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GATEHOUSE GAZETTE

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10



TAKING TO THE SKIES

CONTENTS

FEATURES

The Aviator 5

A biography of Howard Hughes, dieselpunk hero.

One of the Old School 13

Why one opinionated bastard can't just get along.

To the Pole by Balloon 14

The history of the early twentieth century polar expeditions by airship.

The Aviatrix 18

A biography of Amelia Earhart, pioneer.

Interview with Kaleena Kiff 23

Co-creator and director of *Riese*.

Ragnorak Aloft 25

Comparative review of *The Angel of the Revolution* and *The War in the Air*.

COLUMNS

The Aviator Look 8

Hilde Heyvaert's *The Steampunk Wardrobe*.

A Hot Drink on a Cold Night 17

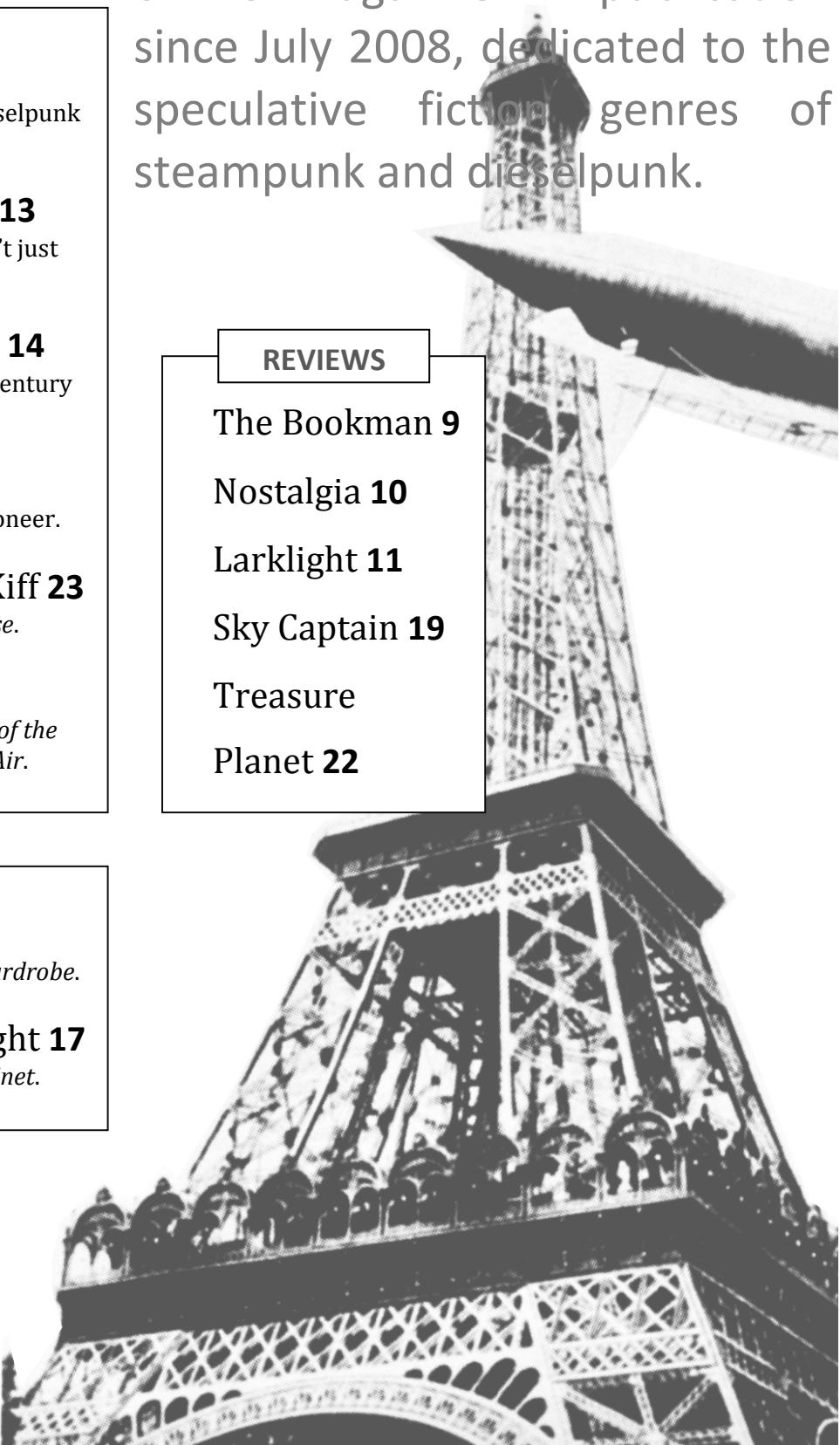
Craig B. Daniel's *The Liquor Cabinet*.

Cover illustration: "This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things" by Myke Amend (2009).

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

REVIEWS

The Bookman 9**Nostalgia 10****Larklight 11****Sky Captain 19****Treasure****Planet 22**

EDITORIAL

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS! WITH 2009 behind us—a year that saw the steampunk community continue to grow and interest in the genre extend to mainstream media—we predict that 2010 will be a dieselpunk year.

We see mid-century influences in modern-day fashion and film and a revival of interest in times past in general, especially in the interwar era as a result of the economic hardships suffered then and today. At several websites and blogs dedicated to dieselpunk, enthusiasts are hard at work building the genre into a movement with its own style and philosophy. The *Gatehouse Gazette* is no exception in this process. As steampunk is steadily entering the mainstream, we are free to devote all the more energy to promoting dieselpunk. We have begun exploring its potential from the very first issue of this publication onward and will continue to do so by offering a platform for opinion and analysis. Dieselpunk is truly taking off—and therefore this *Gatehouse Gazette* is “taking to the skies!”

Tying in our aviation theme with the emergence of a dieselpunk mentality, we offer biographies of two heroes: Howard Hughes and Amelia Earhart, written by James Roberts and J. Parkin respectively. Both were pioneers and perhaps a tad eccentric. Both were innovators and adventurers. And both continue to inspire us are we reminiscence about their accomplishments and the seemingly more heroic epoch that was their time.

While Earhart was the first aviatrix to crisscross across North America and later, the world, a league of equally daring men attempted to conquer the Arctic by air. Marcus Rauchfuß tells the story of the early twentieth century polar expeditions by airship, balloon and zeppelin. Later on in this issue you will find him interviewing Ms Kaleena Kiff; producer and director of the web series *Riese*: a steampunkesque adventure that incorporates Norse mythology and dystopian elements seemingly inspired by Piecraftian dieselpunk.

In our literary section is an exclusive preview of Lavie Tidhar's upcoming steampunk novel *The Bookman* which should hit the shelves around the time this issue is released. Hilde Heyvaert reviews Philip Reeve's *Larklight* trilogy and dedicates her Steampunk Wardrobe column to the aviator look while also reminding us of one of Disney's most underrated adventures: the movie *Treasure Planet*. Lastly, Trubetskoy writes an extensive comparative review of *The Angel of the Revolution* by George Griffith and H.G. Wells' *The War in the Air*—another chapter in the history of alternate history fiction that no serious steampunk can afford to skip!

As you finish reading this issue our team of contributors will be hard at work compiling the next edition already. Please know that we always welcome submissions from readers, be they letters or articles! ■



Nick Ottens

SERIES DIESELPUNK ONLINE

An overview of what's new at the premier dieselpunk websites.



Global Power at *The Gatehouse*

Stefan's latest “Silent Empire” artworks incorporate the mystical, the aetherial and the totalitarian.

www.ottens.co.uk/gatehouse/global-power



Architecture between the wars at *Dieselpunks*

Tome discusses the building styles of the diesel era.

www.dieselpunks.org/profiles/blogs/art-history-architecture



The Red Star at *The Flying Fortress*

One of the strongest examples of where dieselpunk can take the imagination.

flyingfortress.wordpress.com/2009/12/28/147/

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

GREETINGS FROM TORONTO! I HAVE BEEN WORKING for most of the week on reading the full run of the *Gatehouse Gazette*, your great steampunk/dieselpunk magazine. It is always a pleasure to see a new publication see the light of day, even if it is electronic and not paper. I admit I am fairly new to steampunk, which seems to be older than I thought, so I have some catching up to do on the issues you have produced.

I must also admit not having heard the term 'dieselpunk' before reading this publication. I think I shall stick with steampunk, for while there is a grittiness also associated with steampunk, it is far in the background with the workers who create the steam-powered world, while we would prefer to associate ourselves with the fair Victorian or para-Victorian society we've resurrected or created. I think I would prefer the utopian aspects of steampunk rather than the dystopian aspect of dieselpunk.

I had been fearing that steampunk novels might be long, dreary reads, such as many Victorian era novels can be. With the sample of Robert Rodgers' novel, those fears can rest somewhat. I can say the same of Toby Frost's books; I look forward to written steampunk adventures if they are well written as these.

The ideas of steampunk and dieselpunk do seem attractive, but they are gaining in popularity. Decades ago, being a science fiction fan was, as many say, a proud and lonely thing, but with the rise in public acceptance of science fiction, it has become mainstream, and its appeal to the fannish outcasts has waned. If this was to happen to the interests being discussed, would we still retain our interest in them, or would we move onwards to another interest that was mostly out of the public eye?

Indeed, we may be nostalgic for a time that never existed, but we also have some nostalgia for actual times of adventure, discovery and revelation. If only there were unexplored places to find, new civilizations to discover, new areas of science to reveal... this is a part of the human spirit that is now unfulfilled; we have

"Steampunk may depend upon the idea that the steam-powered machine is the ultimate in human creation..."

pretty well discovered and found it all, and there is nothing to wonder about any more.

I completely agree with Ms Heyvaert on steampunk costuming. My wife and I have done a lot of costuming in the past, especially trying our best to recreate costumes from television shows and movies, and there is always someone only too willing to point out that you're *wrong!*, that part of the costume is brown now black, or the decal here should be there. In steampunk costuming, your creation is just that, and there is no one to tell you that you're wrong (although some have tried). Her article on Ethnic Steam reminds me of another aspect of steampunk costuming I like, the western version. I would happily watch episodes of the original *The Wild, Wild West*. There is the original western steampunk drama. I did not see the movie remake, but given the appeal of the genre today, I think the original could stand a television remake.

Ah, the Hallowe'en issue is the dark issue indeed. I've never really been a fan of horror or dark fantasy, so Messrs Howard's and Lovecraft's books were largely left alone. I still think it a little odd that dressing up as a witch around Hallowe'en may have been something that could get you burned to death in Massachusetts not too much earlier. Our relatively enlightened age today makes us look back at our ignorances, and shake our heads. The veneer of civilization was very thin then; is it any thicker today?

Based on the perceived differences between steampunk and dieselpunk, steampunk merely uses what is produced by the new-at-the-time industrial revolution, while dieselpunk is in the heart of that revolution. Perhaps the steams are the elite of mere users, while the diesels are the bourgeoisie? The interest may determine where you see yourself in society. Steampunk may depend upon the idea that the steam-powered machine is the ultimate in human creation at the time, forgetting that that kind of machine may break down, and will with catastrophic results. Our interest deals with steam-powered perfection; a fiction we will just have to accept and enjoy.

And, I believe that I am caught up, and I look forward to your tenth issue. My time is done, and I look forward to future issues. Take care, and many thanks for producing something so interesting to read.

Yours,
Lloyd Penney

THE AVIATOR

MUCH OF THE HOWARD HUGHES legend was well dramatized in the hit Hollywood film *The Aviator*, starring Leonardo DiCaprio. With some alterations for narrative, the film was a great success and provided the viewer with a good understanding of Hughes and his eccentricities. However, the film ends well before Hughes himself passed away in 1976 and left many details of his life uncovered.

Howard Hughes was born on December 24, 1905 in Houston Texas, the heir to wealthy businessman Howard Hughes Sr. who ran the family business: Hughes Tool Company.

Hughes Jr. was unremarkable at school and never graduated his high-school diploma, however by influence of his father he was able to sit in on some classes at a technical college. Shortly after his 18th birthday, Howard's father died and the family became embroiled in a legal dispute over his legacy. A friend of the deceased tool magnate, who was conveniently a judge, made

the young heir a legal adult in 1925, allowing Howard to take sole possession of the company. His uncle had been of great support to the young Howard and been custodian of the business before he could legally inherit it. The same uncle, Rupert Hughes, was a writer for Goldwyn's motion picture studios. From this relation the young and eager Howard gained his interest in the motion picture business which he would first enter into by creating the film *Two Arabian Nights* in 1928.

Two years later he released *Hell's Angels*, the most expensive film then produced at \$3.8 million, dwarfing even the follies of the great silent film director Erich Von Stroheim. The movie, financially a flop, (loosing over a million dollars) still gave Hughes the lessons in the movie business which he would later use to full advantage when navigating his other films to release despite their controversial natures.

Howard always pushed the envelope with his motion pictures,

as he did with his other productions. *Scarface* (1932) was censured for violence, and later in 1941, *The Outlaw* received similar controversy for its sexual content. Famously Hughes designed a special kind of half-cup bra for the curvaceous Jane Russell so that her breasts would look full enough for her role in the film.

While movies were a hobby, Hughes' true passion was aviation. He had acquired his pilots license on the set of *Hell's Angels* and after that, there was no stopping him. In 1932 he set up the Hughes Aircraft Company; a subsidiary of Hughes Tools, which was born out of a project converting a military aircraft of former U.S. Air Service stock to a racing craft. The company later produced the H-1, the most advanced aircraft of 1935 when it broke an Air Speed Record by flying 352 mph. Again in 1937, a variant of the H-1 Racer, this time with longer wings, won the transcontinental speed record. Hughes later claimed that the infamous Mitsubishi Zero fighter plane of the Imperial Japanese Army Air Force was a copy of his H-1.

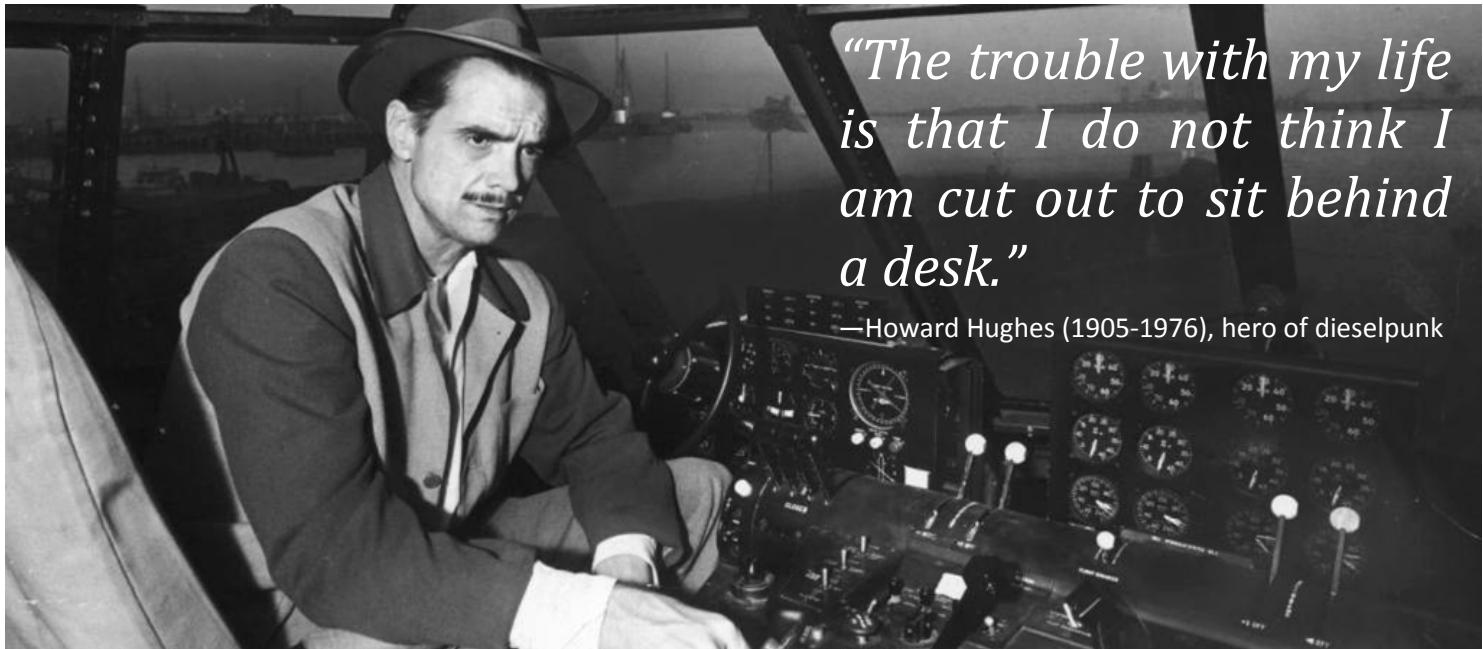
He topped these records by a round-the-world flight in a customized Lockheed 14 which took only three days and nineteen hours. The New York to Paris leg cut the previous record for that journey (set by Charles Lindbergh) in half.

With war looming, Hughes Aircraft concentrated on military contracts, however Hughes proved unreliable for this as two of his famous follies proved. Part of the problem was that he insisted on



James Roberts





"The trouble with my life is that I do not think I am cut out to sit behind a desk."

—Howard Hughes (1905-1976), hero of dieselpunk

a great level of secrecy and would reveal little of his projects till their final unveiling, even to the USAAF. He was also reluctant to use standardized materials, knowing that those that he proffered would achieve better results, even though they were more expensive. Both of his craft flew in 1947, one of them crashing, killing two almost along with the test pilot, Hughes himself.

This was the XF11 spy plane which was developed for war time reconnaissance but arrived two years late.

The second project was the one which Hughes is best remembered for: the H-4 Hercules, known to the media and general populace as 'the Spruce Goose' for its unorthodox construction of wood due to wartime material constraints. This was to be a joint venture with the shipbuilder Henry Kaiser, who later dropped out due to Hughes' delays. The concept for the H-4 was a 'Flying Liberty Ship' to ferry troops over the Atlantic to Britain and Europe without the threat of Germany Navy U-boats which were costing millions in shipping and material during the Battle of the

Atlantic. The idea was sound if unorthodox for its day and in many ways visionary. The contracts were specifically awarded by President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the expense of others which his advisors said would be more feasible. Doubtless Hughes' influence spanned to the highest corridors of power even then.

Before and during the Second World War, flying boats, as they were known in Britain, or flying clippers, in the U.S., had performed the duties of modern air liners by transporting passengers across the world in a level of comfort that is now impossible for us to imagine as modern day airline passengers are crammed into awful plastic seats with microwave food. Travelers onboard the flying boat routes enjoyed silver service, sleeping cabins and personalized welcoming cards. At the outbreak of war, however, these huge vessels were assigned to military duties yet all were dwarfed by a German craft: the Blohm & Voss BV238. This is perhaps the closest relative to the vast creation of Howard Hughes.

The BV238 was a transport

plane prepared for long-range operations with the *Wehrmacht*. She had a wing-span of 188 foot and 11 inches, and was 150 foot, 11 inches long. The H-4 Hercules, however, was a titan amongst mere *Luftwaffe* giants and when she flew in 1947, over two years after her need had gone, she was the largest aeroplane in the skies. The H-4 had a fuselage/hull length of 219 foot; 69 foot longer than the massive wingspan of the BV238.

The H-4 was derided by press and public alike and her immense cost (\$5 million for just the one craft when the initial order was for three units) brought the attention of a special inquiry by the U.S. Senate into what was alleged to be war profiteering on Hughes' part. However, it transpired that Hughes had sunk millions of his own vast fortune into the project.

Unfortunately the H-4 never flew again after her maiden flight when she covered just one mile at a height of approximately 75 feet above Long Beach, California. This remarkable craft is on display at the Evergreen Aviation Museum in Oregon. At the time the Hughes H-4

was seen as a tremendous joke, however large aircraft for troop transport are now the norm, such as the C-130, also called the Hercules. The flaw with the 'spruce goose' perhaps rests with its flying boat design. Before the war, the largest planes were usually of this type, but after the war, the jet engine and better materials allowed quicker and larger planes to connect cities around the world.

Throughout the 1950s, Hughes built a series of spy satellites for the CIA and other U.S. government agencies which brought him more and more in contact with both the Agency and organized crime. The 1960 election victory of John F. Kennedy might well have been

connected to the fact that Nixon's brother did not pay back a loan to the billionaire aviator. A Hughes employee was also central to the infamous Watergate scandal.

In 1966, Hughes sold his remaining stock of Trans World Airways, a company he had bought in the 1930s. He had fought tooth and claw against rival airways, including Pan America (dramatized in much of the Scorsese film), for the development of the airline and made it into one of the most successful of the post-war era, despite numerous set-backs and board disagreements, often started by Hughes.

Hughes became increasingly paranoid throughout his career, a

symptom of his mental illness which had first developed in the mid 1940s, and combined with his obsessive compulsive order to make him a well known eccentric.

During the Vietnam War, Hughes made much money selling helicopters including the now widely used and developed Apache attack helicopter. But the same high costs (which the U.S. Army claimed were inflated) and slow delivery times which had made Hughes an unreliable contractor during the Second World War, also dogged him in Vietnam and Hughes Helicopters lost out to Bell later in the war.

In April 1972, Hughes practically withdrew from public life altogether after a regression in his

illness, and conducted business from a set of sealed-off hotel suites. The entrepreneur eccentric finally passed away in 1976, leaving a fortune of \$2 billion dollars.

The later scandals of Howard Hughes's life and the mental illnesses which plagued him since a young age, seem to detract from the earlier Howard Hughes, which is how your correspondent prefers to remember him; a man who dared to push the envelopes of technology and even legal business practice in pursuit of his passion of aircraft and their design. "I'm not a paranoid, deranged millionaire," he once said. "Goddamit, I'm a billionaire!" ■

Photos courtesy of Life



COLUMN THE STEAMPUNK WARDROBE

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

AS LONG AS PEOPLE HAVE WATCHED BIRDS FLY THEY have dreamt of taking to the skies themselves. It should come as no surprise therefore that plenty of steampunk and dieselpunk enthusiasts dress in aerial styles in their fashions of choice.

There is more to the aviator style than just goggles,

dashing pirates or brave airmen, something which has made clear by all the aviators we have come to love from many movies, books and comics. For those wanting a more air pirate-type look we can heartily recommend the column in issue #3 of this magazine (November 2008).

This article covers the other aviators out there: military men in uniforms for example who take their inspiration from the real airmen of the great wars or films as *The Rocketeer* and *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow*. Leather jackets and Ray Ban-esque aviator glasses are a must for them.

The ladies will no doubt find inspiration in those same movies and with the famous female aviatrix Amelia Earhart or with the character of Captain Amelia from Disney's often underrated *Treasure Planet* (2002).

Dashing rogues and nomads of the air might wish to go for a more ragged look; a more Victorian street urchin and commoner-inspired wardrobe altogether in fact. There is no rule that says you can't wear a style like that and pair it with some fabulous accessories.

Speaking of accessories... There is of course the goggles, which come in pretty much every shape, size and style these days. Cliché as they may seem, they are without doubt one of the key accessories with any aviator look, although it is by no means an obligation to wear or even carry them on your person. For those looking for headwear an aviator cap might be what you're after. There's a few tutorials out there to make your own and places like military surplus stores, military memorabilia shops, eBay and to a lesser extend Etsy tend to be good spots to find them.

Gloves, be they proper leather gloves or fingerless—anything of your choice really—also work nicely with most outfits. The same goes for scarves. Look at the sort of outfit you're putting together: if it's more upper class, then go for high quality materials that look expensive (they need not be expensive of course; you can find excellent deals in thrift stores or high street shops). If you are aiming for a more rugged, lower class type wardrobe, go with tougher looking knitwear: thick bulky yarns work nicely in most cases.

The aviator is one of the looks you can truly go in every direction with. This article is just pointing at some starters; take them and make it your own. The sky is the limit, quite literally here. ■



Hilde Heyvaert

*"When dressing up
in the aviator style
the sky is, quite
literally, the limit."*



Photograph by Tom Vanherck

PREVIEW THE BOOKMAN

A steam-powered dystopia rich with satire and slashed through with automatons and airships.

SET IN AN ALTERNATE VERSION of nineteenth century Earth, with a point of divergence to our timeline sometime in the early sixteenth century, *The Bookman* is without a doubt the most enjoyable and captivating novel I have read in a long time. It has managed to claim the throne as my favorite steampunk book from Moorcock's *A Nomad of the Time Streams*.

The Bookman is steampunk on multiple levels. Not only because of the plot and the world with its automatons, simulacra and a giant space cannon; it is also in itself an intricate work of art, very much like clockwork. The story's depth is revealed piece by piece, gear by gear, during the entire length of the novel up until the end, which makes for a very exciting read.

The reason for its ability to have constantly kept my attention is simple: Whenever I thought I finally understood what was going on and what motivations drove the

protagonists, another layer of the plot was unveiled or another important detail added. This way, a number of theories about what was really going on were shattered and *The Bookman* kept on surprising me. It took me very much until the last chapter to piece all the details together, combine all the different gears and cogwheels to one beautiful apparatus, to grasp the full expanse of what was actually going on right from the start of the novel. Finally in the end I understood and was left with the images of a truly fascinating story and a fascinating world in my mind.

But it is not only the depth of the plot, its many twists and mysteries which kept me glued to its pages; it is also the cast of characters and the many striking details of the world, which make this book so enjoyable.

The author, Lavie Tidhar creates a unique reality in which I, while following the main protagonist Orphan, met well known fictional characters and real historic people—and sometimes the person and their fictional invention. Jules Verne plays a part in the story and is very much involved in the machinations of the novel's namesake, the Bookman. He is accompanied by Robur and he takes Orphan on a ride on board the Nautilus and also *The Nautilus*.

Others are only mentioned in passing, like Dr Marbuse, Lovecraft's Herbert West, even Sherlock Holmes. Other real-world Victorian notables who play their part range from Karl Marx to Isabella Beeton.

Books, rather unsurprisingly, in many ways play a significant role in the story. Books lead the way, books

are powerful and books blur the borders of reality. There is a room where Orphan investigates a bookshelf stacked with volumes that feel strange to him. The titles on the shelf include *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, *The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism* and *De Vermis Mysteriis*.

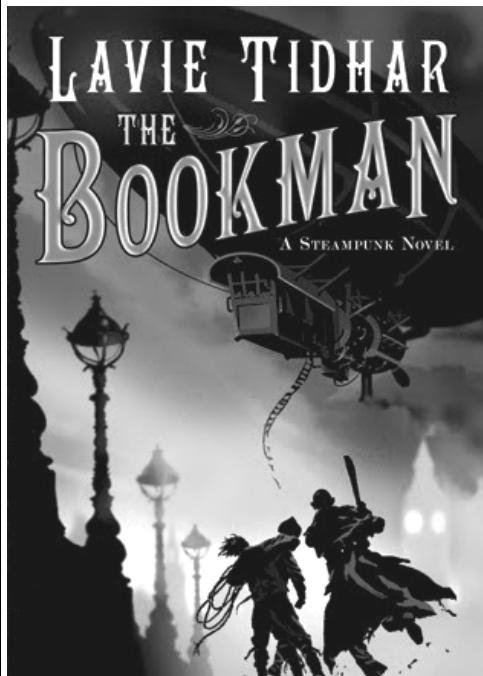
Blurred reality, illusions and deceptions are recurring motifs in *The Bookman*. This too, adds to its fascination. Yet it is only the reader and the characters who are deceived. The plot itself remains coherent. All the events which unfold make perfect sense and ultimately reveal the big picture.

One last element of the novel I must mention is Lavie Tidhar's use of mythology. Elements from ancient sagas are woven into the narrative: Orphan encounters a number of characters who, inexplicably, are in possession of ancient secrets and long forgotten tales. Mentioned in the margins are surprising details of *The Bookman's* version of Earth and its history, which in combination create a whole new mythology with Les Lezards, The Bookman, The Binder and Orphan as the focal points and keystones.

At the end, many questions remain unanswered even as events to which the story has built up towards finally take place. Although the story of *The Bookman* is finished and Orphan has gained what he sought there are many things that the sequel can latch onto. I am looking forward to the next chapter of this epic tale: *Camera Obscura*, scheduled for release November 2010. ■



Marcus Rauchfuß



'A stunningly imaginative remix of history, technology, literature, and Victorian adventure that's impossible to put down... simply the best book I've read in a long time.' — JAMES P. BLAYLOCK

REVIEW *NOSTALGIA*

Steampunk role-playing in the vein of old school video games.

WHEN I FIRST HEARD THAT Matrix Software was developing a steampunk RPG by the name of *Nostalgia* for the Nintento DS, I was vaguely interested, but generally unexcited. With Atlus planning on porting the first installment in one of my favorite RPG series, *Shin Megami Tensei: Persona*, to the Sony PSP and my gaming time already devoted to their tactical RPG *Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor* for DS, I didn't really think too much of a game with such a generic title. However, as the release date crept closer, I began to suspect I had underestimated this game. When it was finally released to generally positive reviews, I caved and bought myself a copy, and quickly became engrossed, logging over twenty hours in the first week.

First, let me say that while the title of *Nostalgia* may seem generic or non-descriptive, it is in fact a very apt description. Of course, the alternate history story drawing on old dime novels and using a steampunk style certainly invokes a certain sense of longing for the past, but the game play comes with its own sense of nostalgia as well. Rather than the nineteenth century, the game mechanics quickly remind one of that early era of gaming when "old school" RPGs rocked the Nintendo Entertainment System and Super Nintendo. This certainly stems in part from the fact that

Matrix Software's first claim to fame was their DS ports of *Final Fantasy III* and *IV*.

If you've played either of those ports, you're not going to be too surprised by *Nostalgia*'s look and game mechanics. The game uses the same 3D graphics of the *Final Fantasy* ports and while the battle system and stats management have their own peculiarities, you're not going to find much you haven't seen in old RPGs before. The most unique addition is the inclusion of airship battles. Unlike *Final Fantasy* games, you're given an airship right from the beginning. Furthermore, instead of a tool to make crossing the vast world map faster as you near the game's completion, the airship is your *only* means of travel outside of cities and dungeons, and comes fully armed and ready for combat.

Airship battles are ostensibly the same as normal combat, with turn-based menu commands in which each character has a chance to act. Rather than your hand-to-hand weapons used in dungeons, each character controls a part of the ship. The sword-wielding hero Eddie pilots the airship, using its bladed prow for attacks; the urchin gunslinger Pad commands the ship's guns; the witch Melody fires the cannons; and the priestess Fiona channels the power of the ship's mystical Orb. Furthermore, instead of the character's individual hit

point gauges, the ship has its own HP, and all attacks eat into that same pool. Lastly, and perhaps the most frustrating for me, is that the ship does not level up from

experience points like characters do. Rather, you have to buy upgrades, but more on that later.

Honestly, this game is fun. The story may not be as deeply moving as *Final Fantasy IV*, but it has its own charm. It reminded me in particular of old dime novels about scientist explorers, such as *Over the Andes with Frank Reade, Jr.* recently republished in Penguin Classics' *Dashing Diamond Dick and Other Classic Dime Novels*. The story is alive with that sense of wonderment of exploring the world with fanciful machines of flight, with "World Treasures" hidden all over the map to find. The world is based on our planet Earth, with the hero and his friend Pad originating in London and adventuring in St Petersburg, Tokyo, New York, and more. The latent racism of the *Frank Reade* stories is no longer present, but the basic storytelling is still there. This isn't a particularly expertly written tale, but it is fun and its similarity to a dime novel's episodic nature leads to that intrigue of "what's going to happen next?"

However, as I hinted at above, my love affair with this game did not manage to elevate it in my mind above classic series like *Final Fantasy*, *Shin Megami Tensei*, and the fantastic *Chrono Trigger* and *Chrono Cross* games. I don't think *Nostalgia* is ever going to be considered a classic in the same way they were, because it's always going to be seen as homage. It's good, but primarily because its referencing the old classics. Even its most unique feature, the airship, which certainly plays a big role, is not



Sigurjón Njálsson

"Finally steampunk enthusiasts have a video game that is a definite part of the genre..."

innovative enough to make it something ground-breaking like *Persona 3*'s dating sim influences or *Chrono Trigger*'s encounter system.

In fact, where it differs most from classic RPGs is where it became, at times, the most frustrating. Having to buy upgrades to "level up" your ship resulted in some areas where the airship battles were essentially impossible. New areas will have stronger enemies but also new upgrades available for purchase. However, you have to fly through that hotbed of new enemies before you can get to the new upgrade. If you're unlucky enough to get into a fight then, you might find yourself in the toughest battle the game will ever give you. Boss fights? They're nothing compared to this.

Even after getting the upgrades, some areas were just harder than others by airship, and you were often punished severely for exploring a little too far, inadvertently entering an area far above your ship's "level." For a game that seems to stress exploration by airship, something felt wrong here. But even at its hardest, it never really surpassed the difficulty of some of those old RPGs. When you consider some of the mapping areas and other little glitches in those very first RPGs that can be relentlessly punishing, *Nostalgia* is much, much easier in comparison. In fact, the difficulty level in general is very low. Most boss fights were hardly worse than the normal enemies as long as you use Eddie's Combo Attack on his every turn. That attack is

overpowered. Yes, there are other attacks that do marginally more damage, but not with such a low cost for use.

Frankly, though, these are small complaints. The game is fun and addictive, and finally steampunk enthusiasts have a video game that is a definite part of the genre, not just one influenced stylistically. I'd definitely recommend it to anyone with a DS and a love for steampunk and/or old RPGs. However, I must add that if you've never played *Chrono Trigger* or a *Final Fantasy* game, you might want to check their ports to DS first. *Nostalgia* may be good, but they're even better. Besides, maybe you need to have a certain love for those classics first to fully appreciate the nostalgic homage that is *Nostalgia*. ■

REVIEW LARKLIGHT TRILOGY

Philip Reeve's series of the Victorian space adventures of the Mumby children Art and Myrtle.

SOME OF YOU MIGHT REMEMBER Mr Philip Reeve from his four-book *Mortal Engines* work. This review, however, is of his newer works: the steampunk Victorian space series of adventures of the Mumby children Art and Myrtle, often referred to as the *Larklight* series, after the first book of the same title (2006).

It all begins with the first volume in which we find the Mumby children and their father inhabiting Larklight, a quaint home in space not far from our moon. You see, they live in an alternative past where Sir Isaac Newton invented the alchemical wedding which not only allows people to travel into space, but also to live there. Consequently, Earth and many other planets are more than a little interracial, inhabited by four-armed Ionians, Martians with rusty skin tones and

other strange beings resembling humanoid lizards, giant white spiders and anemones, to name but a few.

So we find our unlikely heroes living in their flying home, a strange contraption thought to be a few centuries old, where hoverpigs clean the house and robots are the servants. The children are a bit bored; their father is a confused biologist studying Ichthyomorphs for a living. Ichthyomorphs are a sort of fish-like creatures living in the space aether; think the space orcas from *Treasure Planet*, but then in many more species of fish-like beings. Their mother has sadly disappeared on a space voyage some years prior.

But apart from some loneliness and boredom, they're all getting on with life quite well. Right up to the point that one faithful morning, a

great white talking spider wearing a bowler hat named Mr Webster comes knocking, with a plot to capture the Mumbys. The children manage to flee in an escape pod, but alas their father is not so lucky.

From that moment on, the (mis)adventures of the Mumby children take a start, and the reader is carried from one event to the other in a most enjoyable pace as the story is written from the narrative perspective of Art Mumby (with the exception of a few chapters in which his sister Myrtle is the narrator).

From their landing on the Moon, being saved by the teenage pirate Captain Jack Havock, who is a bit of a legend and commander of the infamous *Sophronia*, to being



Hilde Heyvaert

saved by pirates onto hiding in Venus, where something strange once happened which I won't divulge to you and from there onto many, many more adventures, all equally worth reading yourself.

In the second instalment *Starcross* (2007) we meet the Mumby family again, in the midst of their home Larklight being rebuild. After a kind offer they decide to go on holiday to Starcross to flee the dust and builders' refurbishing of the old homestead.

There of course they quickly come to the conclusion that something well dodgy is going on, and they also get reacquainted with the crew of the *Sophronia*. This is the start of a thrilling new adventure with villains old and new (no giant white spiders this time, they have been replaced by mind controlling hats!). I won't give away more of the story, because I don't want to spoil the plot.

The second book goes on where the first one left off, and we get more of the same universe and type of adventure. It's all jolly good fun to read, but if you're expecting something more out of it than a sequel of continued adventures of the Mumby children then you might want to hold off reading it.

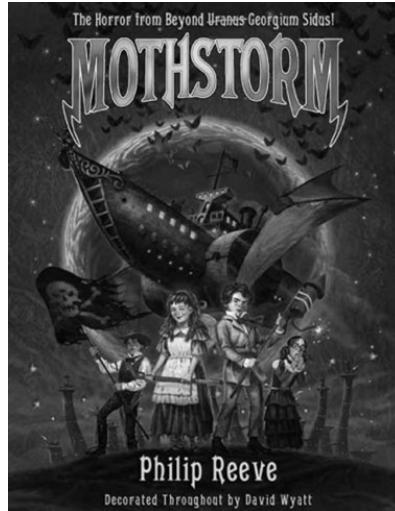
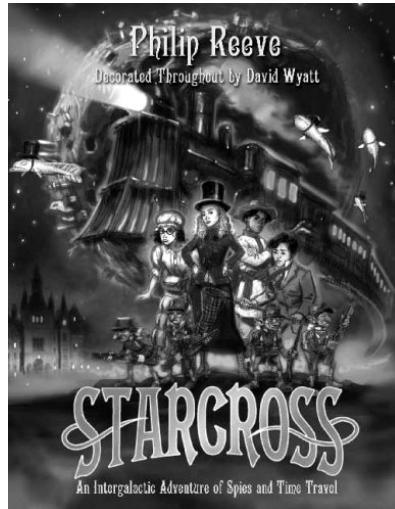
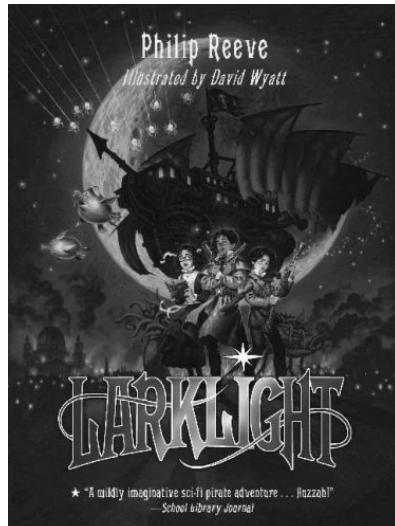
In part three *Mothstorm* (2008) the Mumbys face their most deadly adversary as of yet: a so-called Shaper named the Mothmaker, one that has broken all the laws of Shaper creation and is using an army of giant spacemoths and a deadly race of her own making, the Snilth. Yet again our heroes are reacquainted with their friends of the *Sophronia* aethership, and yet again this is a excellent read of a Victorian space adventure.

The author gives extra flair to the books, by writing in that typical

English we've come to know from British TV comedy set in eras past and movies about Sherlock Holmes, making it easy for the reader to place himself in that alternative past that is the place of Art's and Myrtle's adventures. It is written in an English simple enough for younger readers to understand, but not too young to annoy adults also picking up the book.

Reeve keeps a very good pace, which results in not one dull moment. Instead, the reader will want to read it from cover to cover without pause. He keeps his audience surprised, and mixes a good deal of humour with suspense and succeeds wonderfully in making one sympathize with the protagonists of the story.

The *Larklight* series may be intended for youngsters, but I believe it is a good read for anyone that enjoys science fiction or steampunk. It has all the things we have come to love:



dashing rogues, loathsome villains, aliens and brave adventurers of the both sexes. On top of that there is steampunk machinery and David Wyatt's exquisite illustrations. Frankly the artwork alone is reason to buy these books, the quality of it is truly superb. Contrary to a lot of art, that mainly serves as a page filler, Wyatt's work truly contributes to the story and allows the reader to visualize the tale in his mind.

Even though all three books star the same characters and you know it will be them prancing about in space bravely defeating enemies and thwarting cunning villainous ploys, these imaginative volumes keep on entertaining. I would advise it to both parents looking for a good book for their children or perhaps even for bedtime reading to younger kids, and to adults seeking a fun light read alike!

For those that are fans, know that there's rumours floating about the Internet that there will be a *Larklight* movie. Good times ahead I say if those are true! ■

OPINION ONE OF THE OLD SCHOOL

Why one opinionated bastard can't just get along.

STEAM? YES. PUNK? NO. STEAMPUNK? OF COURSE not. End of discussion, right? I only wish. While there is little argument over what constitutes steampunk as a subculture, what constitutes steampunk as a literary genre is an argument that ignores entropy to this day. Some would have you believe that, like the subculture which it has birthed, steampunk as a genre can be a Jack-of-all-trades. Others stick to their rayguns, drawing lines in the industrial grime to separate steampunk from the myriad of sub-genres surrounding it.

It should be clear at this point where I hang my stylishly-battered top hat in all of this.

While it takes a lot for me to say that various bits of anachronistic technology don't fit with the steampunk subculture, I draw the aforementioned line when people get near my beloved books, telling me that it's okay to take the punk out of my steampunk. That with all the brass fittings, I won't be able to tell the difference. Steampunk books must possess two essential elements: steam and punk. Without those, all the valves and gears in the world aren't going to make a story into something that it's not.

The first element, steam, is self-explanatory. It's what everyone thinks of when they hear "steampunk." Brass, gears, dirigibles, mechanical computers, a British Empire upon which the sun never sets, and of course steam. Victorian styling and coal-fired steam power combine, emulating everything through silicon-age technology but with a nice "antique" patina, so the story is steampunk, right? Close, chummer, but no gilt snuff-box.

What gets forgotten is that key second syllable—punk. What distinguishes steampunk from pseudo-Victorian capers and gas lamp scientific romances is the oft-neglected punk. It's the smog, the swearing, the grit of factory-workers down on their luck, the greedy politicians who inspire countless be-goggled Robin Hoods, the machine (often literally) against which one rages. Taking the punk out is like taking the steam out; you've got shiny brass or gritty realism, but you don't have steampunk. It would be like taking the mega corporations or ubiquitous computing out of William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984); it just wouldn't work.

I'm in no way against the other genres which get grouped in with steampunk, much though I wish that they weren't labeled incorrectly. I love a well-told and

well-written rip-roaring adventure tale as much as the next reader, but even a life of constant adventure can get boring. What draws me to steampunk is something deeper than that. Steampunk should be a lens through which to examine life's persistent issues, regardless of whether those issues are caused by a fanciful steam-powered artificial intelligence which rules the civilized world with thousands of mechanized brass fists or a too-real politician pursuing his or her own ends at the expense of the common person.

After looking at the issue for a long time, squinting and turning my head this way and that, I discovered the disconnect. The perceived newness and hipness of steampunk, which has existed as a literary sub-genre for over twenty years, is a bandwagon, and everyone wants a seat. The "me too" habit of calling a story steampunk when it lacks either of the above elements vexes me most because it often seems to go unchecked. When somebody says that they prefer their steampunk stories without the punk, I must ask them if they're looking at the right genre. It's in the separation of genre from subculture that's getting in the way. People read about airships and goggles and immediately think "steampunk," because it takes little more than getting some spray-painted welding goggles, a few oddments from a thrift-store, and an outrageously "steamy" name and title to get into the subculture. As a result, they will argue that a pulp air pirate caper is steampunk, not because it possesses both steam and punk, but because steampunk is cool.

When I state that such-and-such a literary work is not steampunk, it is not my intent to invalidate the work; it's calling a spade a spade. You can still move earth with it, but don't try to tell me that it's a hoe just because it has a wooden handle and you keep it in your tool shed. It is not out of bloody-mindedness that I argue this point, but because I want to see the genre furthered, whether by my own works or those of other authors.

Brass goggles are all well and good, but what makes steampunk more than a passing curiosity is its utility as a tool to explore sometimes-familiar territory in a new way. If we lose that, then all our fancy dress and affectations can't save us from being just another derivative footnote in the history of speculative fiction. ■



Hilary Bisenieks

TO THE POLE BY BALLOON

A LITTLE KNOWN CHAPTER IN THE history of aeronautics is the attempt to reach the North Pole by airship. The daring Swedish adventurer Salomon August Andrée was the first to try. He and two companions made an attempt on July 11, 1897. From the very beginning their adventure was doomed. He did not use a real airship, though, rather he employed a hydrogen balloon, the *Örnen* (Eagle). This balloon had severe technical difficulties and right from the start was leaking hydrogen and proved unable to gain altitude, repeatedly hitting the pack ice. Ultimately the endeavor had to be abandoned after only a few hours of flight.

Andrée and his men than set out to walk back over the ice towards Spitsbergen, a journey for which they were not equipped. After 83 days they reached Kvitøya, 400 kilometers east of their base camp. There they were caught by the sudden onset of winter. Sadly, all three perished on Kvitøya. Their remains and final records were not found until thirty-three years later.

The next to set out was the American journalist Walter Wellman. Wellman was already a renowned adventurer who had led an expedition to the Arctic in 1898. His first attempt to reach the Pole by airship was announced on New Year's Eve of 1905 and the airship was built in Paris. He also

had a hangar erected at Virgør Harbor, Spitsbergen, with a large base camp at the same location. The hangar, however, was never used for the expedition. On the first trial run of the airship's engines in Paris, they self-destructed, setting Wellman's plans back by two years.

The next try did not go as planned either. Strong and unfavorable winds delayed the launch of the expedition well into August of 1907. In September, Wellman ordered a successful, if rather short trial cruise before returning to the United States.

Wellman made a final attempt to reach the Pole in the Airship *America* in 1909 but again, disaster struck. After about sixty miles of flight the *America* lost its ballast line and had to perform an emergency landing on the polar ocean. Wellman and his crew nearly drowned but were saved by a Norwegian ship.

Wellman never returned to the Arctic. It would not be until 1926 that an airship would actually reach the Pole and it had an illustrious captain, Roald Amundsen. The gifted engineer of Amundsen's airship *Norge*, Umberto Nobile, deserves much of the credit for the

mission's success however. Throughout the flight there was much friction between the highly egocentric Amudsen and the Italian Nobile: the former could hardly bear the presence of someone equally able and successful as himself. Their friendship broke, despite or maybe because of their shared success.

In a strange twist of fate a later journey by Nobile to the Pole in his airship *Italia* in 1928 (without Amudsen participating) would prove to be Amudsen's doom.

Nobile reached the Pole but on the journey back the *Italia* crashed and a massive rescue operation was launched. Among the participants was Amudsen, who died when the Latham 47 flying boat he was a crew member of crashed. The bodies of Amudsen and the rest of the crew were never recovered.

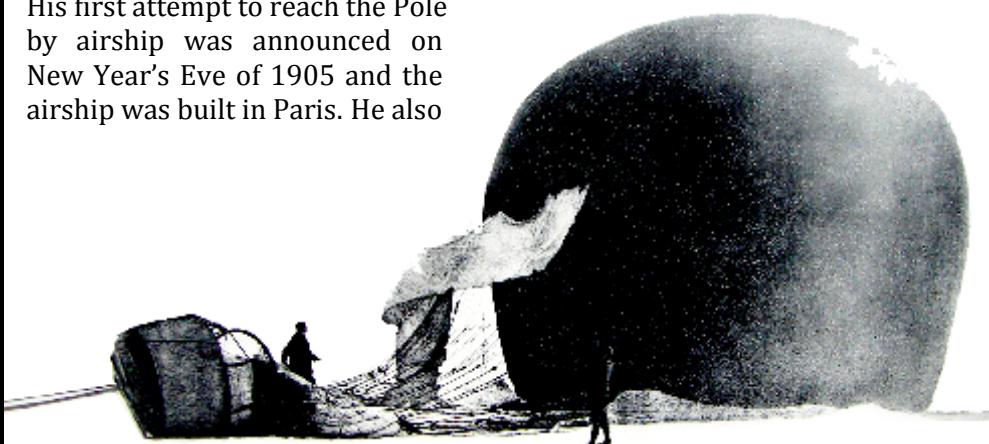
The final journey by airship, and from a scientific point of view the most successful, judged by the amount of data collected, came in 1931. The LZ-127 *Graf Zeppelin* cruised in the Arctic for a week, originally to meet a submarine owned by the Australian explorer G.H. Wolkins there. This would have been a true steampunk event, having a zeppelin meet a submarine in the polar seas. The rendezvous was called off however, when the submarine was scuttled due to age

and technical difficulties before the start of the *Graf Zeppelin*'s polar cruise.

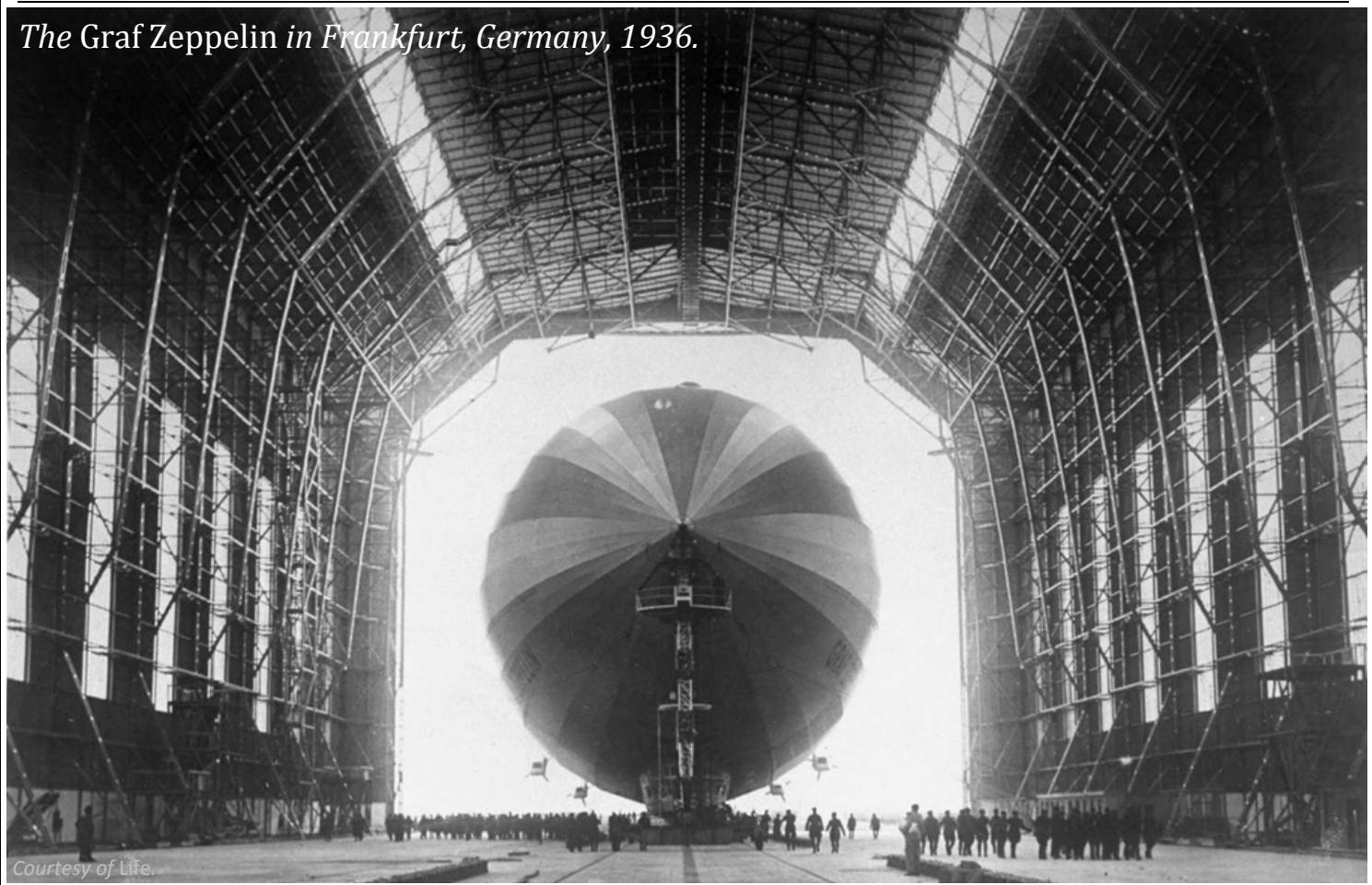
The *Graf Zeppelin* took detailed measurements of the area surrounding the North Pole and collected a huge amount of data that for the first time made a



Marcus Rauchfuß



The Graf Zeppelin in Frankfurt, Germany, 1936.



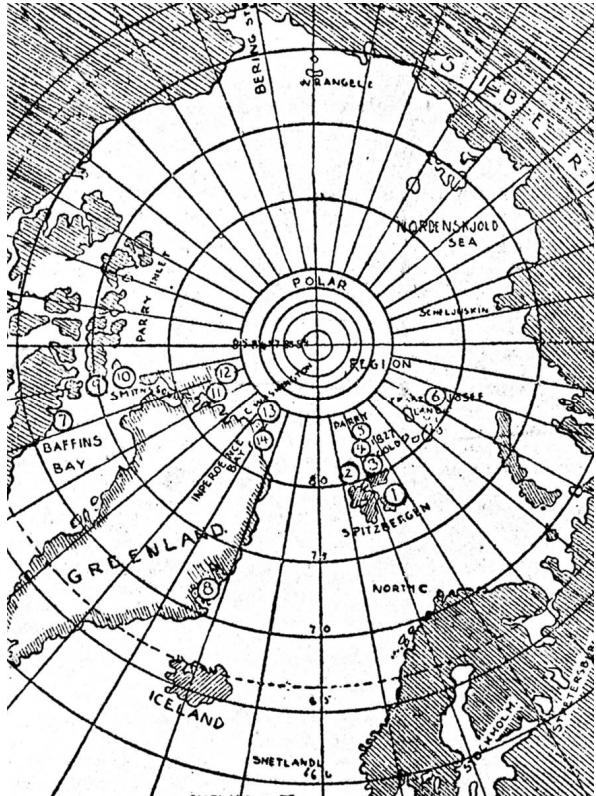
Courtesy of Life.

complete picture of the polar region possible. The one remarkable thing about this journey was its financing: it was planned and executed during a time when the Weimar Republic was still shaken by the economic crisis of the late '20s. The money was gathered by an extraordinary marketing trick: The LZ-127 was carrying thousands of air mail letters which were stamped with a special "North Pole stamp" once the zeppelin reached the Pole, making them highly collectable. There were thousands of people in Germany willing to have such a letter and as such, willing to finance the project.

The dash for the North Pole by airship and zeppelin remains a remarkable example of human endurance, determination and inventiveness. It also shows the spectacular technological progress

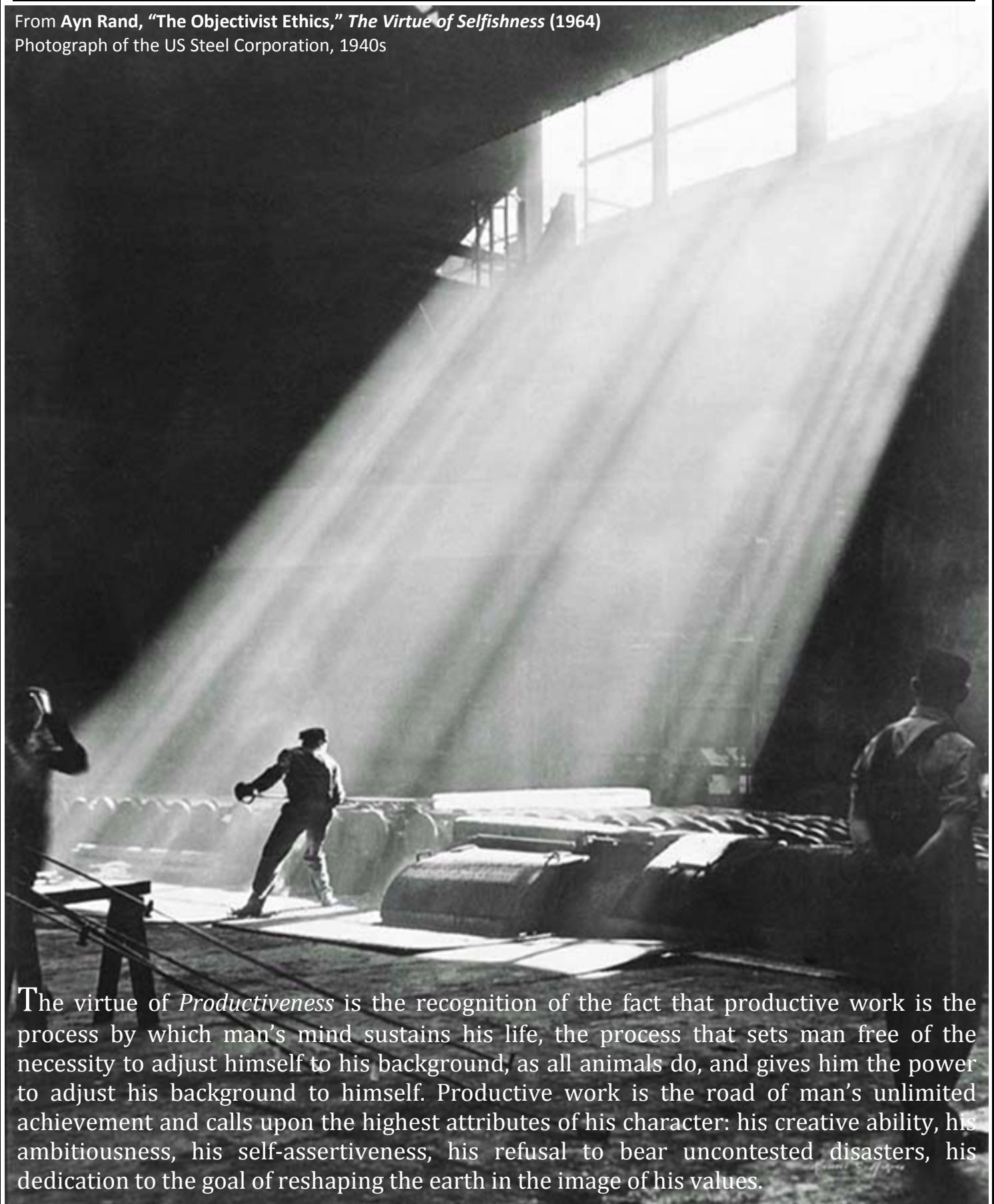
made in the mere forty-five years between Andrée's first attempt in 1897 and the comparably very comfortable and safe week-long cruise of the *Graf Zeppelin* in 1931. In less than a generation humans had been able to turn one of the most remote and inhospitable places on the planet into a location that was and still is relatively easy to reach.

It is a shame that airships have fallen out of favor with the masses, as they could provide travelers with such magnificent views over the Arctic landscape while slowly cruising over it. ■



From Ayn Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964)

Photograph of the US Steel Corporation, 1940s



The virtue of *Productiveness* is the recognition of the fact that productive work is the process by which man's mind sustains his life, the process that sets man free of the necessity to adjust himself to his background, as all animals do, and gives him the power to adjust his background to himself. Productive work is the road of man's unlimited achievement and calls upon the highest attributes of his character: his creative ability, his ambitiousness, his self-assertiveness, his refusal to bear uncontested disasters, his dedication to the goal of reshaping the earth in the image of his values.

COLUMN THE LIQUOR CABINET

Every issue, Mr Daniel introduces the reader to another fascinating part of the world of alcohol.

BLISS IS WHEN YOUR GOGGLES FOG UP WITH THE steam coming off a hot drink on a cold night. For those of a Victorian bent, generally we're talking about toddy—a catch-all term for individual drinks served hot with a bit of spice. These are also some of the most delicious wintertime beverages known to man.

One of the simplest toddy recipes is piping hot applejack or brandy with a dash of syrup, served with part of an oven-baked apple and a little grated nutmeg. You can add a bit of hot water, if you like yours less strong. For those who prefer a longer drink, a common mixer is tea. Stir together half an ounce of simple syrup or honey, three ounces of brandy or bourbon, and enough hot tea to fill the mug, and garnish with a slice of lemon and a little bit of nutmeg, cloves, or both.

Related to both of these is an American concoction known as hot buttered rum. Making it properly requires apple juice of the sort often known as "cider" in the United States: unfiltered juice, generally brown and cloudy and quite distinct both from the clear golden liquid normally sold as apple juice and from hard cider. Put half a tablespoon of butter and a shot of white rum in the bottom of a mug, ladle in boiling juice, and stir with a whole cinnamon stick until it is well-mixed. If you can't get American-style apple cider, regular apple juice will work in a pinch, but it will not be up to the same standards.

In a similar vein, mulled wine, which goes by many regional names, is a classic. The basic pattern to all such recipes is to bring wine to a simmer on the stove, add in various pieces of citrus fruit, spices, sugar, and sometimes hard liquor, and allow it to steep for a little while. In the nineteenth century it was sometimes thickened by the addition of eggs—four per liter of wine seems to be a reasonably historically accurate ratio. Exactly how much sugar and spice belongs in a good mulled wine varies with personal tastes and with how much distilled liquor has been added, but one recipe for *Glögg* (Swedish mulled wine with almonds) calls for two bottles of red wine, two bottles of port, one bottle of cognac, an orange, half a cup of raisins, eight inches of cinnamon stick, two dozen

whole cloves, one teaspoon of whole cardamom seeds, one cup of blanched almonds, and two cups of sugar. Simmer

the sugar and brandy together for fifteen minutes, then add everything else and simmer it for at least half an hour before straining and serving.

Another category of hot drink, popular before and during the Enlightenment and thus perfect for those who prefer their clockwork turned by pendulums rather than steam, are hot drinks known as "caudle," "posset," or "syllabub." These were thickened with egg, and were somewhere in between hot custardy deserts and true beverages; they're also the ancestor of modern eggnog. To make enough posset for a crowd, dissolve half a pound of sugar in a cup of sherry, heating in a double boiler if necessary. Mix in two cups of cream, and bring the mixture to a low simmer. Meanwhile, beat seven whole eggs and seven egg whites until you get stiff peaks or as close as you can (they won't get quite as firm as if you used just whites, but do your best), and then fold the eggs into the sherry mixture while it simmers. Cook it until it's thick enough that you can't decide whether to sip it or eat it with a spoon, being sure to stir it enough that the bottom doesn't burn, and serve with nutmeg on top.

For those who like their eggnog in the modern style, a less artery-clogging version can be made simply enough. For a single serving, the basic recipe hasn't changed much in the past century. Fill your shaker with ice, add a shot of alcohol, an egg yolk, a scant teaspoon of sugar, and two shots of milk. Shake, strain, and serve with grated nutmeg. The choice of alcohol matters—rum is a popular ingredient, but you should use brandy or whiskey for at least half of the liquor, as the oak flavor is a big part of what makes eggnog taste like itself. Personally, I favor two parts rum, one part brandy, and one part Irish whiskey. In the late nineteenth century, mixology author Jerry Thomas gave a recipe making twice as big a serving (using a whole egg instead of two yolks, but otherwise the same) made with half brandy and half rum; he also noted that replacing the ice with a little boiling water and mixing it all together vigorously made a hot version that was

popular in California at the time. I suspect this hot version to be a missing link between modern cold eggnog and eighteenth-century possets... ■



Craig B. Daniel

"Bliss is when your goggles fog up with the steam coming off a hot drink on a cold night."

THE AVIATRIX

BORN ON JULY 24, 1897 IN ATCHISON, KANSAS, Amelia Earhart was a amazing woman.

An unconventional character from the offset, she soon fell into today's stereotype of a tomboy; her mother took a very modern attitude to not trying to mold her daughters into 'nice little girls' and they would probably have been considered to be running wild as Amelia and her little sister hiked, climbed trees, and generally got into all sorts of scraps.

In 1907 she had her first, although incredibly short, experience of flying when her uncle helped her create a ramp for her sled from the roof of the family shed and she flew through the air for a few moments.

Homeschooled for many years she later enrolled in mainstream schooling and took an active interest in the sciences. In an era when women could only work until they married, Earhart aspired to have a career and

admired successful women in predominately male fields as law, engineering and film production.

It wasn't until the late 1910s, early 1920s that she came into contact with aircraft properly when she visited an Air Expo in Toronto, Canada. A World War I flying ace was doing a display and decided to swoop low over the spectators, and Earhart, instead of scattering stood her ground. As he flew by, she felt something. "I did not understand it at the time," she said later, "but I believe that little red airplane said something to me as it swished by."

By the end of 1920 she had had her first ride in an aeroplane, and later said that "by the time I had got two or three hundred feet of the ground, I knew I had to fly."

She worked as many jobs as she could to pay for flying lessons and began on the January 3, 1921. She was taught by one of the pioneering female aviators, Anita Snook, and gained her pilots license in 1923, the sixteenth woman in history to be granted one.

She had many achievements over the next few years, being the first woman to fly across the Atlantic in 1928 (as a passenger, not a pilot), the first woman to fly an gyrocopter and setting an altitude record for gyrocopters—15,000 feet—both in 1931, and she crossed the United States in a gyrocopter in 1932.

Earhart is best remembered for her Atlantic flights (setting the records for being the first woman to fly solo over the Atlantic, and for flying the Atlantic twice in 1932) and her transcontinental flights flying various routes over the United States between 1933 and 1937. Between 1930 and 1935, she set seven woman's distance aviation and woman's speed records, but in 1936 she decided on the most difficult of all: to circumnavigate the world as near as possible to the equator.

She acquired a modified Lockheed L-10E Electra Airplane with the help of Purdue University and planned her trip, which would be the longest of its kind, at 29,000 miles.



J. Parkin

*"The most effective way to do it,
is to do it."*

—Amelia Earhart (1897-1937)



LIFE

Such a long voyage couldn't be made alone and Fred Noonan was selected to be her co-pilot. Experienced in both marine and aeronautic navigation he seemed the natural choice for such an adventure.

On March 17, 1937, they set out, but due to a mixture of technical difficulties and physical problems with the airplane they had to land again which meant that the start of the project was delayed until June 1, 1937. They set out again, taking a west-to-east route and with various stops on the way, the duo reached New Guinea on June 29, 1937.

They had completed around 22,000 miles of the journey. The final leg would take them over the Pacific Ocean. Earhart and Noonan departed from New Guinea on July 2, 1937 and aimed for Howland Island, some 2,556 miles away. But somewhere between New Guinea and Howland Island the plane disappeared.

Their last known position was near the Nukumanu Islands, about 800 miles into flight. Radio transmissions indicated they may be low on fuel, and a US Navy Coastguard ship waiting to help them land at Howland

Island attempted to offer visual signals but the Lockheed never landed.

The Coastguard ship that had been waiting for them searched, and the Navy soon joined them. Searches continued for seventeen days over an area of 150,000 square miles and it was later estimated to be the most expensive search and rescue mission of its type at the time, costing somewhere in the region of \$4 million yet no sign of Earhart, Noonan or the plane was ever found.

There are innumerable theories to explain for what happened, ranging from thoughts that the plane crashed and sank in the ocean after running out of fuel, to landing on an uninhabited island and dying there, to Earhart and Noonan being captured and executed by the Japanese as spies.

Whatever did happen that day, it is undisputable that Amelia Earhart has captured the imagination of many throughout the years and with the circumstances of her disappearance unlikely to be resolved, she is likely to continue to do so. ■

REVIEW SKY CAPTAIN AND THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

The quintessential dieselpunk motion picture incorporates every cliché of mid-century pulp.

SKY CAPTAIN AND THE WORLD OF Tomorrow (2004) is perhaps the most widely known dieselpunk movie around, which is quite fortunate. If you want to explain dieselpunk to a lay person, you just have to say "Think *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow*" and they'll know what the genre is about.

The story of the film could have been taken straight out of a 1930s

pulp magazine and indeed director Kerry Conran was influenced by the Golden Age of comic books and such pulp heroes as Captain Midnight.

Apart from the plot, the imagery of the film borrows heavily from the imaginations of the pulp era. The coloring looks aged and slightly faded as if the original source material was already a few decades old. The special effect,

notably the rays of the experimental ray gun, are concentric circles, exactly as in the original black-and-white *Buck Rogers* with its sparkler-engined space ships. Comic book elements, like the visualization of the radio tower broadcasting the signal for Sky Captain, and 1930s science fiction film elements as the aforementioned ray gun are mixed and blended neatly to form a most rewarding visual pulp experience.

Set in an alternative 1939, the story starts in New York, where the massive *Hindenburg III* is docking at the Empire State Building. Among the passengers is a nervous elderly gentleman who is later revealed to be a scientist of some note and an acquaintance of the arch villain, Dr Totenkopf.

Polly Perkins (what a fitting



Marcus Rauchfuß



Photos courtesy of Paramount Pictures

pulp name for a journalist) follows him and is dragged in the middle of an attack by giant robots on New York City, during which H. Joseph Sullivan a.k.a. Sky Captain is called into action to fight the automatons which retreat after capturing a number of generators. From then on, the story never loses momentum and has no trouble taking on every pulp cliché along the way. There are fights, there is betrayal, a mysterious past, hidden motives—everything a good pulp story should contain. Even a visit to Shangri La and a cameo appearance by Godzilla is fitted in. (Yes, Godzilla has a fleeting appearance in *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* but I am disinclined to leak any specific information.)

The film features everything a dieselpunk enthusiast can and will enjoy: a dashing hero, his extremely clever and resourceful inventor sidekick, the hero's ex-girlfriend (a bumbling journalist with a habit of getting into trouble), another ex-girlfriend, or at least former lover, who is an officer with the RAF. In addition, the movie features zeppelins, giant robots and a mad scientist by the (fittingly German) name of Totenkopf (which,



although the German word for skull is not a German last name at all, does have the "I am Evil" sound written all over it). Totenkopf is a larger-than-life and totally overblown evil genius. He finished his degree in his early teenage years (that's how clever he is), made inventions so advanced, no one could understand them, and his master plan, although it would destroy the world, includes saving

every species on the planet except for mankind—but adds some re-bred dinosaurs to make up for it. There is a certain facet of a global savior behind the veil of insane genius.

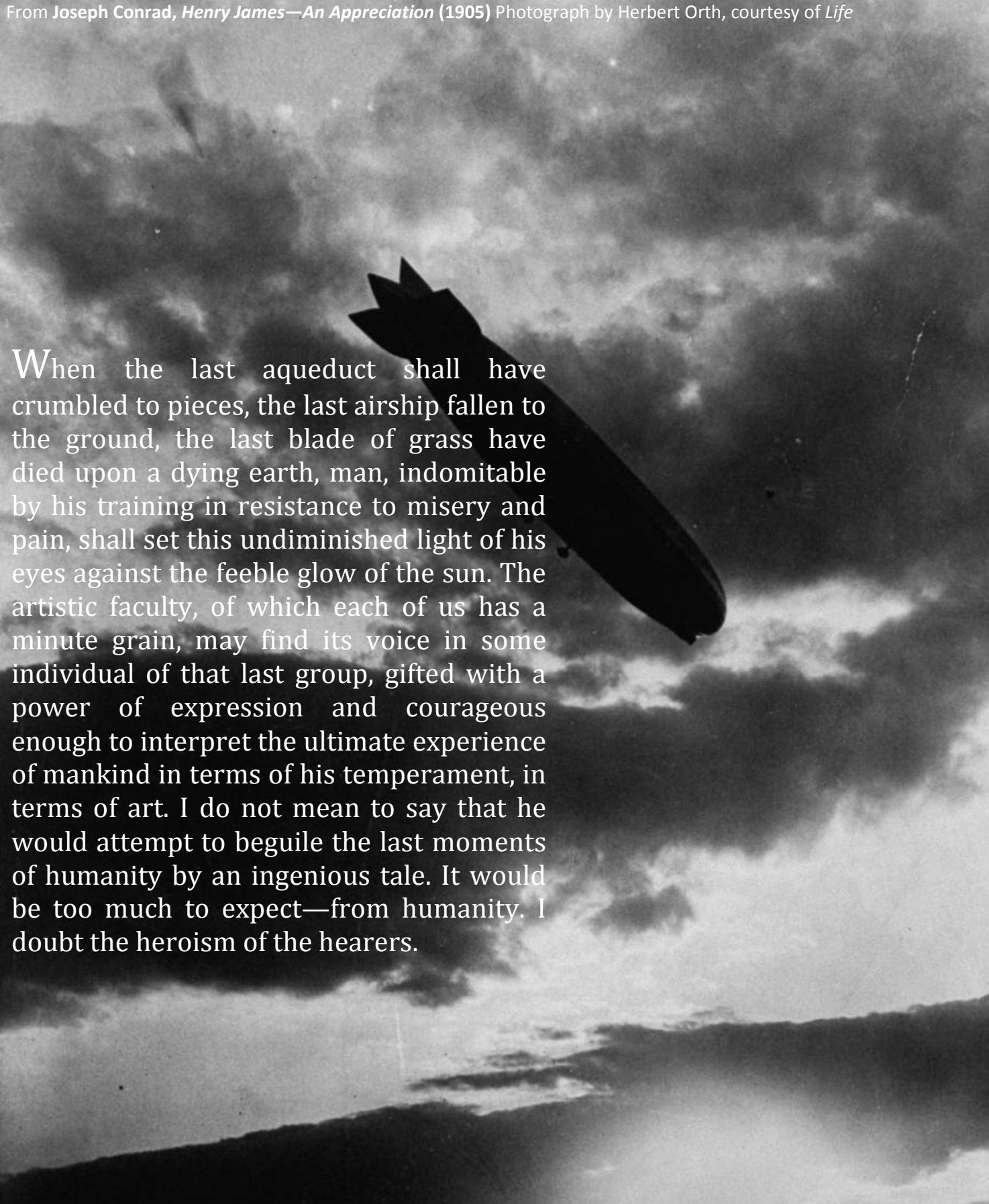
The list of pulp elements does not stop there: There are real flying fortresses, nothing like the US bomber of the same name; airplanes capable of operating under water; a giant space ship designed to be the new Noah's Ark and a very sinister female thief/assassin who turns out to be a cyborg, reminiscent of Metropolis' *Maschinenmensch*.

Lucky, and adding to the enjoyability of the film, is the fact that *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* does not take itself seriously at all. For example, there is this running gag within the story of Polly

Perkins constantly forgetting to take off the lid of the camera when shooting photos of important events and places, like the rescue operation at the end of the movie.

The very last word is actually "Lens cap" directed from Sky Captain to Polly, indicating that she wasted her last shot... The final image is that of a frustrated Polly Perkins frowning into the camera before "The End" appears. ■

From Joseph Conrad, *Henry James—An Appreciation* (1905) Photograph by Herbert Orth, courtesy of *Life*



When the last aqueduct shall have crumbled to pieces, the last airship fallen to the ground, the last blade of grass have died upon a dying earth, man, indomitable by his training in resistance to misery and pain, shall set this undiminished light of his eyes against the feeble glow of the sun. The artistic faculty, of which each of us has a minute grain, may find its voice in some individual of that last group, gifted with a power of expression and courageous enough to interpret the ultimate experience of mankind in terms of his temperament, in terms of art. I do not mean to say that he would attempt to beguile the last moments of humanity by an ingenious tale. It would be too much to expect—from humanity. I doubt the heroism of the hearers.

REVIEW **TREASURE PLANET**

This underrated Disney classic ranges from Victoriana to futurepunk in one fluent movement.

DISNEY'S 2002 *TREASURE PLANET*, a modern retelling of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic *Treasure Island* is without doubt one of the most underrated Disney films ever made.

Not only was this the first classic to make proper use of integrated computer animation, but it was also one of the few films for which Disney was imaginative and willing enough to stray from its usual and well-walked path of brave heroes, dashing princess and damsels in distress. Rather *Treasure Planet* deals with the classic characters of Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver, but in a way you've never seen them before.



It's a future where space travel and space piracy are very common. Countless worlds and moons are inhabited by humans, humanoid animal people and aliens alike. It is on the fictional world of Montressor, famous for its space port that we find young Mr Hawkins: a small time street urchin one step away from a stint in juvie hall when one fateful evening he decides to lend a hand to an injured old turtle-like humanoid crash landing on the pier to his mother's inn. It is there that the adventure starts when the dying alien gives Jim a map and a warning to "beware the cyborg."

Sure enough, the poor guy has barely died or pirates arrive and Jim must flee together with his mother and aided by family friend, a dog-like humanoid called Delbert Doppler, who also happens to be a doctor in the astrophysics and without doubt one of the most amusing and clever characters that Disney has come up with in the last decades. He is funny, smart and hilarious in his usual bimbly manner and dressed

impeccably in a Victorian gentlemen's outfit.

Sure enough, it is Delbert who takes Jim under his wing and into space, on a mad hunt for the infamous Captain Flint's legendary treasure (because that's what the map is pointing at).

They take off in a magnificent aethership under command of the feline humanoid Captain Amelia and her second in command, the golem Mr Arrow. It is there that Jim makes the acquaintance of John Silver, the ship's cook and cyborg and his pet Morph, a tiny blob-like shape shifter. Of course, Silver and the deckhands hired along with him are pirates, and just as in the original tale, they plan to get their hands on the map and the treasure.

Apart from the classic leading characters the new characters Disney came up with for this retelling are spending, imaginative, original and contributing so well you'd think they were always part of the legend and invented by Mr Stevenson himself for his original work.

I am sure no one needs me to retell the entire tale, but needless to say, this movie is a must-see for any steampunk—and every Disney—fan. The characters are innovative, there's a lot of pretty unnecessary death involved, which is unusual for Disney and the atmosphere ranges from Victoriana to futurepunk in one fluent movement whilst staying through to the style without even blinking. The aetherships are magnificently done and the story has been told in such an original manner, it gives it an entire new look and life. ■



Hilde Heyvaert

INTERVIEW KALEENA KIFF

Co-creator and director of Riese the Series, the fantasy-steampunk web series.

RIESE DEBUTED LAST NOVEMBER, introducing the character of Riese (Christine Chatelain) and the dying country of Eleysia: a decimated land populated by characters from dreams and nightmares. Loyalties are ever in question, suspicion is in the minds of all. The realm was not always so cruel however.

This is the world created by Ryan Copple and Kaleena Kiff; actress, producer and director, of the first five episodes of *Riese* among other things. Copple previously directed the short films *Awkward Silence* and *Time Before the Light* while Kiff has worked on eleven different films which include the recent *The Morning After* and *Alice & Huck*, available for online viewing at allisonmack.com.

Both were familiar with steampunk beforehand, but they didn't realize at first that they were creating something of a steampunk world. "Ryan and I were working with an artist, Jay Senetchko, on concept drawings for *Riese*," says Kiff. "The more we described this world, and Jay's drawings brought it to life, the more familiar it seemed. People began to identify it as steampunk, so we investigated the genre further to learn more. It turned out that while we weren't following steampunk to a 'tee', we were drawing heavily from it." Kiff notes that with *Riese*, they never strived to be purists by any means—"but we hope to pay homage to the genre, while still remaining true to the original story we developed."

The world of *Riese*, much like steampunk, is anachronistic. But the series does not take place in any familiar steampunk setting. "We didn't want to write a post-

apocalyptic scenario," Kiff explains. "Instead we imagined a world like ours, but not ours, as if World War I never happened. Similar to how steampunk blends Victorian and Futuristic esthetics, we're blending Norse mythology, pre-apocalyptic eeriness, and an almost fascist environment."

"From the Vikings to the Celts," mythology served as an inspiration for the series. "We preferred to go pre-apocalyptic to make *Riese* more of a cautionary tale told in the middle of the story, rather than after the fall." Rather than depicting some post-apocalyptic wasteland, *Riese* shows people descend into darkness. The power-hungry tyrant Amara rules Eleysia and under her reign the borders of the country, "about the size of Spain or Germany," are constantly

expanding. Yet a mysterious faction is able to wield power over her: The Sect, purporting to be Eleysia's religious caste, is spreading through the land like a plague.

"No real life cult inspired The Sect," notes Kiff, "though we did love a lot of what [Jean-Pierre] Jeuneut and [Marc] Caro did in *City of Lost Children*." She admits that the organization has something of an Orwellian touch to it, though The Sect is "more of a comment on the dangers of fanaticism or fundamentalism in general." It is not without opposition: "there is a Resistance movement what will surface in Chapter 2," says Kiff. "They will have their own inner-strife to deal with." Over time, more and more of the Eleysian history will gradually be unveiled as *Riese*'s journey proceeds.

The series is broken down into Chapters which each consist of five episodes. "Each Chapter's title reflects the place Riese journeys to, so there will be five distinct areas that she explores within this season. In addition, the next episodes also delve deep into other characters' lives as well, creating a story that has the potential to take place all over this expansive world."



Marcus Rauchfuß

Courtesy of Riese Productions Ltd.



"Rather than depicting some post-apocalyptic wasteland, Riese shows people descend into darkness."

The first five episodes can currently be watched on riesetheseries.com and on *YouTube*.

Talking about the future of the show, Kiff promises some romantic

action; "though I'd prefer not to say who will be having the fun." A number of new characters will join *Riese* in Chapter 2: Rand (Ryan Robbins), Aliza (Emilie Ullerup) and Garin (Allesandro Juliani), so, in Kiff's words, "there will be a lot more potential" for romance.

Casting was never the greatest of their problems. "Vancouver is blessed with an amazing pool of actors," says Kiff, "and we're lucky enough to have worked with many of them before on other projects. They all loved the story and wanted to be a part of bringing it to life."

The same goes for members of the crew. "Our costume designer is the massively talented Megan Leson, who has years of theater experience. She builds each costume from the ground up

using found materials and gifted seamstresses," making for a distinct and very steampunkesque look. "The production designer is Chad Krowchuk who combined his two talents as a successful painter and an actor to become an inspiring and tireless designer, crafting Eleysia by hand. He has a motley crew of ingenious builders, artists and craftspeople that help him tinker."

Enthusiasm alone however doesn't make a series. "The show is entirely privately financed, so any support we can garner from fans would be a great help in paying back our generous backers!" Only when the crew succeeds in recouping the costs of the first ten episodes, through online sales, advertisements, sponsorship and donations, will they be able to continue making the series. And there is some good stuff to look forward to. On the topic of airships for instance Kiff reminds us that in Episode 2, over Amara's right shoulders, we can spot two at dock. "We hope to be inside one sooner than later!"

"Steampunk is such a beautiful and inspiring world," concludes Kiff, "and I've yet to see an episodic, mainstream series incorporate it." With *Riese*, we are one great leap closer to that. ■

"We're blending Norse mythology, pre-apocalyptic eeriness, and an almost fascist environment."

Photos courtesy of Riese Productions Ltd.



REVIEW RAGNOROK ALOFT

A comparative review of The Angel of the Revolution and H.G. Wells' The War in the Air.

THE FOUR DECADES BETWEEN the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War were a golden age for speculative armed conflict. The decaying international environment in Europe, with its yearly crises and eternal arms races, combined with militarized national cultures and an expanding literate middle class to create an audience ready to be enthralled with tales of futuristic conflict between the greater powers of the continent. While early speculations about the nature of "the next great war" tended to be prosaic accounts of invasion and experimental weaponry, the rise of the serialized magazine in the 1890s saw the emergence of new stories that used the future wars as a setting for breathless technological adventures.

Today, the majority of these stories have fallen into obscurity, surviving only in secondary sources. Indeed, the only prophet of future war who survived his epoch was H.G. Wells, a writer whose work embraced a far different worldview than that of his colleagues. To illuminate this divergence in

outlook, one can profitably compare Wells' 1908 work, *The War in the Air*, with 1893's *The Angel of the Revolution*, an earlier work by contemporary writer George Griffith.¹ On the surface, both stories draw from the same wells. Both were written by middle-class civilians for middle-class audiences.² Both stories revolve around the potential uses of air power in the conflict to come, as seen through the eyes of mechanically-minded young male protagonists. Below the superficialities of plot and setting, a fundamental difference emerges in the way Wells and Griffith handle their subject matter however.

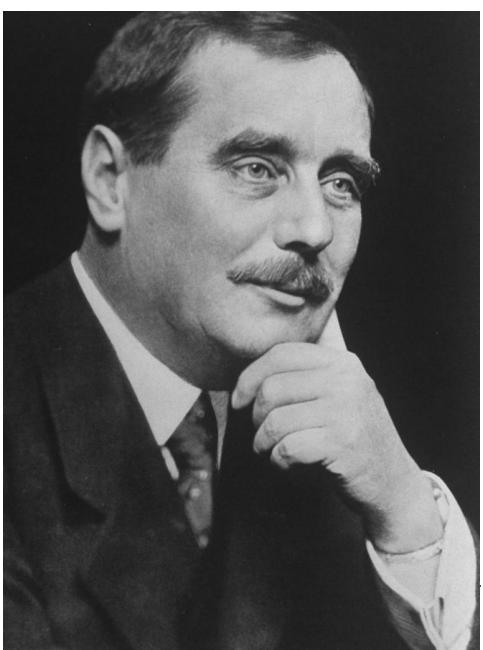
The Angel of the Revolution is a tale enshrined in the heart of pulp adventure. The story picks up in the glittering electrified London of 1903, with Richard Arnold, impoverished inventor of a fantastic type of aeroplane, trudging the streets at night bemoaning his fate. In accordance with the iron laws of adventure, he soon encounters a mysterious well-heeled gentleman who cryptically promises to solve all his woes. A few short chapters later, Arnold is inducted into a terrorist cell of "nihilists" fighting injustice, deprivation, and the encroaching tentacles of the Russian autocracy. Thanks to the traditionally deep pockets of revolutionary organizations, the nihilists soon construct a working prototype of Arnold's aircraft. From here the plot shifts into high gear, with jaunts to

Siberia to rescue captured love interests, the exploration of a hidden plateau in Africa and its transformation into the cradle of a new "Aerian" society, and the outbreak of war between the Anglo-Teutonic Alliance and the Franco-Slavonian League. While a new Russian armada of aerostats initially spells disaster for the Protestant powers, the outcome is never in doubt. Though the Russians storm the gates of London, they are held back by the power of the Aerian airships. As the story draws to a close, Tsar Alexander III is frogmarched to Siberia in chains, world peace is assured by the creation of an "Anglo-Saxon Federation" under the benign aegis of the Aerians, and half the cast marries the other half.

As read from the perspective of the early twentieth century, *The Angel of the Revolution* remains a product of its time. From a strictly technical standpoint, the story is rubbish. None of the characters emerge as distinctive personalities in their own right, and the plot suffers excessive padding. Pages are spent dwelling on Arnold and his associates as they negotiate their impending matrimony, and there is a whole subplot concerning the theft of an Aerian airship by tsarist agents that meanders along with no purpose beyond protracting the conclusion. As a prognostication of futuristic warfare, the story is similarly lacking. While the geopolitical world of 1903 that Griffith constructs is a fairly plausible prediction someone from 1893 would make, all pretense of realism goes out the window once



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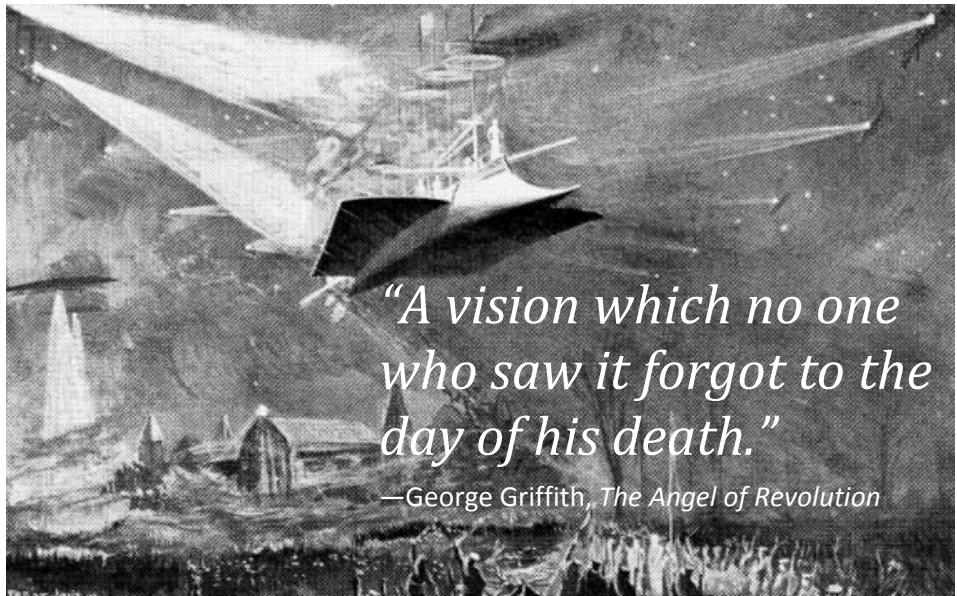


¹ For a look at some of Griffith's other work, consult Issue #5 of this magazine (March 2009).

² *War* was first serialized in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, while *Angel* made its debut in *Pearson's Magazine*.

the war begins. Most of the action of the book revolves around the seeming invincibility of Arnold's airships (perhaps best described as a sort of tri-rotored fuselage with heavy guns). In encounter after encounter with the Russian Army, the Russian Aerostat Fleet, and the Franco-Italian Navy, among others, the Aerians are the unquestioned masters of war, flying hundreds of miles at a time without refueling, hiding out of the reach of any possible counterattack, crushing all who stand before them with high-powered artillery. While there are a few passages in the book discussing the effects of modern war (particularly the scenes depicting the Russian assaults on Berlin and London), there is no sense that the action in the story should be taken as anything other than good martial fun exercised against a despicable foe.

Amidst all the cliché-und-drang, a modern reader may be forgiven for asking what Griffith's intentions were in writing *Angel*. On one level,



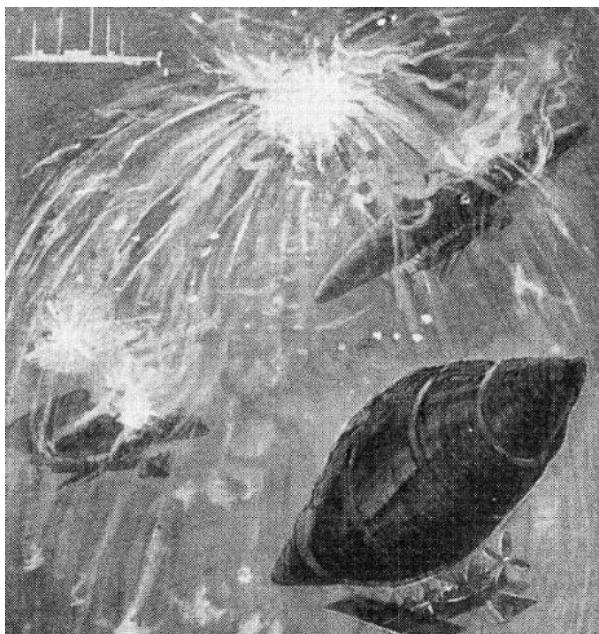
*"A vision which no one
who saw it forgot to the
day of his death."*

—George Griffith, *The Angel of Revolution*

there is something of a definite sympathy for the ideals of the nihilist/Aerians in the text. As noted by Michael Moorcock and Barbara Arnett Melchiori, the story embraces a sort of primitive socialist message, with its opposition to oppression and the vagaries of capitalism, the latter of which tended to be expressed in a crude anti-Americanism. At the same time, the book exudes a sort of racial chauvinism that is hard to overlook. World peace is assured by the dominance of an Anglo-Saxon (though not exclusively English) world state, though rumors of a silent conflict between "Buddhist" and "Islamic" civilization ending in a Muslim "victory" are implied to pose a potential threat to the West in the future. Perhaps most distressing of all is the story's attitude towards the Russians, which seems to veer from strident anti-tsarism into sadistic hatred. The most jarring example of this occurs about a quarter of the way

through the story, when the main characters, en route to a Siberian jailbreak by airship, decide to stop at St Petersburg and obliterate the naval base at Kronstadt. While intended as a symbolic blow against autocratic evil, no real motivation is given for the attack, and the barely-concealed glee the narrative takes in the sudden destruction of a naval base in peacetime appears nauseating to modern eyes. At heart, *The Angel of The Revolution* is a military fantasy, one that, like the worst of modern pulp, does not demand that its heroes or characters pay any price for their actions.

Compared to Griffith's work, the cynicism of Wells' comes across as a breath of fresh air. Unlike *Angel*, *The War in the Air* is from start to finish a serious attempt to imagine the effect of air power on warfare. In Wells' future (never precisely dated, but assumed to occur some time between 1913 and 1920), the secret of powered flight rests not in the hands of a few charismatic terrorists or a single scheming autocrat, but as a generally held principle that several nations are furiously researching and integrating into their war plans,



*"The rain of fire spread
out far and wide."*

—George Griffith, *The Angel of Revolution*

in a manner that bears a passing resemblance to the naval arms race of the pre-WWI era. With the rise in air power, new nations have come to the fore; Wells posits a near-future world dominated by Germany, America, a Sino-Japanese alliance, and the steadily declining British Empire. Imperialism has continued to stoke the fires of international strife, with fault lines now stretching into Latin America and East Asia.

A window into this world-about-to-boil is provided by the unlikely figure of bicycle enthusiast Bert Smallways. A native of Bun Hill, a steadily industrializing exurb of London, his main thoughts consist of finding a job and wooing the girl across the street. Already an incongruous character to occupy center stage in a riveting tale of aerial combat, Bert's unsuitability for his role is underlined by his chronic inability to understand anything that happens in the world around him, never mind control it. Early on, however, it becomes quite clear that this is deliberate. *The War in the Air* is not a pulp adventure; it is a documentary of the Fall of Man, with Bert Smallways as the cameraman.

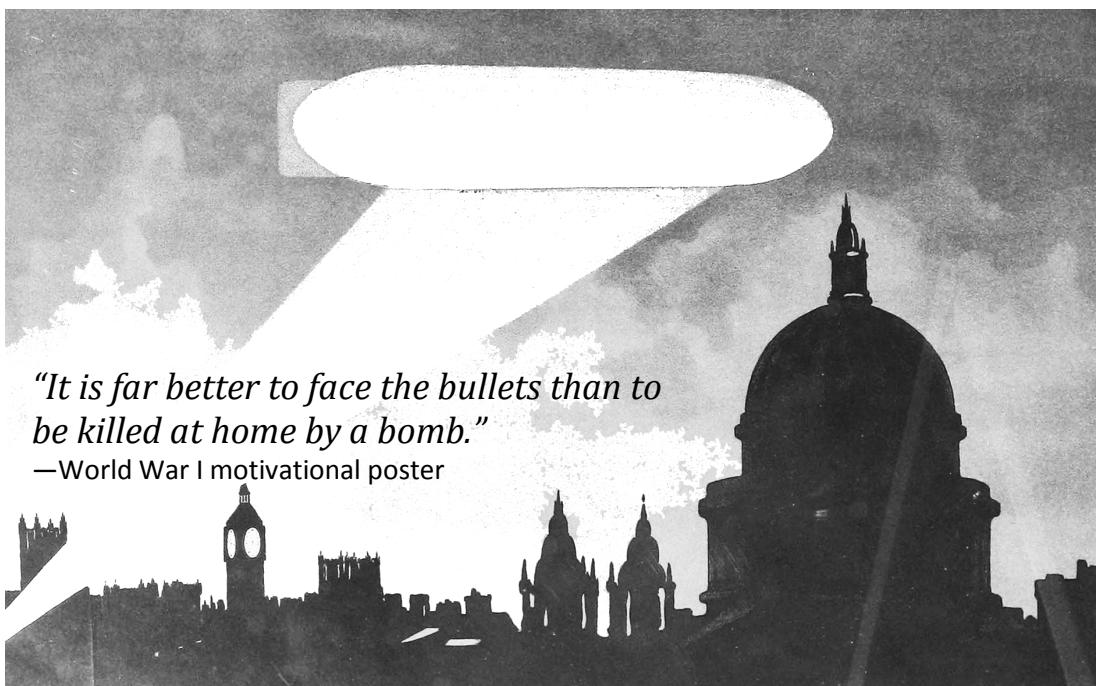
Initially, the story stays fairly close to the tropes of adventure fiction. Through an acceptably implausible set of circumstances, Bert accidentally ends up absconding with a famous inventor's hot air balloon, setting himself to drift east over the Channel into Germany. After drifting over a zeppelin field in outside Frankfurt, he is brought down, mistaken for the

inventor, installed in the quarters of the German flagship, and carried aloft as the fleet prepares to assault New York and force the Americans to accede to Berlin's demands in Latin America. The only action Bert encounters is a successful sortie against the American fleet in the Atlantic, an event that hints at darker acts to come.

It is upon the German air armada's arrival in Manhattan that the "adventure" aspect of Wells' novel curdles. The Germans quickly force the city to surrender after a brief, savage flurry of bombs. However, in the clearest break yet with stories like *The Angel of the Revolution*, air superiority does not win the war. Rather, with no troops to enforce order, the people of New York renege on their initial surrender and counterattack the German fleet, prompting the Germans to retaliate with the obliteration of Manhattan Island. As the world descends into the maelstrom, reports of similar scenes playing out in Berlin, Paris, London, and countless cities the world over filter through the narrative.

After the immolation of New York, the story disconcertingly begins to adopt the characteristics of the classic post-apocalyptic narrative. Bert's zeppelin is brought down by a marauding Sino-Japanese air fleet over Niagara Falls, trapping him on an island with no food, two German officers and a wrecked Sino-Japanese ornithopter. There is a trek back through ruined landscapes and lost souls struggling with a technology that can no longer serve them. Civilization passes back into medieval squalor and brutality. As the book closes, there is a conversation, familiar to anyone who ever read a story set after a nuclear war, between a grandparent that miserably remembers civilization, and a grandson that views his elder's story as an account of a lost mythical age.

The War in the Air is not without its flaws. Much of the book is given over to authorial lectures in the folly of man, generally written in the sort of hectoring tone that made Wells' future works, particularly *The Shape of Things to Come*, nigh unreadable. War, nationalism, and



imperialism (as personified in the fictional figure of Crown Prince Karl Albert, commander of the expedition against New York) are not so much depicted as hammered into the reader as shortsighted, stupid ideas that are incompatible with modern technological society, which is quietly implied to run best as a sort of autocratic world-state. Some aspects of Wells' military speculation also fail to follow through, particularly in the absence of anti-aircraft weapons and troop transport. In Wells' future, as in Griffith's, air power is still the ultimate force in battle. However, as the Wells' final world war shows, air

power is a force that is bound tightly to the rules of geopolitics and military production, and is incapable of guaranteeing victory for anyone.

It is this lesson that separates and elevates *The War in the Air* from stories like *The Angel of the Revolution*. Despite Griffith's nods to social commentary, his story is at hard an adventure romp, and as such can make whatever sacrifices it needs to the demands of spectacle. (This trend can be observed in the 1894 sequel *Olga Romanoff*, an adventure set in 2030 that involves, among other things, a ex-Romanov princess hell-bent on revenge, mind-

control potions, a submarine battle in the Antarctic, the Russo-Islamic conquest of Europe, and the obliteration of most of mankind by a "fire cloud"). Strip away the adventure and there really isn't that much to the book. Wells, despite his flaws, used his fiction to address larger issues, to stand against the prevailing mood of his time and call on humanity to aspire to more than mere savagery and destruction. It is this attempt to warn humanity of its ills, a practice that is found in all of Wells' best works, that sets him apart from pulpists like Griffith, and make his books of wars never fought still relevant today. ■

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