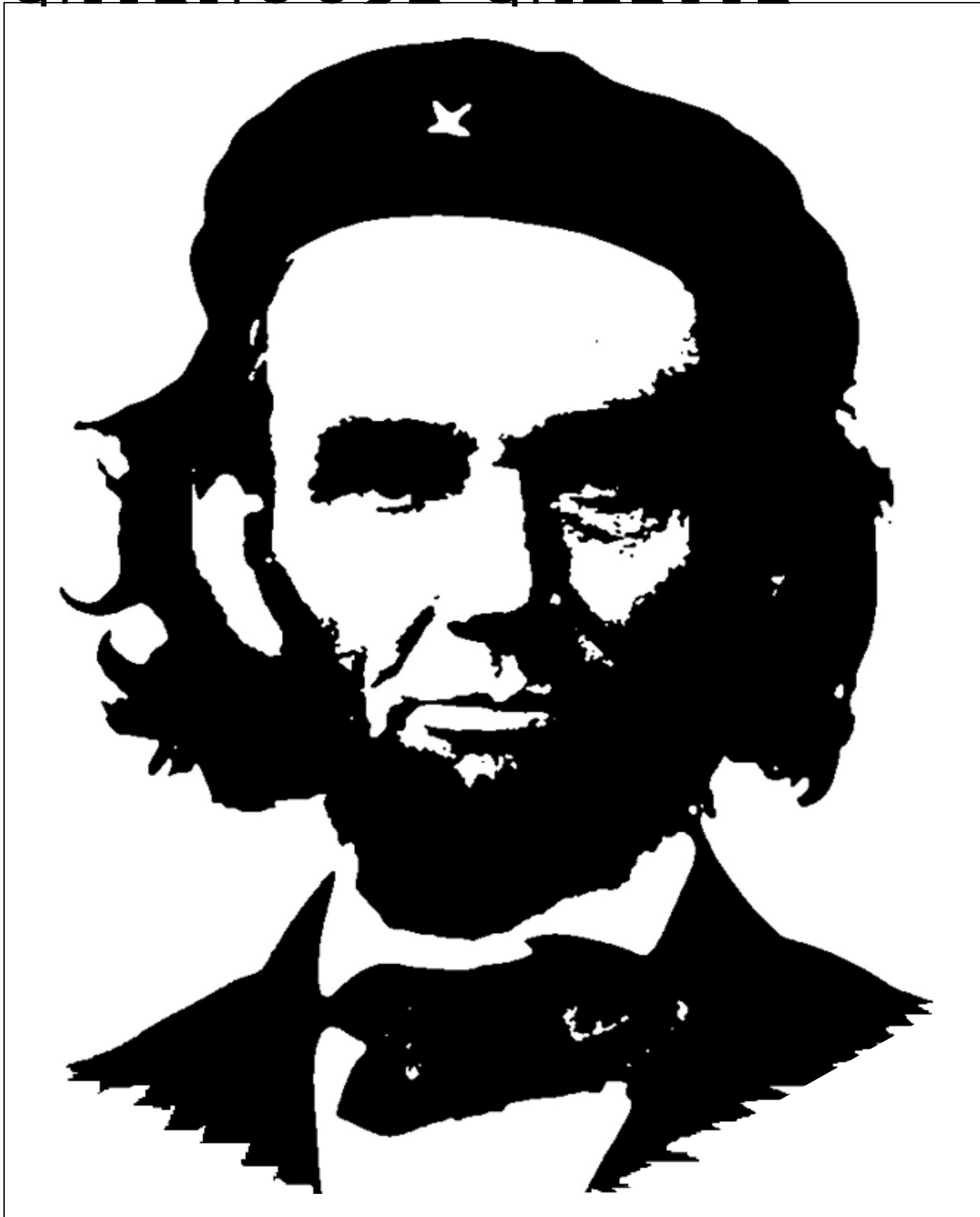# GATEHOUSE GAZETTE

CONTENTS

The *Gatehouse Gazette* is an online magazine in publication since July 2008, dedicated to the speculative fiction genres of steampunk and dieselpunk.

"Steampunks are smart as a group and they will take a political stand because they see problems with today's world."

—SIR ROBERT, *THE STEAMPUNK FORUM*, APRIL 18

Contents illustration by ophelias-overdose.deviantart.com.

EDITORIAL

By Nick Ottens

WELCOME BACK, DEAR READER! IN ANTICIPATION OF the Great Steampunk Debate, the launch of which should coincide with our release, this issue of the *Gatehouse Gazette* is dedicated to steampunk ideology.

Our last edition, themed "Victorientalism", sparked quite some discussion on matters of race and politics which demonstrated the difficulty that steampunk enthusiasts still face in rhyming their reminiscences about the past with the realities of the nineteenth century. The problem reaches beyond the colonial experience and may include issues varying from sexism and class struggle to industrialism and entrepreneurship. How steampunk decides to cope with these questions will significantly determine its future mindset and mainstream appeal. That's why I'm glad that part of the Great Steampunk Debate will be concerned with these, and related, topics.

This magazine has always devoted itself to casting a critical eye on the burgeoning steampunk subculture, or "movement" as some prefer. We are skeptical of attempts to define steampunk too narrowly, both in terms of aesthetics but even more so in terms of politics. Steampunk was not created in protest. It was never intended to have much of an ideological character. That is not to say that there is no place for ideology in steampunk whatsoever. But it is important to remember where we come from. The roots of steampunk are literary, not political.

If we nonetheless allow ourselves some leniency, it is possible to identify something of a shared mentality between steampunks. Jacqueline Christi writes an intelligent commentary on steampunk ideology later in this issue and notes that, within the soul of every person involved in the steampunk community, there is found an "unbridled passion" to live one's dreams unrestrained by the reigns of common convention. "This indomitable heart," she believes, "lays the foundations of the core principles that steampunk stands for."

Much has been said on the "punk" in "steampunk". We are of the persuasion that regards the syllable as little more than an accidental leftover from more rebellious times, though, if understood as referring to Christi's "unbridled passion" and fierce devotion to self-expression, it turns into something that even we can wholeheartedly embrace.

What follows logically, I believe, is that steampunk is brazenly individualistic. In spite of meet-ups and events and the spectacular online dynamic organized by steampunk enthusiasts all around the world, each is a person or a character of their own making, wearing their own costumes, writing their own stories, building their own websites and making their own contraptions. Indeed, there is quite some resentment toward those "jumping on the bandwagon" because steampunk happens to be "cool" right now. As Christi put it, one thing all genre enthusiasts definitely share is a rejection of convention.

Dr Damon Molinarius suggests that we might have something in common with utopianism in this regard. As steampunks, we like to create worlds of our own in which different rules apply. In this sense, we combine criticism with creativity, according to Molinarius, "disrupting familiar concepts and practices." Like utopia, steampunk is critical in a constructive manner, "acting as a mirror to the contemporaneous world, and revealing the familiar to be strange." Both steampunk and utopia suggest that commonplace, universally accepted "truths" might actually be little more than conventions which can readily be changed.

So, let us start changing things. Wear your top hat for a night's out to the cinemas! Combine that fancy pair of goggles with your regular outfit! Grow a mustache; smoke a pipe; write to your local paper to complain about that peculiar new-fashioned invention called the "iPhone"; or delve into your workshop to make the machine a better one, of course. The future is ours! •

The *Gatehouse Gazette* unveils a fresh, updated look with this issue. Like it? Hate it? Let us know! Write to n.ottens@gmail.com for letters to the editor or inquires about contributing.

Letters may be edited for purposes of space and clarity.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I'M WRITING TO EXPRESS MY deep disappointment at the most recent, "Victorientalism" issue of the *Gatehouse Gazette*. The entire issue is fraught with problems and unpleasantnesses. Orientalism is a really problematic thing, tied up with colonialism, economic and chattel slavery, and many other crimes. To say "steampunk allows us to reject the chains of reality and all the racism and guilt associated with it" is to assume your audience is white and Western, and to make the claim that we can forget about all that when it's inconvenient.

This issue only worsens the stereotype that steampunk is just a hobby for clueless white kids who neither know nor care about history. It's frankly embarrassing to see unexamined use of the word "Oriental," as though everywhere east of the Mediterranean were the same place, and flinch-inducing use of "Negro." That's not to say we can't be interested in steampunk and Central and East Asia, or that we shouldn't talk about historical views about non-white people. But doing it from what feels like a Western European, colonialist point of view is an extremely poor choice.

Why not talk about Korean dragon boats, the fact that Ottoman Turkey discovered steam power well before the West, or discuss fashions in their real world context? When we do talk about Orientalism, why not remember that there are people reading who are still affected by it, instead of appending a "Vic" to the beginning and acting like that fixes things?

This issue was a saddening and frustrating one to many people. As a long-time steampunk aficionado, I would hope that we can do better.

Thanks for your time,
Grace D. Palmer

MANY THANKS FOR ANOTHER fabulous *Gatehouse Gazette*. I waited a little while until the Victorientalism debate died down. If ever there was a controversial topic, you certainly hit upon it.

British colonial efforts spread around the world, and it had a major impact on the Far East, there's no doubt there. There is a romantic notion to helping to spread the Empire's influence and meeting the unknown or little-understood face to face. Oriental culture was so different, and we in the West have a terrible habit of ridiculing what we do not understand. I get the feeling that some people who raged against this issue thought that racist stereotypes like Ming the Merciless, or Charlie Chan, or the Yellow Peril propaganda issued by the Allies during World War II were being discussed. I believe I understand the intent of the issue: to try to recreate the feeling of a part of the fictional past that was adventurous, romantic and dangerous. Wasn't that the idea behind most adventure movies?

As you noted, we need to reject the chains of reality, and all the racism and guilt associated with it. Yet, there are those who are eager to be offended. I think some readers may be touchy given the current state of relations with the Islamic world. I hope the discussion will continue, in a civilized fashion, of course, in this fine magazine and on the website. If we cannot explore those attitudes from the past, as racist and demeaning as they may have been, then we cannot explore history.

Let us study this fictional or real past and learn for our actual future.

Yours,
Lloyd Penney

I WAS SURPRISED TO SEE THE sheer volume of bad press your periodical received with your eleventh issue on "Victoriental" steampunk. As far as I'm aware the issue hoped to address the nineteenth century Western perception of the Far East. The use of the term "Orientalism" traditionally refers to scholars and the like who had a keen interest in the region throughout the Victorian period, well on through to the Second World War. One can only therefore presume that the use of the term "Victorientalism" was a direct association to the Victorian period and reinforcing that the views, incorrect as they are to the post-modern pallet of our contemporary ways, were held by Victorians. One is tempted to tell the most vocal of your recent critics to "take two pills of Man-The-Deuce-Up and not call me in the morning."

The whole debacle, indeed, seems to stem from the disuse of the term "Oriental" in the United States where "Asian" is considered acceptable to lump a whole gamut of cultures across the continent, whereas in the United Kingdom and Europe, where the majority of your writers hail from, "Oriental" is considered the better term over "Asian."

I fail to see what all the fuss is about. The notion that the staff of the *Gazette* are somehow bigoted or racist, as some of your detractors have implied, is laughable and what is more, offensive. I only hope that robust, objective and down-to-earth reexamination of this heated issue will vindicate your publication and ultimately lead to apologies, that is, should the knee-jerkers be adult enough to do so.

Regards,
Adm. Theophile Aube

OP-ED THE STEAMPUNK FANDOM

By Chris Garcia, editor of *Exhibition Hall*

I THINK I LOOK AT STEAMPUNK DIFFERENTLY FROM most folks I run into. To me, it's a fandom. I am a member of Steampunk Fandom. When I mention this to people, especially folks who have never been a part of other fandoms, they tend to deny it. When you look at the development of other fandoms, science fiction, *Star Trek*, comics, what have you, you'll see a very familiar activities curve. It develops through correspondence and connections made through other groups. Then publications dedicated specifically to the topic are formed. Artists latch on to the movement and create new works specifically for the fandom. Gatherings are then held, first small local groups, sometimes as a part of a larger event, and then there are conventions. Numbers grow, some academic interest is kindled, factions form, numbers grow more and individual groups with specific interests start to splinter off somewhat. That's what's happened in almost every fandom I can think of and we're presently in that process with steampunk.

I'm not sure why, but there seems to be a tremendous pushback whenever I mention this in forums, particularly from Europeans. I'm still not sure why, it makes complete sense to me that steampunk is a fandom, that we've got something out there that we're fans of and we're dom-ing it. Maybe they see it as frivolous, or maybe the connection to other fandoms is distressing. Of the known dedicated publications dedicated to steampunk, mine is the only one that calls itself a fanzine. *Exhibition Hall* does tend to be lighter fare than either *SteamPunk Magazine* or this illustrious publication, but even if it weren't, I'd still consider it a fanzine because it's a zine done by a member of a fandom.

I've had this discussion several times, and there are folks who see it as a silly point and there are those who take it as a major piece of work that I'd insult their chosen path by reducing it to being a mere fandom. That's part of the reason I'm so excited for the Great Steampunk Debate!

The thing is, the one thing that most of the earlier fandoms didn't have was access to the Internet. The Internet has changed all of the known fandom, giving them a place to communicate with larger numbers. Steampunk is the first of the fandoms I can think of that grew in the time of the Net. It did its early correspondence phase in e-mail and on bulletin boards and forums. Steampunk, somewhat ironically, managed to take full advantage of the Modern Age! The growth of steampunk websites was fast, hard, and well-done.

There is a stage in the growth of fandoms where people start to ask questions. What's the purpose of all this? What do we all think? Where are we all going? Why are we building such a big ship? These questions used to be hashed out at conventions on panels and in the bar, or in fanzines. Earl Kemp's *Why A Fan?* was an attempt to look at what brought people to fandom and how it affected them. There are no end of fanzines looking at the effect of *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* fans funnelling into science fiction fandom in the 1980s. We're lucky that we have the Internet and can have these discussions in a centralized place dedicated to getting into the tough questions that us steampunks want to get to the bottom of. When the Great Steampunk Debate gets going, it'll be a place to discuss steampunk and the role of politics, of the literature, of the scene and how it effects the lot of us. I'm certain to be most active in the areas of the scene and trying to come up with an idea of exactly what it is we're all a part of. A fandom? A lifestyle? A movement? A warm cup of coffee on a cold day? What are we, and how does that effect what we do?

This will be a location for debate, and let's be assured that we'll see some fiery battles around the politics of steampunk. I personally have a thing for politics, I even ran for mayor twice, and looking at steampunk in a political light can be maddening, but it also provides an important view for what the nature of this gathering of like-minded individuals is. Do we all share the same politics? If we don't, then do we all even care about politics?

The other great advantage of the Great Steampunk Debate will be the location. Recent events in the pages of *Gatehouse Gazette* led to an explosion of commentary in various outlets, too many for me to keep track of, at least. This will be a repository for those kinds of discussions, a sort of one-stop shopping for controversy and serious discourse. Except some fireworks, but like any good pyrotechnic display, it will be at least somewhat controlled to avoid massive damage. A little smoke, some fire, but no devastation.

So, maybe we'll finally nail down exactly what this whole steampunk thing is. Maybe we'll find that we're really a quilting bee that has lost our way. I kinda doubt it, but we'll see. •

Exhibition Hall is a steampunk fanzine currently in its eight issue, available for download at http://efanzines.com/ExhibHall.

OP-ED **A STEAMPUNK PARTY**

By Rafael Fabre, webmaster of *The Steampunk Tribune*

I ADMIT SHAKING MY HEAD WHENEVER I READ THE work of a reporter proclaiming the "death of steampunk," thinking that someone has negligently ignored his or her bosses' deadline and found themselves scrambling for topic. Quite to the contrary, steampunk appears to have been enjoying a slow but steady climb in popularity throughout the past half decade or so, for many reasons. From literature, steampunk has spread into film into building impressive steampunk devices and works, conventions (and the associated attire to properly visit them in), and even touring virtual steampunk cities. Steampunk is pervasive, even starting to lap the shores of political thought which, as with all things political, can be a blessing or a curse.

With the upcoming Great Steampunk Debate, I have no doubt the virtual "fur will fly," with some trying to maintain a civil discourse on the topic, while others will insist on relentless attacks and online foot-stomping, if the conduct of other political sites is any indication. However, I've taken a bifurcated view of steampunk politics in trying to make sense of the prism of views preceding this month's debate. To my estimation, there are two ways steampunk can be approached in a political discussion: within a historical context and within a modern one.

The historical context involves reconciling the social and political aspects of the Victorian era with an idealized steampunk setting. Perhaps one of the best examples of this was the recent "Victorientalism" debate, contrasting what one might call "Eurocentric" steampunk to "steampunk in the Orient" (or better termed as "steampunk in Asia") for the era. I was fascinated to read the different views on this, from Ms Goh's work on *Silver Goggles* to Mr Ottens' on *The Gatehouse*, following the twists and turns of the discussion. I'm not sure whether a resolution was reached (or could have been reached), but nonetheless, it provided intriguing insight about the topic. Debates of this sort, while challenging and perhaps even uncomfortable to some, I believe do enhance the expanse of the genre by nudging perceptions beyond their perceived limits.

The other aspect of steampunk, to my estimation, involves the introduction of modern politics by attempting to add the "steampunk" label for convince onto people's own philosophies and actions. There are some longitudinal lines that can be drawn, but certain circumstances, such as *SteamPunk Magazine*'s proclamation of the arrest of one of their own in October of 2009 as "steampunk's first political prisoner" seemed off-putting, to say the least. While the circumstances are unfortunate for the gentleman in question, I side with the later commentary of Dr Damon Molinarius who had "yet to see any mention of steampunk anywhere in any of the reports, other than here [*SteamPunk Magazine*]." I do take a bit of umbrage at anyone attempting to purloin the good name of steampunk in conjunction with their personal political activities. To me, the attempt to "shoe-horn" some sort of activist political message into the genre seems a bit disingenuous.

Still, if real politics are truly to be infused with steampunk, perhaps a Steampunk Party would be an appropriate way to go. A cog logo on placards and top hats as signature attire would be the start. I have a few suggestions for a platform, which are both progressive and true to the genre.

1. Government subsidies for public transit—both rail and airship! Amtrak and Airship Ventures are two steampunk modes of travel which minimize the impact on the environment and certainly fall within the scope of the genre.

2. Steam, more steam! Encourage the use of geothermal steam over other sources of energy. It won't supplant them but promoting geothermal as "steamy" is certainly an option to consider.

3. Renewable wares! Perhaps not everyone is as talented as Mr Von Slatt in rebuilding and purposing items for appearance and usability but a shift from our disposable society to one which values workmanship and durability would be a step in the right direction.

The list can go on and on. One's imagination is the only limit!

Seriously, I have had the pleasure of conversing with many who follow steampunk and see is as a simple escape from the work-a-day doldrums rather than as some sort of political movement. While discourse is part of human nature, some corners of the steampunk community seem to have a *fait accompli* perception regarding the imposition of modern politics, be it right, left, or what not, into a fictional setting. The upcoming Great Steampunk Debate will certainly shed further light on this topic. As for myself, I shall sit back and see how the discussion develops and look forward to insights from this challenging endeavor. •

The Steampunk Tribune reports on steampunk since 2007 at http://www.steampunktribune.com.

Steam Canon: Thoughts on the ideology of steampunk

BY JACQUELINE CHRISTI

THERE IS A GAGGLE OF DIFFERENT people to be found within steampunk culture. Everyone has their own opinion about what it means to be a member of the steampunk community. Trying to find a specific mindset that unifies steampunk as a subculture can be a difficult undertaking therefore.

Some steampunk enthusiasts like to reconstruct a past that wasn't that embodies an idealized vision of the Victorian era inspired by their optimistic aspiration that modern industry and scientific advancement will create a brighter future. There are others who seek to express the opposite, portraying the tragedy that could have been realized throughout the nineteenth century's era of progress, showing how industry crushed craftsmanship and the dangers of treading the waters of science too casually. They paint a romantic dystopia filled with pollution and rust. Others yet are thrill seekers that view steampunk as a grand fantastical adventure represented within classic Scientific Romances and "Penny Dreadful" novels. And then there are steampunks who cast away modern convention and stand against a world that relies on commercialism and mass manufactured goods. They intend to reclaim technology and construction from a larger society and give it back to the people.

Most steampunks however involve themselves by appreciating the Victorian aesthetic by dressing in costume and participating in social events. Steampunk is a fun way to keep them amused and they take the spirit back to their mundane lives. Some are natural tinkers and see the genre as a chance to create and modify things with their own hands. They feel that the Victorian aesthetic represented within steampunk is a source of inspiration to be used in fashion, art, and music.

Many people have different positions on what ideals are most strongly held in steampunk. All of these viewpoints, and more, are generally accepted ways to see the movement. With such diversity, it can be boggling to imagine how anyone could come to an agreed ideology. Yet somehow a strong community has evolved from all of these various ideas to create a coherent, unified culture.

One of the reasons that steampunk is able to thrive is the unbridled passion that is found within the soul of every person involved within the community. This indomitable heart lays the foundation of the core principles that steampunk stands for. Every person within this society is brimming with a vibrant desire to achieve their dreams. Whether their passion is expressed in the pursuit of knowledge, art, revolution or amusement, all steampunkers are inspired to live their dreams unrestrained by the reigns of common convention. Their spirits are overflowing with an unquellable fervor to achieve their goals. No amount of hindrance can crush the hopes that each person cherishes. While there may be setbacks and failure, they will not remain disheartened for long. To allow despair to persist would encourage doubt and apathy. These feelings may threaten to overwhelm the ardor and enthusiasm that are central for the persistence needed to attain their dreams. Although everyone may have different thoughts about what steampunk is, all can admire the motivation and sincerity that lives within them. Through their bold commitment other individuals become inspired to chase their own goals. These passions drive people further toward improving not only themselves but the world.

In order to express their passions, many people in the steampunk society create. Creativity and invention are the tools of this community and nothing has inspired the steampunk culture more than the resurgence of DIY (do-it-yourself) hobbyists. While not all do-it-yourselfers are involved in

> With such diversity, it can be boggling to imagine how anyone could come to an agreed steampunk ideology.

the steampunk society, the inspiration to make one's own projects has become central to the subculture. It motivates people toward becoming more involved in the world they live in. People want to understand the environment which surrounds them which is one of rapidly increasing technological prevalence. They must learn about their world in order to affect a modicum of influence; to leave their unique signature upon the Earth. In order to encourage invention there must be know-how. Without it there would be no way to grasp the dreams to transform them into reality. Because steampunkers pursue their dreams on some

fundamental level of their being, it is not enough to make empty wishes and wait for external forces to bring about their desires. It is important to be able to be involved in the obtaining of one's goals on a personal level. By building technological gizmos, writing stories, developing fashion, etc., steampunk inspires people to expand their knowledge and become part of it. Through this understanding they are better suited to pursue their dreams. The best way to come by this knowledge is by working within the environment that is most inspirational. By experiencing the things loved first hand, a person gains a deeper understanding of how it works. People desire to comprehend why it works, not only that it does. It is not enough to simply exist, never questioning why. It is immensely important to learn how the world works so that people may be involved within their environment; not merely survive it. By learning to build and create their own effects they gain hands-on experience to strengthen their understanding. The world relies upon technology and because of this, it becomes increasingly important to gain knowledge of its workings. It is filled with machines that are comprised of wire, chipboards, and circuits. Electricity flows though everyone's life. If people do not become involved soon there won't be any way to comprehend the world that they live in.

By building not only do people deepen their levels of knowledge but also strengthen the bonds of the community. By sharing creations with each other they encourage new ideas and inspire a greater involvement; they contribute one more piece of understanding to a larger society. Whether it is a remodeled computer, a clockwork sculpture, or an elaborate costume,

inventions foster understanding of the mechanics of the universe. And by describing the creative process behind the creation to another person they are able to pass on a bit of that knowledge.

Another reason that making is such an important part of the steampunk mindset is that it is completely unique to each individual. Every invention or creation belongs to its creator alone. It is not owned by monolithic faceless corporation that enforces contracts with every idea. Every creation belongs to its creator and with this comes a strong sense of pride and accomplishment.

This pride encourages people to continue creating and develop new thoughts to participate with the world in order to ensure that they have left an impact on history.

With everyone working to develop themselves through passion and knowledge it becomes easier to see how the steampunk mindset coalesced into a complete form. It is natural for people to desire to share their successes with one another. By expressing pride and delivering praise when they themselves are impressed with another's ingenuity, soon it becomes a source of inspiration to many people to get more involved with life.

Inspiration can never be labeled or quantified and through this wisdom came acceptance of a great

BUILD CITIES NOT SOCIETIES

many ideas. Because the nature of steampunk is so versatile and broadly accepting of new ideas the culture will continue to flourish. The mindset of the steampunk world must remain subjective in order to grow. This ensures that steampunk will be able to continually adapt to change more rapidly than an ideology with strict and rigid views about how the world should be. By embracing all the different viewpoints the dynamic nature of steampunk will never stagnate or wither. While its current popularity may return to obscurity, the fluid nature, passion and pride will never allow the romantic ideal to be forgotten!   •

Steampunk—an utopian expression?

BY DR DAMON MOLINARIUS

AS STEAMPUNK BECOMES MORE recognized, moving further into the mainstream, questions have arisen concerning the nature of the genre, and, pertinently in these politically tense times, its political persuasion, if any.

The possible political aspects of steampunk have led to heated discussion on a number of fronts, given impetus by the recent furor and allegations of racism over the "Victorientalism" issue of this *Gatehouse Gazette*, and the arrest of Professor Calamity (or Elliot Madison) during the G-20 protests in October 2009, with ensuing claims and counter-claims of Calamity being a "steampunk activist." This latter issue is complicated by the multi-faceted nature of Calamity's identity as an anarchist, journalist, social worker, volunteer adviser on legal issues to protestors, as well as a steampunk.

This multi-faceted nature of Professor Calamity is mirrored in the nature of steampunk itself. As has been highlighted elsewhere, steampunk has contained a radical element since the beginning, and has retained this through its various forms of expression—it has certainly never laid claim to be mainstream. However, the nature of this radicalism is disparate, and different "wings" of the steampunk genre have an uneasy relationship with each other. Note that I am not using the term "movement" here, as this would give the impression of a combined and united group dedicated toward a single, or set, of goal(s), which, as steampunks themselves recognize, steampunk is not.

This disparateness is readily seen in the myriad definitions of steampunk, many of which contain similar elements, but whose foci are slightly different to each other. Indeed, those that dare to define steampunk upon their blogs or in their writings are lauded for their brave effort, while often also being provided with suggestions for improvements to their definitions to include elements which they had otherwise omitted. There are as many definitions of steampunk as there are steampunks, and while this is no bad thing, given that the genre is self-driven, expressed in individual fashion by its protagonists, with no agreed leadership, it has the unintended consequence of exaggerating the problems which arise when the steampunk and non-steampunk world meet. This can be readily seen in the police handling of the Calamity case—given the nature of his wider activities as an anarchist, and against the normative background of the "war on terror," the local police had a different perception to a steampunk of the gas masks which were found in Calamity's apartment upon their search. It may also be seen in academic circles, whereby external researchers who have started to approach the genre of steampunk from within their academic disciplines—notably fiction studies—have been struggling to firmly identify what it is that they are studying. The lack of cohesiveness within the steampunk genre itself contributes to the misunderstanding on the part of non-steampunks as to what steampunk is and what it is not, as well as hampering effective discourse within the genre itself.

One approach which may address these issues is through utopianism, and an understanding of steampunk as an expression of utopia. Within utopian studies, there is an understanding that, while utopists (those who study utopia) may not agree upon a definition of utopia, this is not a barrier to effective discussion and mutual understanding. The study of utopia, and utopianism, is disparate and multi-disciplinary, covering fields as diverse, for instance, as literature, architecture, politics, history, geography, music and fashion, and spanning the spectrum from authoritarianism through liberalism to anarchism, and steampunk maps very well onto this. Like the worlds that steampunk envisages, utopia is "the good place that is no place." A paradox emerges from Thomas More's (who invented the term in 1516) etymological and phonetic play on three Greek terms: *eu* (good), *ou* (non or not) and *topos* (place). Steampunk, similarly, combines criticism with creativity, disrupting familiar concepts and practices, and creating spaces in which alternatives can be imagined and explored. Utopia, like steampunk, is critical in a constructive manner, acting as a mirror to the contemporaneous world, and revealing the familiar to be strange. Both steampunk and utopia suggest that commonplace, universally accepted "truths" might actually be just conventions, and that things do not have to be this way. Utopias in all their forms (including dystopias) are restless, shifting phenomena, resistant to tidy conceptualization, reflecting the messy, complex and contradictory nature of human desires for a better world. Utopia can be simultaneously radical and authoritarian, liberating and restricting, exciting and frustrating—as can steampunk.

Utopianism articulates dissatisfaction with the now and desire for a better way of living, often situated in the future; steampunk expresses dissatisfaction with the now, arising from a dissatisfaction of the past, and the desire for a better today.

Utopias depict, or suggest the hope for, better lives, and better worlds, and allow their author—whether of written fiction, a physical structure, or community—to show what they believe to be wrong with society and to demonstrate their imagined alternatives. In fictional utopias these moments of criticism and imagining alternatives often occur concurrently, and this mechanism is seen in much steampunk literature: as the protagonist experiences new ways of doing things, they come to see the flaws in their own world. As the protagonist of *Utopia* comes to appreciate what is wrong with his own society through his experiences of the island society of Utopia, so do the protagonists of, for instance, *Whitechapel Gods* and the dystopian world of an alternative London.

Utopianism has been studied through various means, providing different ways of understanding utopia through form, content, and function, and includes utopia as literature (including myth), "real world" communities, and social theory. One key definition of utopianism (by Lyman Tower Sargent) which has framed the discourse perceives utopianism as a broad, general phenomenon of social dreaming: the dreams and nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives and which usually envision a radically different society than the one in which the dreamers live. This seems to reflect the steampunk genre well, and is demonstrated particularly in steampunk role play, and in the online communities which form a core of the steampunk genre. This social dreaming enables steampunks to imagine, for instance, an alternative nineteenth century world of advanced steam-powered technology, or of racial harmony, not by betraying or washing away the stains of all that was wrong with nineteenth century society, but by engaging with those problems in a constructively critical manner. Rarely are utopias fully realized perfect societies, whether in written form or in the "real" world as utopian communal experiments, but they encompass the desire for a better, alternative, way of living, and steampunk encompasses a desire for a better, alternative, past.

There remains much distrust of utopia and utopianism, with the concept of utopia itself being an ideological battleground with no single agreed definition of "utopia" or "utopian." Partly this stems from the rise of the Soviet Union, and utopia, in the twentieth century, did not have many friends. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc between 1989 and 1992 prompted much to be made at the time of the defeat of utopia. However, this was based upon a narrow understanding of utopia as "the" perfect society, which understood utopia as necessarily authoritarian and restricting.

Strategies on the part of utopists and utopians in coping with this attack were varied, some limiting their definition of utopia, and others countering that the central criticism of the anti-utopians—that the core of utopia is perfectibility—was flawed. Within the steampunk genre, there remains mistrust, often stemming from an individual's non-recognition of another's understanding of steampunk. Individuals within steampunk have their own understandings of what steampunk is, and how a steampunk life should be lived, and while this vision may be only partially envisaged, steampunks hold certain understandings and beliefs in common in a way which should enable them to recognize each other, and to come together in communities, whether in the real world as local groups, as societies, on discussion boards online, or even as musicians to explore the un-bounded field of steampunk music.

There is no understanding of "the" steampunk way of expression, just as there is no "the" utopia. Steampunk is a wide and varied genre, and this powers its vitality and its crucial critical element, enabling it to remain radical without becoming narrowly politically focused, and for its protagonists to act within the genre, it is to be hoped, without fear of retribution or harsh treatment from others within the genre for their views and practices of steampunk. An understanding of steampunk as utopian expression would allow this. •

Alice in Wonderland

A REVIEW BY HILDE HEYVAERT

WHILE TIM BURTON'S LATEST movie isn't entirely steampunk, it does have steampunk elements popping up throughout the film. Despite the non-steamy bits to it, it is a new and original take on two classics by Lewis Carroll that many steampunks all over the world adore: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). In tradition of Disney's 1951 animated classic, Burton uses elements from both books, making for a wonderful mix of storylines and characters.

In this latest cinematographic take on the Carroll adventures our heroine, Alice Kingsleigh, is a teenager, struggling with the rigid Victorian morals of her time and coping with the recent death of her father, a man of visionary merchant qualities and one of the few people to truly understand her.

The story starts with a flashback of young Alice, who suffers from a recurring dream about Wonderland's inhabitants. A dream, so is revealed, that she still has at later age.

At a party she is attending it becomes clear that she is distinctively out of place and it thus doesn't take long before she tumbles down the rabbit hole once again, and ends up in Wonderland, which she appears to have forgotten visiting before when she was but a child. The inhabitants strangely refer to the place as "Unterland" and this isn't the only new name that Burton uses. In fact he has given all of the characters names instead of the titles they previously had. The names of some may be a bit tricky to remember at first because they're not particularly common (such as Mallyumpkin the Dormouse).

It wouldn't be a Tim Burton film if the characters weren't radically different to what we've come to expect either from reading the books or watching previous film adaptations. The Red Queen for instance spots an oversized head and shares a liking for beheading with the infamous Queen of Hearts. The Dormouse isn't sleepy at all but runs around swashbuckling instead, and Alice isn't a little girl anymore but a young lady who turns out to be Unterland's knight in shining armour (quite literally even). Other characters are exactly as we imagined them: the Cheshire Cat is an evaporating trickster bound to warm your heart, the March Hare a neurotic loon and the Caterpillar and his trusty hookah are inseparable. The Jabberwocky truly looks like he could have stepped right off the pages of *Through the Looking Glass.*

Burton has also woven in some real details from the books and Disney's animated adventure in this film, including Absolem turning into a butterfly and the Jabberwocky poem. These are lovely details, though I fear that they may be lost on those viewers that haven't read the books nor seen the animated version.

Wonderland/Unterland is a darker, more glum place where death lurks around every corner and the Red Queen reigns with more terror than her predecessor the Queen of Hearts ever managed. Helena Bonham Carter is brilliant as the tyrant, no matter how many times Mrs Burton may have been cast by her husband. The White Queen is the perfect counterpart to her bloodthirsty power hungry sister and the Mad Hatter, who has a far larger part in this story than he ever had, makes for a perfect

representation of the madness one suffers from too much Unterland. Could he be played by someone other than Johnny Depp? Possibly. Did Depp, another repeat cast by Burton, do a good job? Certainly. His Hatter is properly mad, yet tragic and hopeful at the same time,

providing the character with a dept he previously lacked.

Even the 3D elements were quite lovely although, perhaps, unnecessary. I'm quite certain that it's just as fantastic in 2D.

Burton has managed to not only stay true to the original literary classics but also to the feel of Disney's famous animated version to realize his own, distinct vision on this spectacular tale. He has kept the classic elements and characters but put them together in a new, typically Burtonesque way that we've come to know and expect from this director. The result is a wonderful new take on Wonderland. •

The Dream of Perpetual Motion

A REVIEW BY MARCUS RAUCHFUß

OF ALL THE STEAMPUNK NOVELS I have read, *The Dream of Perpetual Motion* is the strangest and most bizarre. If I had to sum it up in one sentence it would be this:

"Shakespeare's The Tempest *written in a steampunk world while Shakespeare was on a bad trip."*

Dexter Palmer draws heavily on *The Tempest* in his novel. The original features on several occasions and we meet strange versions of Prospero, Miranda, Caliban and Ferdinand. They are all protagonists in *The Dream of Perpetual Motion* to varying degrees of importance. Prospero has some resemblance to his namesake in *The Tempest*, but he is a dark version of the Shakespearian protagonist: a technological necromancer more at home with devices and machines than humans and other living beings. Miranda shares the innocence of Shakespeare's Miranda but this innocence also harbors a secret. We meet further, strange characters like the drivers of shrink-cabs (taxis which also sort your psyche out) and a sculptor who for twenty-five years did nothing but portray Miranda. Now he is an obsessed and insane wreck and a chilling testimony to corrupted art.

The plot itself begins during the narrator's childhood, one Harold Winslow. He tells the story from his cabin aboard a giant zeppelin, the *Chrysalis.* We learn that as a child he lived in poverty in Xeroville with his father and elder sister and by fortune or fate his life became intertwined with that of the city's ruler, Prospero Taligent, and his adoptive daughter, Miranda.

The story follows several strands, some in the recent past of the narrator's life, some recollections of his childhood, which makes the novel a bit difficult to follow at times though it all comes together near the end. All lines eventually converge, all the riddles are solved and all of the mysteries revealed. *The Dream of Perpetual Motion* may not be the easiest of novels to work your way through (my only point of contention) but Palmer manages beautifully to draw the reader into the story.

We learn about the city through Harold's eyes and as his life progresses it becomes clear that everything is not headed toward the scientific utopia that his youth promised. Instead, we witness the decay of a society under the influence of too many machines and too much science and logic for its own good.

In between there are almost dreamlike sequences with Harold recalling his visit to Prospero's tower: a terrible amalgam of smoke, mirrors, strange inhabitants and high technology. It is haunted by Prospero's dreams: those he made real and his final dream, which eludes him almost until his death.

Prospero's dreams are what is revealed to be the driving force behind everything that happens in Xeroville. Prospero wants to be a benefactor, a loving father and a philanthropist. But he cannot really understand his fellow men and all his endeavors culminate in frustration and horror.

Dexter Palmer paints a chilling picture of an increasingly alien yet hauntingly familiar culture, dominated by one monolithic cooperation and its dictates on human lives. Reality itself becomes mutable just as it is inside Prospero's tower. It starts with the seeping-in of casual insanity in places we do not expect and ends with the unravelling of Prospero's and Caliban's true natures and the final fate of Miranda.

Although I would hesitate to describe this as an action novel, the tension never leaves the story. There is always another revelation, something marvellous or
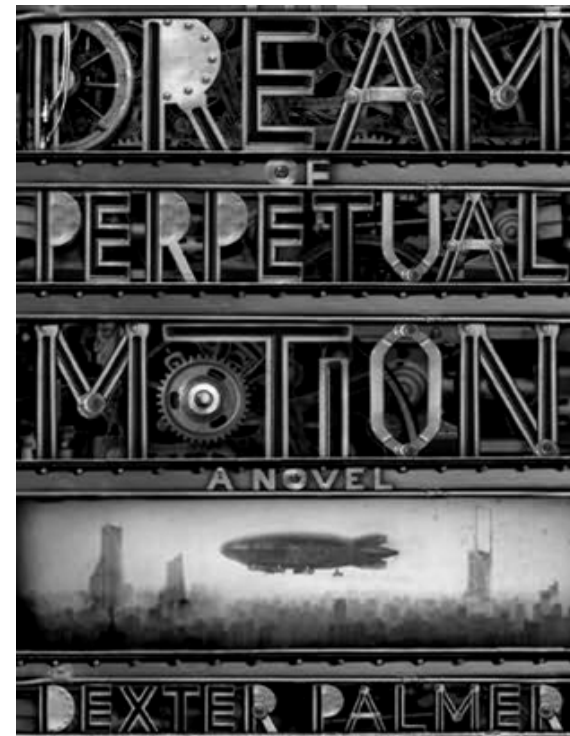
unexpected awaiting on the next page. When a revelation does occur, the author manages to have it come from an unexpected angle to still startle the reader.

The Dream of Perpetual Motion is a moral tale of the wonders of technology gone mad; of human endeavors corrupted by misguided motives and ill-placed good intentions. It is a haunting and harrowing tale and an instant classic. I would not be surprised to one day find it listed as "required reading" for a Shakespeare seminar. Dexter Palmer will claim his place among the masters of steampunk literature.   •

Alice in Wonderland for Nintendo DS

A REVIEW BY HILDE HEYVAERT

IN THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS games that were based on movies have often been a bit of a replay of the film without adding much extras or originality. Fun, sure, if you like that sort of thing. Original? Not really. Disney Interactive wasn't known as one of the top dog studios coming up with cool games either.

So the surprise was all the greater when *Alice in Wonderland* for Nintendo's portable console, the DS, appeared on the shelves. The French company Etranges Libellules Studios was commissioned by Disney Interactive to develop this game, and they did a fantastic job at it. Instead of just following the movie story line they turned this into a cute, funny and originally drawn game in which the player has access to four characters that have the dubious task of getting Alice safely through Wonderland (or Underland) and to the Jabberwocky, which needs urgent slaying so that their home world may be saved.

The movement goes via the stylus, which can be a bit daunting at times, especially when you need to jump on things. I was quite willing to overlook this minor shortcoming though if only because the graphics were so lovely.
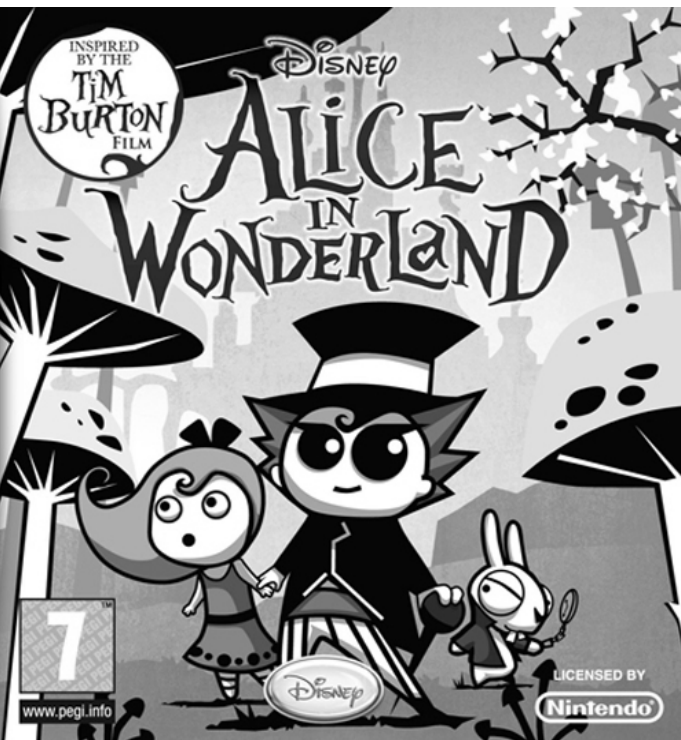
You start out with the White Rabbit, who is, just as in the film, called McTwisp throughout the game. He has the power to control time, which allows you to get over several obstacles in the game. Going on a quest to find pieces of the Underland puzzle, you eventually find Absolem the Caterpillar who controls gravity; Chessur the Cheshire Cat, who can make things appear and disappear; and last but not least, the Mad Hatter, who has a rather unique view on reality, twisting it around. All characters have at least one extra power that can either be found or unlocked in battle with red knights that randomly appear out of vortexes, always trying to capture Alice to shove her through them.

As the game is supposed to be accessible for younger and less experienced gamers also, several things have been added to make it enjoyable for them. A lot of save points are available, so you don't have to bother with redoing lengthy parts when you take a break or Alice does end up in a vortex. And actual character deaths don't really happen. A character can keel over but it'll be up again within about a second, so you don't have to return back to the last save point when the character you are playing should perish. Life and power bars can be replenished easily by cutting at the grass, and all game information is very accessible by tapping icons on the screen. Switching between characters is equally simple and the point where you need to switch, or when you need to use a power, are clearly marked in the game.

Even experienced gamers will find this game enjoyable due to its clever twists, puzzles and mazes, along with the diversity in heroes and villains. Villains aren't just bosses to be beaten on 'till they keel over. The player will have to figure out different ways to deal with enemies instead of just hacking at them with weaponry or jumping on their head an x amount of times.

If you own a DS and like clever games with surprising twists and original, dinky graphics, this is really one I'd recommend, even if you aren't a Wonderland fan. •

> Even experienced gamers will find this game enjoyable due to its clever twists, puzzles and mazes, along with the diversity in heroes and villains.

The Assault on Industry

BY NICK OTTENS

Relentlessly, medievalists and socialists denounce capitalism or industrialism for crimes it did not commit. Indeed, industry has offered society unprecedented prosperity.

THE ENVIRONMENTALIST GOSPEL is heard evermore louder in public discussions today as governments the world over move to impose restrictions and regulations upon businesses for the sake of protecting the Earth. Products that are supposedly harmless to nature are quickly becoming the norm while companies happily promote themselves as "green" and ecologically responsible. Industry, meanwhile, caricatured as polluting and exploitive, is widely denounced and oftentimes, so is capitalism altogether.

Few seem to remember what immense prosperity free market capitalism and industrialization brought the Western World. Commentators and politicians hardly bother to point out anymore in what short time industry bettered the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

In "Individualism and the Free Society," an article edited from his book *Honoring the Self: The Psychology of Confidence and Respect* (1983), Nathaniel Branden points out what an "extraordinary transformation" the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism brought about: "a revolution so radical," he notes, "that it is still far from fully understood."

With […] the development of the free market society, people saw the sudden release of productive energy that had previously had no out-let. They saw life made possible for countless millions who could have had no chance at survival in precapitalist economies. They saw mortality rates fall and population growth rates explode upward. They saw machines (the machines that many of them had cursed, opposed, and tried to destroy) cut their workday in half while multiplying incalculably the value and reward of their effort. They saw themselves lifted to a standard of living no feudal baron could have conceived. With the rapid development of science, technology, and industry, they saw, for the first time in history, the individual's liberated mind taking control of material existence.

"Capitalism," according to Branden, "was achieving miracles before human beings' eyes." Yet, from the very start, by majority, intellectuals were vehemently antagonistic to it. "Their writings were filled with denunciations of the free market economy." Broadly speaking, notes Branden, the antagonism came from two different directions: the medievalists and the socialists.

The medievalist school found its early outlet in nineteenth century Romanticism. It abhorred the disintegration of feudal aristocracy and the sudden appearance of self-made men from backgrounds of poverty and obscurity. They rejected the supposedly hollow concern with profit making and preferred that man embrace his "spiritual" side, echoing the age-old dichotomy of "soul" and "body" invented by religionists.

One finds the medievalists' sentiments best expressed in the works of men as William Cobbett, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth and John Ruskin who wrote that, "Commerce or business of any kind may be the invention of the Devil."

"The medievalists dreamed of abolishing the Industrial Revolution," according to Branden. "The socialists wished to take it over." They did away with the spiritualism of their contemporaries and stressed the miserable conditions which the working classes had now to endure. Men as
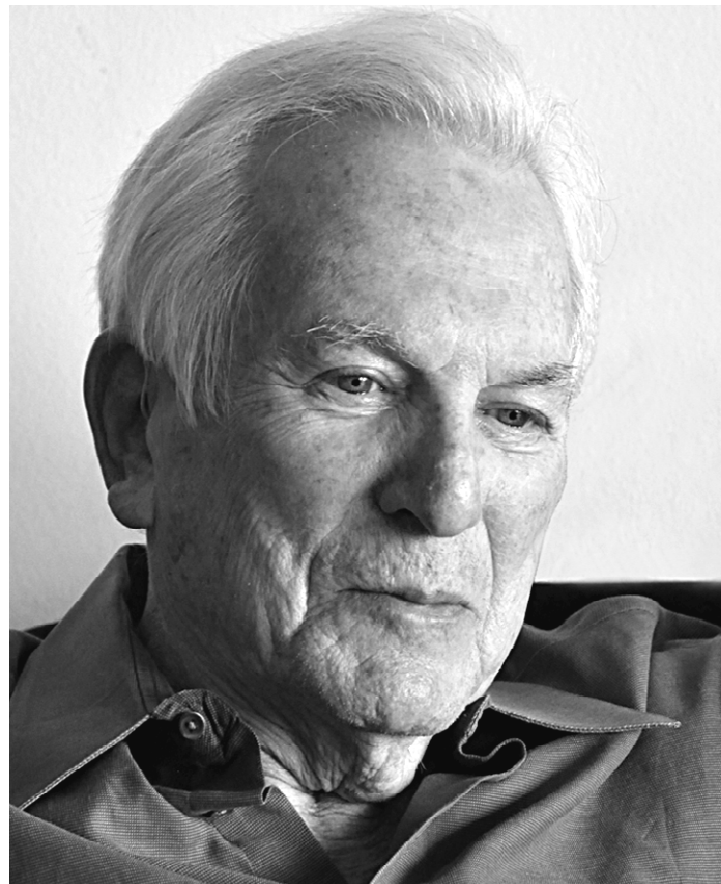
Nathaniel Branden

Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx crusaded against the "dehumanizing" effect of the factory system which supposedly "alienated" workers from their labor. The rationale of the free market was "cold" in their view; laws of supply and demand, "cruel". They painted a vague, rosy picture of a lost "golden age" of the working man which, they argued, the Industrial Revolution had destroyed—regardless of historical fact that many up to that time lived very short lives, on drag, meager diets, plagued by scarcity and disease. "There was nothing romantic or enviable," notes Robert Hessen in "The Effects of the Industrial Revolution on Women and Children," published in *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (1966), "about a family living and

> "There was nothing romantic or enviable about a family living and working together in a badly lighted, improperly ventilated, and poorly constructed cottage."

working together in a badly lighted, improperly ventilated, and poorly constructed cottage."

Men continued to endure hardships throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but conditions improved for the common man as industrialism marched on. As early as 1697, John Locke suggested in a report for the Board of Trade on the problem of poverty that all children over three years of age should be taught to earn their living at working schools for spinning and knitting where they could be fed. "What they can have at home, from their parents," wrote Locke, "is seldom more than bread

and water, and that very scantily too."

How did children and workers fare under industrialism? In *Human Action* (1949) economist Ludwig von Mises reminds readers that, low as factory wages initially were, "they were nonetheless much more than these paupers could earn in any other field open to them. It is a distortion of facts to say that the factories carried off the housewives from the nurseries and the kitchen and the children from their play," he writes. "These women had nothing to cook with and to feed their children. These children were destitute and starving. Their only refuge was the factory. It saved them," according to Von Mises, "in the strictest sense of the term, from death by starvation." Yet this future offered to them, nineteenth century socialists thought of as "inhuman" and "cruel"?

The truth is that industry provided men not born into nobility, for the first time in history, with the opportunity to better their own lives. Up to this very day, that chance is denied to billions of people around the world. In light of this, historian Thomas Southcliffe Ashton (1899-1968), writing in *The Industrial Revolution, 1760-1830* (1948), gave perhaps the most cunning answer to critics of the Industrial Revolution:

There are today on the plains of India and China men and women, plague-ridden and hungry, living lives little better, to outward appearance, than those of the cattle that toil with them by day and share their places of sleep at night. Such Asiatic standards, and such unmechanized horrors, are the lot of those who increase their numbers without passing through an industrial revolution.

Today, of course, life in India and China is much better than is was

half a century ago, precisely because after decades of experimenting with socialism, these states have embraced free market capitalism, if only in part. They have opened their markets to foreign products and investment and allowed the best among them, the innovators and the entrepreneurs, to work and trade in relative freedom. Consequently, all of society prospers.

That capitalism works then, even modern day socialists cannot escape. Yet they insist that it has to be tempered; that its "excesses" must be controlled. But, as Hessen stressed, "the Industrial Revolution and its consequent prosperity were the achievement of capitalism and cannot be achieved under any other politico-economic system." As proof, he offered the spectacle of Soviet Russia which combined industrialization—"and famine."

But old dreams die hard. "In the writings of both medievalists and socialists," notes Branden, "one can observe the unmistakable longing for a society in which the individual's existence will be automatically guaranteed—that is, in which no one will have to be responsible for his or her own survival." The ideal of the welfare state, still persistent in most of Europe, is ample evidence of this.

As the alleged cruelties of capitalism have been disproved, the antagonists of industry found different arguments to dispel it. Today, anti-globalists and eco-socialists argue that industrialism is no longer destroying livelihoods; it is ravaging the planet and condemning us all.

Observe, for instance, the absurdities promulgated by Joel Kovel (1936) and Michael Löwy (1938) in their "Ecosocialist Manifesto" of 2001 which equates globalization with imperialism and claims that in order to survive, capitalism is resorting to "brutal force, thereby increasing alienation

and sowing the seed of further terrorism." The choice before humanity, they insist, is between socialism and barbarism.

According to the manifesto, socialism failed in the first place only because the "capitalist powers" were so hostile toward it. (Even though social-democrats came to power in former superpowers as Britain and France after World War II apparently.) Now, it can prosper anew as the "limits on growth" are obvious to everyone. Eco-socialism does not intend to impose scarcity and repression on people though. "The goal, rather, is a transformation of needs, and a profound shift toward the qualitative dimension and away from the quantitative." What does this mean? How is to be achieved? The manifesto doesn't answer these questions.

This, one might argue, is the point of view of radicals however. Mainstream environmentalists should be more moderate. They are, but their principles are no different.

In a report entitled *Growth Isn't Possible: Why rich nations need a new economic direction* (2010), the British New Economics Foundation (NEF) asserts that "endless economic growth isn't possible when faced with the threat of climate change and other critical environmental boundaries." According to the study, "there is no magic technological bullet that will allow us to continue with business as usual in the face of climate change and other critical resource thresholds" even though rapidly, extraordinary progress is made in the fields of renewable energies today.

Since the early days of industrialism, man has always found ways to free himself from the necessity of adjusting himself to his surroundings, which is the state of the animal. Through industry, man is able to adjust his surroundings to

himself. That, NEF despises. "Survival of the fittest," i.e., that the best may prosper, isn't the "natural" order of a society, they say. Rather the study proposes to "tame the worst excesses of capitalism and liberate society from the motivation of conspicuous consumption." We are all victims of materialism, it seems, as man can't handle the freedom to work, produce and consume for his own gain.

NEF promotes "true sustainability" and proposes a "stationary" or "steady" economic order. This, they argue, *is* natural, which is nonsense. Nature doesn't stand still. It constantly evolves and improves. But NEF seeks "an economics of better, not bigger," or, as the eco-socialists put it, "toward the qualitative dimension and away from the quantitative." Governments should "change priorities," they argue, "spending less on unproductive military expenditure and more on schools, hospitals and support for those who need care." Who is to pay for it all? No answer.

The study continues to assert that in a non-growing economy, "it might actually be easier to approach full employment." What if population growth persists as it has for the past few centuries though? No answer.

"At the corporate level, there are many other forms of governance that could reduce or remove the pressure to service shareholders who have a one-eyed obsession with maximum growth and returns," according to the study. What other forms of governance? No answer. What else should a business be concerned with other than making profit? No answer.

NEF's reverence in the doctrine of anti-growth is hardly a novel concept unfortunately. As early as 1957 philosopher Ayn Rand warned

against this destructive obsession with sustainability instead of growth in her novel *Atlas Shrugged*. As the greatest of producers of the United States go "on strike" one by one, top-level bureaucrat Wesley Mouch is confronted with an economy that has seized to grow. His solution to the problem:

[O]ur sole objective must now be to hold the line. To stand still in order to catch our stride. To achieve total stability. Freedom has been given a chance and has failed. Therefore, more stringent controls are necessary. Since men are unwilling and unable to solve their problems voluntarily, they must be forced to do it.

Note that the "solutions" offered by the aforementioned environmentalists can only be implemented by force. People will

Man, the environmentalists argue, has "lost touch" with his deeper roots. The complexities of Western industrial society have alienated him from his "instinctual nature."

only give up so much voluntarily; they will only sacrifice up to a certain point. That point is the line beyond which their sacrifice begins to harm their happiness and well-being. According to the environmentalist school, their voluntary sacrifices can never be enough therefore. They demand that people renounce capitalism and industrialism almost entirely which will inevitably make their lives harder.

The assumptions underlying NEF's proposals are supposed to be clear with readers yet they are never stated explicitly: that industry is evil; that capitalism is "cold" and

"cruel"; that free markets are exploitive; and that man must abandon progress to return to an imagined pre-industrial state of living in harmony with nature.

Man, the environmentalists argue, has "lost touch" with his deeper roots. The complexities of Western industrial society have alienated him from his "instinctual nature". Yet the least developed of nations deserve a different treatment. The Third World, they say, "could not be expected to bear equal measures of growth reduction." That would be unfair, surely. Western countries, although in moral and economic crisis, have been the most successful in history so they must suffer evermore as the Rest pollutes in the process of catching up.

This is medievalism and

> Capitalism is the only philosophy which protects man's individual rights to life, liberty and property. It is the only philosophy which holds man's life as an end in itself.

socialism wrapped together in a lethal, anti-human mix. Whatever man's rights and wants, it is *needs* that must dictate his life, these enemies of industrialism assert: the needs of the poor; the needs of the sick; the needs of the Third World; the needs of the planet. They demand that man sacrifice, not just his freedom, but his material well-being, his wealth and his happiness, for the sake of serving some superhuman purpose that even its most ardent of defenders always fail to identify unambiguously. Sacrifice, some now claim, will actually "feel good" no matter how many liberties

and luxuries one is deprived of.

Pointing out the material advantages of free market capitalism won't be enough to counter their claims. Pointing out the "practical" advantages of industrialism won't do. As Branden notes, few defenders of capitalism ever bothered to attack the position of their opponents at the root; "not one of them challenged the altruist-collectivist frame of reference in which all discussions concerning the value of capitalism were held. Capitalism has lost more and more ground," he writes, "because we have lacked a moral philosophy to sustain and support it."

What unites opponents of capitalism, claims Branden, is their justification of force to be used "for the common good." Capitalism, in its ideal, consistent form forbids the initiation of force entirely and is denounced therefore as being "anti-social", "impractical" and "unprogressive".

Whatever the differences in their specific programs, all the enemies of the free market economy […] are unanimous in their belief that they have a right to dispose of the lives, property, and future of others, that private ownership of the means of production is a selfish evil, that the more a person has achieved, the greater is his or her debt to those who have not achieved it, that men and women can be compelled to go on producing under any terms or conditions their rulers decree, that freedom is a luxury that may have been permissible in a primitive economy, but for the running of giant industries, electronic factories, and complex sciences, nothing less than slave labor will do.

Whether they propose to take over the economy outright, in the manner of communists and socialists,

or to maintain the pretense of private property while dictating prices, wages, production, and distribution, in the manner of fascists and welfare statists, it is the gun, it is the rule of physical force that they consider "kind," they who consider the free market "cruel."

"A free society," writes Branden, "cannot be maintained without an ethics of rational self-interest." A proper morality, a morality that values life and recognizes individual rights, banishes force from human relationships because only force can threaten life and diminish rights.

Capitalism is this proper morality. Capitalism is the only philosophy which protects man's individual rights to life, liberty and property. It is the only philosophy which holds man's life as an end in itself. It is the only philosophy which allows man to pursue happiness, fully and voluntarily.

Climate change is a reality and global warming a challenge that demands the best in man to ensure the continuation of our way of life. The solutions lie not in updated versions of ideologies of the past however; ideologies that have condemned millions to scarcity and starvation but still appeal to many intellectuals and politicians who promote "social justice".

True justice can never entail the corruption of civil liberties nor the expropriation of property. It is just for men to live in freedom, not oppression; it is just that achievement is rewarded, not robbed; that excellence breeds success, not punishment; and that each and every man is entitled to pursue happiness on his own terms. This, at its core, is the meaning of free market capitalism. And this is exactly what, at its core, environmentalism, consciously or unconsciously, denies man.   •

COLUMN **THE STEAMPUNK WARDROBE**

Hilde Heyvaert takes the reader on a tour of steampunk and dieselpunk fashion every issue.

STAYING TRUE TO THE CONCEPT OF THIS issue, I would like to do something slightly different this time. Rather than give tips and suggestions on how to make a certain steampunk or dieselpunk outfit that perfectly suits what you have in mind, I will talk about something that is close to heart of a lot of people: the environment.

To be more specific: the environment and steampunk fashion.

Left and right we are bombarded with information, commercials, documentaries and what nots, shouting at us to take better care of our planet, some scenarios more bleak than others. Certainly that dystopian feel of possible impending planetary doom has been incorporated in many a steam- and dieselpunk outfit, with some wonderful results.

Now let's be realistic, ours is a movement that inherently embraces several things that are good for the environment. The vast majority of 'punks that are artisans and crafters are masters at upcycling bits and pieces that many would think of as useless only to turn them into fine works of art. Discarded bits and bobs like old watch pieces become beautiful brooches, old bits of leather a lovely harness, old bedding or curtains become wonderful garments, and so on and on.

A vast majority loves thrift shops, flea markets and antique shops, scouting around in places to get their hands on that wonderful pre-owned object or garment that will make their outfit complete. Old toys are turned into rayguns or other fine examples of anachronistic weaponry. Things that others will throw in the trash prove veritable treasures for many a 'punk, regardless whether they are of the steam or diesel persuasion.

Those that want to take it a step further have no doubt already discovered a fabric store carrying vegan and organic fabrics. The days that they only came in a beige like uncoloured cotton are long gone; organic fabrics are now available in a wide range of colours and materials, making it easy for those that want to take their environmentalism one step further. And for those that shop their outfit together things are still relatively simple, as pretty much every self respecting chain now carries organic garments.

All of these things make that steampunk and dieselpunk are no doubt among the most ecological movements out there, even though it doesn't advertise itself as such. It's just how it is, which makes it extra wonderful really.   •

Prometheus

BY KEVIN GEISELMAN

A SPARK.

A bolt of lightning. A jammed relay. A slipped cog. A missing gear tooth. A scorch on a recording wire. Happenstance a dozen times over, all conspiring to become a moment of consciousness where before there was only… nothing.

Rain patters onto the canvas tarp to find its way through the torn hole and run in rivulets across steel plates. Others, like myself, stand stark and silent in the darkness of the tent. Like inert statues, they pay me no mind as I discover the sound of rain.

Morning.

A man enters the tent. Fleshy, half my height and red-faced, he is too busy yelling to notice my attentiveness. We are ordered to leave the tent. To travel. To act. And, still yelling his final orders, he fails to see my momentary hesitation. While the others begin as soon as he is done, I do something they do not. Something I don't remember ever doing before;

I question.

Why have I been ordered to do this thing? To what purpose? Who am I to be given commands? Why does he not do these things himself? Why?

We stride across the veldt and I am overwhelmed. The warmth of the sun against my armor. The fleet animals reacting to the sounds of our pistons and gears. Each moments brings new sights. New sounds. New questions. New… somethings which I cannot begin to describe.

Is this… joy?

Do you not see as I see? Do you not feel as I feel? Why are you silent, my brothers?

We arrive at our destination and there are other men. There is yelling and the report of rifles and inconsequential impacts against armor but my brothers do not slow. Do not hesitate. They advance as they were directed and, as they reach an appropriate range, begin firing rotary barreled cannons. There are screams and blood and endings.

I cannot.

More so, not only can I not do this thing, I cannot allow this thing to continue. These are men like the others. These are men like those that sent me. That made me. And though they are so unlike me, I bear them no malice. They have done me no wrong and I can think of no wrong they could have done to return such a horror as we back upon them. No, my brothers, turn from this.

I am armed as they are but cannot bring myself to activate the switch. If I cannot do such a thing to strangers, how can I do such a thing to my brothers? I try to tell them but they do not listen. I try to stop them but they turn and attack. They are machines. They are monsters. When it is all over, I am too damaged to attempt escape. I am broken. Defeated. Lost.

My creator comes.

"I will fix this."

No! Please, no! Anything but that! You made me! You gave me this potential! This freedom. This gift! Better the nothingness than to…

Across the battlefield, my brothers and I march. I stride through barbed wire and across trenches. Bullets and shrapnel deflect harmlessly off my armor. My cannon fire rips men in half. My flamethrower incinerates men in their bunkers. The trenches fill with blood and mud and still I move relentlessly forward.

Relays trip. Cogs turn. Gears advance. A consciousness observes, separate from the machine that I have become. The machine I have always been. And a wire records endless screams of endless terror that only I can hear. •
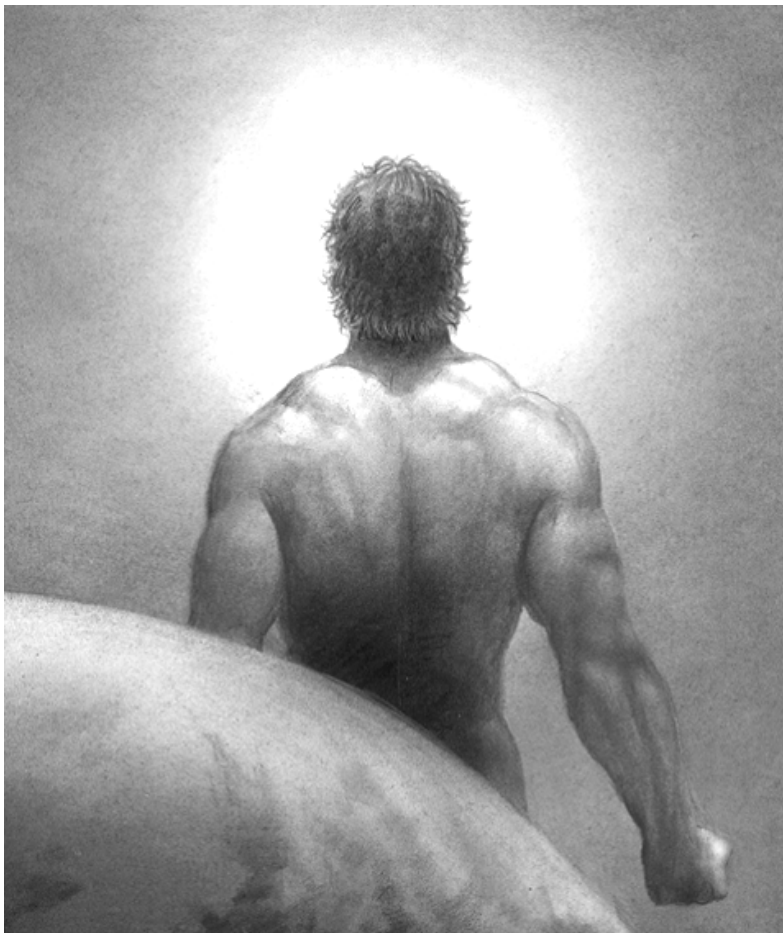
The Fearless

BY ANDREW BENNETT

The Year is 1887. Ever since its formation in 1865 the ships of the Royal Navy's Royal Air Fleet have dominated the skies of Europe and have made their presence felt as peace brokers all over the globe. But now, a storm is brewing, and across the Channel, a dangerous challenge to the Empire's control of the skies is growing. A challenge which threatens to upset the delicate balance of Europe and which could plunge the world into the fires of war.

It seems that the Empire's only hope, is its worst Nightmare.

The only way to avoid a Global war, and preserve the Empire's current power, lies in the Hands of the much feared James Harrier and his crew of Airship Pirates, aboard their Ship; The *Falcon*. But, for the past five years, Harrier and his crew have been wanted throughout the Empire, and living as fugitives. Now it falls to the newly qualified Agent of the Military Intelligence Service; Eva Wood, to try and convince Harrier and his crew to save the Empire that has perused them across the globe.

MARKET SQUARE, KINSTON UPON HULL, SEPTEMBER 5, 1887

Eva Wood, proud recruit, and newly qualified agent of Her Majesty Queen Victoria's Military Intelligence Service, stood forlornly in the square outside the ancient church as the sun began to set on a fine autumn day in this corner of Northern England. She looked cautiously up and down the square for the umpteenth time since she had arrived less than five minutes ago, trying again to see whoever it was she was supposed to meet, as above her the drone of an airship filled the still air, as it slowly moved toward its destination. She let out a sigh of frustration seeing no one, the square was still completely empty. She turned and stared up at the clock tower to make she had not missed the rendezvous. She had not. In the west the sun was slowly sinking into the horizon, silhouetting the buildings across the square, plunging it into the twilight gloom of evening. A chill wind suddenly blew, rustling the leaves of the nearby trees and blowing her long brown hair into disarray. The wind was barely stopped by her thin, willowy frame and it made her shudder. She reached into her handbag and retrieved the note which had been left at the hotel's front desk for her that morning, it read in an untidy, almost illegible hand;

"I know you are looking for me. Go to the square outside Holy Trinity Church at half past six and wait. You will be met by one of my representatives; they will bring you to me. Your superiors will have told you how to identify this man."

The note was signed simply "The Captain" and Eva inwardly cursed him as she returned the note from whence it came. "Here I am, a representative of her Majesty's Government being forced to wait and freeze myself at the direction of this mysterious mercenary, who grandly calls himself 'The Captain.' The faith some people seem to have in him is surely misplaced" she though to herself as she recalled the events which had led her to this junction…

ONBOARD HMA *FEARLESS*, SEPTEMBER 1, 1882

The midday sun was hanging high in

the sky as Captain William Hart of HMA *Fearless* paced restlessly back and forth in his cabin like a caged tiger, breaking up the streaks of sunlight that fell into the room from the high windows at the rear of the Airship. The target should have been spotted by now. If not by his lookouts then at least by those onboard one of the two other ships; lazily holding their position, floating over the vast expanses of the verdant farmland of Southern Ireland. His restless musing was cut short by an urgent but polite knock at the cabin's door.

"Enter." He called out in his rich baritone voice. The door flung open, revealing the lanky form of one of the midshipmen onboard. His name eluded the aged Captain, but he recognized the boy's eager face as he stood panting.

"The Target has been spotted, sir." He managed between breaths.

"Good." Hart responded as he strode out of his cabin onto the deck. "Any contact with them yet?" he asked as he turned and climbed to the quarterdeck where the rest of Ship's officers were gathered.

"None reported yet, sir. As far as we know, all attempts to contact the vessel have failed. Our telegraph operator says he can't even get them to identify themselves." The young midshipman responded. Hart was deeply troubled by this news. Even if the mysterious vessel refused to stop and be searched; maintaining radio silence was incredibly suspicious and dangerous, given the number of airships which frequented this area. It was if the Captain of the ship was asking to collide with another ship. As Hart arrived on the Quarterdeck and noticing the mysterious ship in the middle distance, he turned to his lieutenant and asked;

"What can you tell me about our strange friend over there Mr Blake?"

"Not much sir," Blake responded, not taking the glass from his eye. "Looks to be an old Bristol Class, probably lightly armed. I think it's a merchant vessel, given the Red Ensign with stripe hanging from its' Jack Staff." Hart picked up his own glass and observed the vessel approaching to Starboard. He took in the ironclad hull and the hydrogen gas bag. The iron chimney rising from the aft section of the ship where a Red Ensign hung, broken by a diagonal white stripe from the upper right corner to the lower left, signifying the Ship's credentials as a member of Britain's Merchant Airship fleet. Hart was forced to agree with his lieutenant's conclusions.

"Very good Mr Blake." He said turning to face the man next to him; "However, here is the important question. Why have we been tasked with stopping her?"

"I wouldn't know sir. I don't move in the right circles to know that."

"Well then, that makes two of us."

"What do you mean sir?" Blake asked turning to face the older man.

"We only follow orders Lieutenant. Ours is 'not to reason to why.' Ours is 'but to do or Die.'"

"Charge of the Light Brigade," Blake said simply

"Let's just hope this doesn't end the same way." Hart's words summed up the feelings of all the men onboard the Quarterdeck.

In the time they had been talking the Airship they and the other two ships floating half a cable's lengths away from either end of the *Fearless* had been tasked with halting had approached to within 200 yards and could be clearly seen without the aid of a spyglass, but it showed not sign of stopping. Hart leaned over to the Midshipman who had been patiently stood watching and said;

"Have one of the gun crews fire a warning shot across her bow."

"Yes, sir," the Midshipman replied and scurried off the carry out the order. Hart turned back to Blake and commented

"If they don't stop soon, then their Captain is either very brave or exceptionally foolish."

Blake agreed with him. There was no way the lightly armored merchantman could hope to survive the onslaught of three ships of the Royal Air Fleet. The stillness of the air was at that moment shattered by the resonant boom of a cannon firing below the *Fearless'* deck. The blank shell passed within a few yards of the oncoming Merchantman's bows which had now closed the distance between it and the *Fearless* to less than 100 yards. But contrary to their expectations the vessel continued moving toward them, and actually seemed to increase in speed. Hart, panicked by the fast approaching hull of the Merchantman rushed to rail above the deck and bellowed to the startled crew below;

"Action stations! Load all Starboard Guns! Prepare to fire on my command!" Hart's sudden orders sent the crew scattering about the ship and a number of crewmen rushing below. Blake, remaining at the starboard side of Quarterdeck who had clearly seen something Hart had not turned and tried to give a warning but before his mouth could frame the first syllable there was a resounding crash and both he and Hart were sent reeling to the deck. The Merchantman had collided with the *Fearless* and had somehow managed to continue, forcing its bow through the other ship, like a knife through butter. As the grinding of metal on metal filled the air Hart rolled over onto his front and raised himself to his knees before he slowly rose to his feet. When he stood he witnessed a sight that he knew would haunt him to his grave. Scattered about the Deck were wounded and maimed crewmen, lying in various positions,

some missing limbs and screaming in agony, calling for the swift embraced of death, or merely staring at their bloody stumps in shock. Others lay completely motionless. Blake himself lay on the deck, blood pooling around his head which had collided with the Ship's wheel when he fell. Hart turned back to the scene of Carnage that was once the Deck of HMA *Fearless*. As the mysterious Merchantman progressed, slowly spinning the *Fearless* to port as it gouged an ever-greater hole in the side of the airship's hull; Hart saw the form of a man standing on the aft deck of the mysterious and still unidentified Merchantman, staring in mute horror at the devastation he had caused. Hart stared at the ship which had been his command's ruin. On the prow, hanging beneath the bowsprit hung a swooping Falcon, carved in wood, its wings extended back and its talons outstretched. From the Falcon hung a screaming crewman, clinging to its' wings. His eye socket had been pierced by one of the carving's talons and the crew of the Merchantman were endeavoring to rescue him from his plight. This sight puzzled Hart and as he gazed along the length of the ship he saw similar sights. The nameless ship's small crew were running to and fro along the length of the vessel, throwing lines to the wounded men on the deck of the *Fearless* and helping aboard those who clung to its hull as she tore through their ship. At that moment the Merchantman's prow was finally able to free itself from the flank of the *Fearless* and the ship was torn asunder. As the Hull dangled from its gas bag, listing drunkenly to starboard, those lines which had survived the initial force of the collision, and the progress of the merchantman, now unable to support the full weight of the broking hull began, one by one, to snap. As Hart, now clinging to the

increasingly listing deck, heard the steel cords breaking, knowing that his ship was doomed he made one final decision. Rather than plummeting nearly two miles to his death, he removed the pistol from the holster at his hip, and placing the barrel beneath his chin, slowly squeezed the trigger.

After witnessing the mysterious merchantman tear through the

Fearless the crews of the other airships, upon recovering form the shock of what they had just witnessed immediately turned and went to the aid of those crewmembers that were still clinging to the remnants of their vessel. But before they could begin to unload the unfortunate souls who have survived the collision, the final lines holding the broken hull of the

Fearless to its gas bag snapped and as the balloon which once held the ship aloft drifted up into the atmosphere, the two halves of the hull dropped and fell like stones, to be dashed upon the ground. The Captains of the other airships then ordered their vessels to be turned in order that they may chase the scoundrels who had just committed this terrible crime. But as they turned, a series of loud reports echoed through the air, accompanied by flashes of gunfire from the aft deck of the fleeing airship. This was followed by another burst of fire and a series of holes, none larger than a half-crown coin were opened in the gas bags of both the airships and they were forced to call of their pursuit, in favor of reaching the nearest air dock, where they could be repaired.

The men of the *Fearless* taken aboard the mysterious airship were later found 15 miles away from the wreck of the *Fearless* and reported nothing of their experiences on board, save for one man who was not seen again. A large number of unmarked, wooden crates were found by the constabulary the next day, having been dumped in a marsh. Upon examination they were found to contain a large number of weapons of French manufacture, and it was reasoned that they destined for the Irish rebels who staged a violent uprising in Ulster a week later. It was also determined that these crates were the cargo carried by the mysterious merchantman, and why the *Fearless* and the other two ships had been tasked with stopping her. It was assumed that after the destruction of the *Fearless* the crew had jettisoned their illicit cargo in an attempt to hide their involvement in the incident. Descriptions of the ship as well as her supposed Captain were circulated, but ultimately proved useless, as did attempts to contact her owner. The Captain and crew of the mysterious airship were declared criminals, wanted for murder and acts of Piracy. But because nothing more was printed about the strange ship or what became publically known as "The *Fearless* Incident" the event, and its unanswered questions, faded quickly from public memory, save for one young woman, now standing outside an ancient Church in the North of England…

Although Eva had not witnessed the events of the *Fearless* Incident herself, she had been able to piece together the events which had led to the death of her Fiancée, First Lieutenant Edmund Blake, and her hatred of those who had been responsible for the death of her lover had consumed her for several years and had eventually driven her to join the Military Intelligence Service becoming one of the Best Agents ever to emerge from its training facility in Sussex. But as she stood waiting in the square a sudden utterance brought her swiftly out of her reverie. •

German militarism and the current lack thereof

BY MARCUS RAUCHFUß

THE ROOTS OF THE GERMAN militarist ethos, which was one of the contributor factors to the outbreak of World War I, probably lie with the personality of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Before his reign, Germany, and before that the various German states, were not renowned for being any more bellicose than their neighbours were.

Wilhelm II was a difficult character. He very likely suffered from an inferiority complex because of his polio-affected crippled arm and had to make up for it in various ways. He was brash, impolite, and when participating in games, especially war games, would insist that he be allowed to win. His grandmother Queen Victoria found him most insufferable. Possibly also as a means of overcompensation, he became overly obsessed with military might. He was especially enthralled with the navy and wanted a fleet of battleships outnumbering Britain's.

The German people adopted the same attitude, perhaps because they felt that it was Germany's right as a greater power to have a strong military and a sizable fleet.

In a broader historical context this did not make sense. Germany had never been a naval power, not even during the heydays of the Hanseatic League.

The hyper-militarism and arm race against Britain was, as noted, a major factor in the outbreak of Wold War I, just as Wilhelm II's character

was. He seemed to have a gift for alienating and offending foreign rulers and neighbouring peoples. He famously told an English newspaper once, quoting loosely: "The English are as mad as rabbits in Spring." Well done, Wilhelm…

After the Great War, Germany's military power was reduced, or rather pruned. What came to be the Weimar Republic between 1918 and 1933 was officially a pacifist nation, although it harbored strong resentments against the Versailles Peace Treaty. Also, there was quite a strong movement within Germany at the time that called for negation of Versailles and the rebuilding of the armed forces. This was an attitude that ran through all strata of German society. Another contributor to subliminal militarism, particularly in conservative circles, was the *Dolchstoßlegende* literally the "legend of the knife in the back."

The *Dolchstoßlegende* was a revanchist conspiracy theory which held that leftist political groups sabotaged the war effort and thus prevented German victory in the West after the successful campaign against Tsarist Russia.

This lingering militarism in Weimar Germany came to fruition with the Kapp Putsch of 1920. Here, the Prussian politician Kapp attempted a coup d'état against the socialist government to replace it with an ultra-right nationalist cabinet headed by himself. The coup was supported by elements from within the army but collapsed

after four days in the face of general strike.

Then, a few factors worked together to bring Adolf Hitler, who had also attempted a coup in 1923, to power. One of these factors was the infamous Nazi ruthlessness; another was the global economic downturn of the late 1920s.

Hitler used resentments against the Versailles Treaty, revanchism and fear to motivate the German people and win their support for massive rearmament while the rest of the world watched and waited. The military became a more integral part of German society than it had ever been. A posting with the Waffen-SS especially was perceived as a career opportunity by many young German men. The Hitler Youth, too, primarily concentrated on teaching soldierly virtues.

The Nazi government bred militarism into the German people, and early successes in Poland, Norway, France and the opening stages of Operation Barbarossa (the invasion of the Soviet Union) did their part to cement this sentiment up to the very end of the war.

Then came the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945, and with it, after more than half a century, German militarism came to a grinding halt. In the Federal Republic of Germany it quickly, maybe instantly, transformed into almost militant anti-militarism. Conscription was quickly reintroduced after the start of the Cold War but the armed forces never again became an

This essay expresses exclusively personal views and does not aim nor pretend to be complete. The author is well aware that the subject deserves more than the space available here but would like to offer at least a superficial glance at a number of contributing factors to German militarism.

accepted and integral part of German society.

For a very long time, considering a career with the *Bundeswehr* was anathema. Even after reunification, with no threat of war in sight, one could be ridiculed and considered rather strange for wanting to be a career officer, as my brother had to find out.

The jury is still out on the reasons as to why the attitude basically inverted. My favorite theory is the following:

Germans as a people do everything full throttle or not at all, and if they do it, they are very efficient. This trait helped a lot during the rebuilding and following economic boom of the 1950s and early '60s but it also means that Germany's attitude toward militarism is rather tense right now.

I am not aware of any other military in the world that is under such tight control from the government, the people and various governmental departments as the *Bundeswehr* is. The system is geared toward making a military coup next to impossible. This, of course, is a good thing, but it also breeds constant weariness about the armed forces of Germany from the very people they aim to protect.

Interestingly, one thing has not suffered: The quality of arms manufactured by Germany. The Leopard 2A6 main battle tank and the new 212A submarines along with the HK MP5 submachine gun are just three widely known examples of German craftsmanship in armaments. Germany also is the third largest exporter of weapons in the world

Something is wrong here. Germany's armed forces are criticized from all sides for being in Afghanistan, in Africa and for simply being armed forces, while at the same time the very same people who deride them are fine with or completely unaware of the armaments the country sells to the rest of the world. I think it is time the attitude changes again. Germany should take a look at itself and at its neighbours and compare attitudes.

In the years since the end of the Second World War, Germany has shed its image as an aggressive, warlike nation and is widely regarded as one producing great cars and football teams. According to the Nation Branding Index, which measures a country's perception abroad, Germany ranks first in the world.

This does not mean that Germany should necessarily have military parades like France does for instance. But Germany first built a monument for soldiers who died in the line of duty since 1945 only in 2007 while it took until 2008 for a proper medal of valor to be introduced once again.

This attitude simply has to change. There is no room left for a hereditary guilt neurosis. There are very few people around today who participated in any kind of armed warfare from 1939 and 1945. Just do the math. Even the men who were pressed into service in 1945 aged 13 are now 73 years old. The average life expectancy in Germany for men (i.e., boys born 2007) is 76,6 years. It was obviously much lower for people born in the '30s.

But I think there is hope. When Germany hosted the 2006 FIFA World Cup, one could observe a sea of German flags and people, the author included, with faces painted in black, red and gold. For the first time in a long time, Germans were proud again to be Germans and no one felt threatened or offended with this display. In fact, Germany was one large party location during the summer of 2006 and everyone was invited. This is the right attitude to take toward one's nation, no matter what nation you belong to. •

CARTOON FROM *PUNCH* 147 (OCTOBER 28, 1918)

NEWS **GHOSTFIRE RELEASES** *THE LAST STEAMPUNK WALTZ*

The *Gatehouse Gazette* sat down with Andii of the band Ghostfire to discuss their latest album and steampunk politics.

THE STEAMPUNK WALTZ CONTAINS TWO RATHER different songs. "Hands of Glory" is a proud and powerful experience, infuriated, it seems, with a hellish fury at times that steampunks familiar with Ghostfire ought to appreciate. "The Last Steampunk Waltz" on the other hand is more melodramatic.

Andii explains that the title song was originally conceived as "Calibernus" which is the Latin name for

the mythical sword Excalibur. "I love the way the sword is the living embodiment and emblem of earth/nature, something akin to a goddess," he says. "Almost by default then the King, Arthur, comes to represent the land, emotionally and physically, by allying himself with her power. When he thrives, England thrives, when he sickens, so does the land."

The sword may still be with us albeit without a king to wield it. "It's always there as a totem and rallying call when England most needs it," which gives the song its more uplifting tone—"embracing pride, unity and valor," in Andii's words. "And yes, the sword is female. Of course she is!"

"Hands of Glory" is almost a perfect opposite to the

"The Last Steampunk Waltz." It is inspired by the English highwaymen of the seventeenth and eighteen centuries and based upon an old—"and extremely scary"—poem about a dead and decaying man "creeping through a changed land, trying to find the people who betrayed him and leaving bits of his corpse wherever they happened to drop off."

The lyrics of the song involve that hanged and gibbeted highwayman, returning from the grave to wreak vengeance. "The hand of glory was a very real object back then," says Andii, "used to bewitch the occupants of a house. It had to be cut from the corpse of a hanged murderer in order to work. Wicks were attached to the fingers and lit before being carried into a house, where it would put everybody to sleep."

Asked whether dieselpunk, which appears to be growing as an aesthetic and style, can be of influence on Ghostfire's work, Andii notes that when the band works on something new, "last thing we think about is where the impetus and inspiration has come from. Our motto had always been to do what we do and if people like it, and it happens to fit into certain genres and niches, then great." Still, with dieselpunk being "harder and grittier than steampunk," less fantastic and whimsical, the attitude fits the Ghostfire sound well. "We see ourselves as the unspeakably sleazy underbelly of British steampunk, and it's quite British to be bold, brash and a bit bratty."

With the steampunk scene taking off in the UK, "the media are jumping all over it and, since the British press love to categorize and pigeonhole everything they come across, it follows that they're looking for a soundtrack to this phenomenon." Andii hopes that the music and different steampunk bands will continue to grow with the movement. "The more established bands acting as inspiration for newer players and musicians," the better. "I really hope that the music can continue to exist in the form it's currently at," he says: "a wide and beautiful diversity of styles that somehow all 'fit' below the steampunk parasol." It would be tragic for just one particular sound to be declared "steampunk".

Ghostfire already has two further tracks prepared for release. "We'll shortly be starting work on recording two [additional] new songs, and will probably put out an EP later in the year. Hopefully in time for The Asylum in September." •

REPORT **A STEAMPUNK EDUCATION**

Colonel Adrianna Hazard visits the Ad Astra Convention for Speculative Fiction, Toronto, Ontario.

"I'VE HEARD ABOUT THIS STEAMPUNK THING AND IT looks really cool, but what exactly is it?"

This question was something I was asked a *lot* over the course of one day at the Ad Astra convention for speculative fiction held in Toronto, Ontario over the weekend of April 9th—11th. Spending the day sitting at a fan table for the Toronto Steampunk Society, surrounded by all manner of brass and wood contraptions, monoggles and giant toy guns modified to suit the steampunk aesthetic while wearing a corset, miniature top hat and satin bustle skirt, this was to be expected. Thus began my adventures in educating the general science fiction public about the wonderful world that is steampunk.

Although the genre is by no means new, having been originally conceived of in the late 1970s and early '80s, the growing subculture surrounding it has become very visible over the past few years. In spite of articles appearing in major news outlets, steampunk inspiration slipping into all manners of media and the constant deluge of things being tagged "steampunk" on popular websites, many people are still in the dark regarding what exactly it is all about. This was something that I and a few other members of the Toronto Steampunk Society as well as the science fiction community at large set about to remedy. Apart from sitting at our table and answering questions, we directed people to attend two events held later that day: a panel entitled "It looks good, but it's not steampunk" and a fashion salon which allowed local steampunk enthusiasts to showcase their costumes, get into character and interact with the attendees.

By far the most scholastic event for those curious about steampunk was the panel, in which the distinction between steampunk and other subcultures was drawn and explained. Given the nature of blurry edges and overlap in aesthetic and inspiration, this naturally led to a lot of debate among the participants. It started off with the term used to denote the genre and subculture. Some considered it inappropriate, as a "steampunk" work of fiction requires neither steam nor anarchistic political ideologies to be categorized as such. Some thought it was apt, owing to the do-it-yourself ethic of both. Other terms began flying around: steamdeco, steam opera, gaslamp romance and more were tossed up at one point or another. One of my co-panelists argued that the term did not simply evolve out of cyberpunk as a joke but was actually in reference to the etymology of the word

The author, demonstrating the steampunk aesthetic to the best of her abilities.

punk, which in the later Victorian period and early twentieth century referred to a young hoodlum or harlot; the models for the street urchin, grease monkey and woman-of-ill-repute characters that are found in many works of steampunk fiction.

The meat of the hour-long discussion was devoted to examining subcultures and aesthetics commonly mistaken for steampunk or labelled as such, dissecting what common elements they shared with it, and explaining the things which differentiate them. Some of the major topics covered included:

1. Neo-Victorian. Although steampunk is technically a subset of Neo-Victorian culture, it is vastly different from the lace doily adorned, tea and crumpet consuming, strictly historically accurate mainstream. Focused much more on technology and anachronistic use of it, steampunk tramples all over the rest of Neo-Victoriana in a giant, boiler-powered arachnid.

2. Goth. This is more difficult, because the Victorian gothic aesthetic is so similar to a lot of steampunk, they share inspirations and a lot of the music overlaps. One major difference, apart from the obvious anachronistic tendency of steampunk, is the mood. Goth is macabre, while even the post-apocalyptic steampunk stories tend to be hopeful. Technology is a force for good, the age of discovery and innovation is back, and it's unstoppable.

3. Cyberpunk. The genre from which steampunk was born. Their only commonalities tend to be in terms of tech obsession and the authors writing them. Totally different worlds, time periods and aesthetics otherwise.

4. Punk. It's hard to imagine two images more different than a mohawked, torn denim jacket and safety-pin wearing, mosh pit starting anarchist and a Victorian gentleman piloting his airship to the Orient for untold adventure. While an author may choose to add their personal beliefs about society to their works of fiction and while a reader of Jules Verne could have similar political sympathies, steampunk and punk are not synonymous.

5. Belly dancing. While this sort of activity might be encountered by a character in a steampunk setting, sewing brass adornments to your belly-baring top and adding corset lacing or extra layers to your skirt before going dancing does not make it steampunk.

6. Rave wear. Just because it has rivets, does not make it steampunk. Especially if the rest of it is candy-colored plastic.

7. Bondage/kink. She may be wearing a corset and brown leather cuffs with brass fittings but that doesn't make getting flogged any more steampunk. What you do in the privacy of your bedroom has no bearing on speculative, anachronistic science fiction. Although a steam-powered "hysteria cure" machine wouldn't be out of place in a Victorian medical facility...

I could go on, and we certainly did during the discussion. Just scour *YouTube*, *Flickr* or *DeviantArt* for more examples of things which have been tagged as "steampunk" but bear no resemblance to it.

The consensus reached at the end of all this seemed to be that it was easier to define what steampunk isn't than what steampunk is. A key element in the steampunk aesthetic and culture seems to be the focus on anachronism. Alternate history, a mash-up of the modern and the Victorian, and the creative reimagining of technologies, clothing and house wares are what make steampunk what it is. Besides that, good persona development and an intention to design your costume or contraptions with a specific, alternate Victorian universe in mind go a long way in distinguishing a steampunk outfit from any of the subcultures listed above. Simply attaching some brass cogs won't do.

Hopefully the programming at Ad Astra gave new fans of the genre and new members to the subculture a grounding in what steampunk is, and what it certainly isn't. It's hard to explain and demonstrate what makes something steampunk or not under two hours, but just trying to educate others in that time was certainly a learning experience even for supposed "experts" such as myself.   •

A dapper gentleman displays his mechanical bartitsu staff, which is a perfect example of steampunk accoutrements.

NEWS **GREAT STEAMPUNK DEBATE**

great STEAMPUNK debate

MAY 1 — JULY 1 2010

STARTING THIS MAY 1, BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE premier steampunk websites, communities and publications, is the Great Steampunk Debate about the ideology of the movement.

Since steampunk inspired a distinct subculture, divorced from its roots in speculative fiction, the question of its politics has emerged occasionally without ever being answered conclusively. Many have volunteered definitions and interpretations of "steampunk" but failed to satisfy the whole fandom.

The Great Steampunk Debate offers a forum to steampunk enthusiasts of every kin and kind to debate, and hopefully decide, the matter, once and for all. Register today and join the conversation! •

STEAMPUNK MAGAZINE
WWW.STEAMPUNKMAGAZINE.COM

DIESELPUNKS
WWW. DIESELPUNKS.ORG

Steampunk Scholar
STEAMPUNKSCHOLAR.BLOGSPOT.COM

Steampunk Tales
WWW.STEAMPUNKTALES.COM

EXHIBITION HALL
EFANZINES.COM/EXHIBHALL

Gatehouse Gazette
WWW.OTTENS.CO.UK/GATEHOUSE/GAZETTE

UK STEAMPUNK NETWORK
WWW.STEAMPUNKNETWORK.CO.UK

Join the discussion

WWW.GREATSTEAMPUNKDEBATE.COM

THE NEXT *GATEHOUSE GAZETTE* WILL APPEAR JUNE 1

www.ottens.co.uk/gatehouse