quite happy to review whatever it is that you feel counts as steampunk enough to warrant review. We will, however, only review physical submissions (rather than pdf books or mp3 albums). Contact us at COLLECTIVE@STEAMPUNKMAGAZINE.COM to find out where to send things!

ALBUM

Mr B the Gentleman Rhymer

Flattery Not Included

Grot Music, 2008

[WWW.MYSPACE.COM/MRBTHEGENTLEMANRHYMER](http://WWW.MYSSPACE.COM/MRBTHEGENTLEMANRHYMER)

On a quest to reintroduce manners to the modern proletariat, Mr B is a pipe-smoking, Banjolele-playing purveyor of 'chap-hop'—hip-hop as performed by Noel Coward.

Drawing inspiration from a genre notorious for its misogyny, love of violence and its desire to shock, *Flattery Not Included* takes those stereotypical staples and subverts them by making them ridiculous. Instead of rhymes about turf wars and paranoid husbands, Mr B raps about being thrown out of Gentleman's Clubs and defending the honour of a lady after a fellow chap-hopper dissed her cream teas. He also issues a challenge to Prime Minister Gordon Brown's policy on smoking in public, and boasts of his prowess with a cricket bat.

It takes skill to create a farce, and you can only mock something you love. *Flattery Not Included* is silly and sharp, like satire should be. The rhymes are skilled and the beats—erm, phat? For those who know hip-hop there are hidden gems a-plenty. For the rest of us there's the delight of laughing with the fool as he lampoons both popular culture and our own top-hat wearing, stiff-upper-lip keeping, monocle-wearing foibles.

NOVEL

Lavie Tidhar

The Bookman

Angry Robot, 2010

WWW.LAVIETIDHAR.WORDPRESS.COM

An accomplished short story writer who has forced the gaze of speculative fiction beyond its traditional, Anglo-centric haunts, Tidhar has now turned his hand to writing a novel.

Orphan is a poor poet living in the capital of a British Empire ruled by a royal family of lizard-type creatures who have shrouded their origin in myth. Words and narrative carry the ultimate power, the worlds of poet and politician are dissolved into each other. The power words hold is given dramatic personification when the love of Orphan's life is apparently killed in an explosion erupting from a book. The mythical Bookman has returned. It's his desire to recapture her which drives Orphan throughout the novel.

Orphan's voice anchors each sentence. He exists in the moment. We're not told about Orphan's whole-hearted nature, we're shown it.

The narrative is populated with outsiders, from Orphan himself to dis-empowered autons, blind beggars, and a ruling class of a different species altogether. All are fighting to find a place in mainstream society, and it's those fights that drive this story. There is little space left to explore the society, but the brush strokes Tidhar uses illustrate it sufficiently.

The Bookman is a book for people who love words. It's quintessentially Steampunk with only a hint of dirigibles and a whisper of Victorian smokestacks. In their place, there is a world of mysterious islands, political unrest, pornographically evocative bookshops and a conflict which is at the heart of Steampunk ideology. The world of Steampunk is richer for it.

TWO ALBUMS

iLiKETRAiNS

Progress Reform/Elegies to Lessons Learnt

Beggars Banquet, 2006/7

WWW.ILIKETRAINS.CO.UK

I have no idea whether the pessimistic post-rock band iLiKETRAiNS have ever even heard of steampunk, but if they haven't then someone should probably tell them about it.

Currently, the band have released one full-length album (*Elegies to Lessons Learnt*—2007) and an earlier EP (*Progress Reform*—2006). Both are filled with bleak stories-told-in-songs of history's great tragedies and most often-repeated mistakes.

The song that will undoubtedly draw the steampunk community to them is 'The Beeching Report' on the *Progress Reform* EP, which paints a haunting picture of the loss suffered by the British working classes during the closure of vast swathes of the public railway system during the 1960s. That said, iLiKETRAiNS have also written songs about the ill-fated Scott expedition ('Terra Nova'—*Progress Reform*), the Salem witch trials ('We Go Hunting'—*Elegies*) and the 1812 assassination of the British Prime Minister by a desperate man who felt that he had no other recourse ('Spencer Perceval'—*Elegies*). There is even a timeline for the *Elegies* album on the band's website which provides much of the historical backdrop to each of the songs.

No one could accuse iLiKETRAiNS of being the happiest or most uplifting of bands, but their music is often intense, moving and deeply thought-provoking. That, and how grounded the band are in the past, makes them more than worth a listen.

ALBUM

The Men That Will Not Be Blamed For Nothing

Now That's What I Call Steampunk Volume 1

Leather Apron, May 2010

[WWW.MYSPACE.COM/BLAMEDFORNOTHING](http://WWW.MYSSPACE.COM/BLAMEDFORNOTHING)

The Men That Will Not Be Blamed For Nothing are not the best steampunk band that I have ever heard, because they may just be the only steampunk band that I have ever heard. For a long time, we have been

waiting for a band that likes to mix a little punk into their Victoriana, and now, with the release of the Men's debut album *Now That's What I Call Steampunk Volume 1*, we finally have it. The album is filled with guitar- and drum-driven cockney punk songs, complete with the musical saw and comedy lyrics that have made the Men notorious.

But if the Men have ever been accused of being all laughs and no substance, then this album puts pay to that rumour once and for all. In that respect, 'Blood Red' stands out above all others as a chilling and bitterly angry commentary on colonialism that will give supporters of Victoria's Empire pause for thought.

Of the other tracks on the album, 'Boilerplate Dan' and 'Moon' are also exceptional, but to be perfectly honest the album doesn't have a single weak link, and most of the songs are not only very good, but also very, very catchy.

It is impossible for me to recommend the Men highly enough to you. If you are only going to buy one album this year, then make absolutely fucking certain that it's this one.

ILLUSTRATED HARDBACK

Paul Guinan and Anina Bennett

Boilerplate

Abrams, 2009

WWW.BIGREDHAIR.COM/BOILERPLATE

Subtitled "History's Mechanical Marvel", *Boilerplate* is invented history of the finest sort. Providing the background to the 'much overlooked' Victorian automation of the same name, *Boilerplate* tells the story of how Professor Archibald Campion (with the help of, among others, Nikola Tesla) invented a robotic soldier with the lofty hopes of ending the all human death in war.

Predictably, Campion's endeavours never went entirely to plan, and so instead he ended up touring much of the world with his mechanical marvel and getting embroiled in many well-known events. However, what is most interesting about *Boilerplate* is the way in which Campion's automaton is often shown as fighting on the side of the

oppressed—the Buffalo Soldiers, the suffragettes and Victorian child labourers, amongst others. In fact, despite being a book about a robot that was designed for the express purpose of making war, *Boilerplate* is far from being the Empire-touting Victoriana that you may expect it to be. Instead, it presents a view of the late 19th and early 20th century that is filled with wonder and detail, but also the home of persecution, discrimination and inequality. It tells us, through Archie Campion's realisations at the end of the Great War, that technology will never be the only single answer to all of humanity's problems. *Boilerplate* also illustrates the many varied social and economic factors that determine technological progress, which is so often wrongly viewed as a straight line from ignorance to enlightenment, with technological perfection at the end. Instead, the book displays some of history's lost technology in all its glory, and asks us to imagine what else could have been developed and rejected for being too far ahead of its time.

It is an expert mixture of fact and fiction (that manages to both educate and entertain while at the same time leaving you unsure of where history ends and the story begins) and also beautifully and incredibly cleverly illustrated throughout. Perhaps most impressively of all, it manages to insert a mechanical wonder into the major events between 1890 and 1920 without taking anything away from the real men and women that lived through them.

ANTHOLOGY

Ann and Jeff VanderMeer (eds)

Steamupunk

2007, Tachyon Publications

WWW.TACHYONPUBLICATIONS.COM

Ann and Jeff VanderMeer have written, edited and won awards for more anthologies and magazines than most people have read. From people who are, as Jeff almost put it, steampunks until their next project, one might expect a collection of depressing Steampunk clichés. But if you were expecting that, then you would be very wrong.

The stories in the anthology showcase Steampunk at its eclectic best. Opening is an extract from Michael Moorcock's 1972 novel *The Warlord of the Air*, watching as the vast dirigibles of the international powers loom over a resilient town, attempting to subjugate it. James P Blaylock's 'Lord Kelvin's Machine' is to modern Steampunk what the Great Apes are to humanity. Ian R. MacLeod's 'The Giving Mouth' and Jay Lake's 'The God-Clown is Near' are wonderfully engineered, surreal worlds with a Steampunk aesthetic and ideas woven deep into their fabrics. Joe R. Lansdale's 'The Steam Man of the Prairie and the Dark Rider Get Down: A Dime Novel' is a tribute to one of Steampunk's many roots, capturing the adventure of a dime novel, but burying their imperialist morality. Molly Brown's 'The Selene Gardening Society' is the sort of Steampunk story a post-Monty Python Oscar Wilde might write, and Ted Chiang's 'Seventy-Two Letters' is a breath-taking exploration not just of another world, but a whole other imagined biology.

The beauty is, you might find 'Seventy-Two Letters' dull as dishwater but be captivated by Mary Gentle's tale of science and matriarchy, 'A Sun in the Attic', or vice-versa. But frankly, Jess Nevins's introduction is worth the cover price alone. The VanderMeers may be transitory Steampunks, but all those editing credentials aren't for nothing. They have captured the heart of what makes Steampunk so compelling and inspirational. ☀

SUBMIT TO NO MASTER!

but please consider submitting material to us!

We are always looking for content for our magazine. Keep in mind before submitting that we publish under Creative Commons licensing, which means that people will be free to reproduce and alter your work for noncommercial purposes. We also, regrettably, are no longer able to offer payment to our contributors.

The next reading period is **1st April 2010 to 31st May 2010**, when we will be accepting submissions for Issue #8 of SteamPunk Magazine, which is due out in October. The theme for Issue #8 will be “The Myth of History”, studying the relationship between the impact that stories and legends have on us, and the fallacy of the concept of ‘truth’ in the way that history is recorded and remembered.. Some ideas for fiction and articles on this theme are:

- Legends in steampunk
- Popular misconceptions in history
- Steampunk as historical myth
- Allegorical poems and tales
- The importance of stories over ‘fact’
- Invented history

As always, we will accept both themed and unthemed material, so please don’t be restricted by the examples above.

Content Guidelines:

Fiction: We appreciate well-written, grammatically consistent fiction. That said, we are more interested in representing the underclasses and the exploited, rather than the exploiters. We have no interest in misogynistic or racist work. We will work with fiction of nearly any length, although works longer than six thousand words will be less likely to be accepted, as they may have to be split over multiple issues. We will always check with you before any changes are made to your work. Submissions can be in .RTF, .DOC or .ODT format attached to email.

Poetry: Poetry can be written either in a specific form, or as free verse. We can work with poetry that is of almost any length, although work longer than 40 or 50 lines will be less likely to be accepted. As with fiction, submissions can be in .RTE, .DOC or .ODT format, attached to email.

Illustration: We print the magazine in black and white, and attempt to keep illustrations as reproducible as possible. Ideally, you will contact us, including a link to your work, and we will add you to our list of interested illustrators. Any submissions need to be of high resolution (300dpi or higher), and preferably in .TIFF format.

How-tos: We are always looking for people who have mad scientist skills to share. We are interested in nearly every form of DIY, although engineering, crafts and fashion are particularly dear to us. We can also help to adapt things to print format, if you need it.

Comics: We would love to run more comics. Contact us!

Reviews: We run reviews of books, movies, zines, music, etc. However, due to limited space in the magazine, we will only run reviews of releases that are truly exceptional.

Fashion: Although we are quite interested in steampunk fashion, we are more interested by DIY skill-sharing than exhibition of existing work. If you want to share patterns or tips for clothing, hair or accessories, then please let us know!

Other: Surprise us! We're nicer people than we sound.

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COLOPHON:

We're still not doing so bad at using so many fonts. This issue, we used: oldstyle, **HEADLINE ONE**, Headline Two, and Persnickety from the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society. *Nars* (Nars), by Eduardo Recife. Twentieth Century, by Sol Hess. And our body font is Warnock Pro, designed by Robert Slimbach.

PUBLISHED BY:

Vagrants Among Ruins

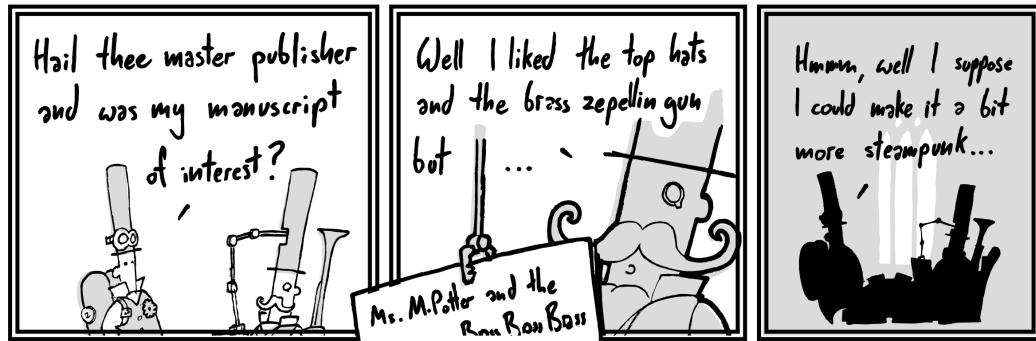
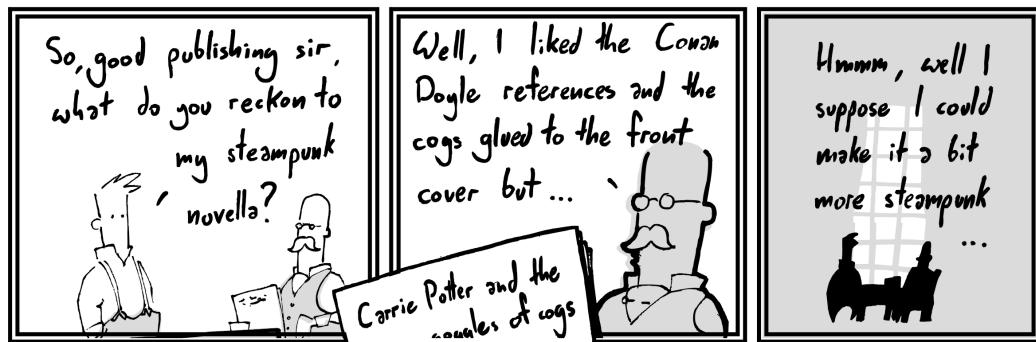
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PRINTED BY:

The Fallen Angel Media, Bristol, UK
07966 252540
print@thefallenangel.co.uk
WWW.THEFALLENANGEL.CO.UK

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