



## Steampunk II: Steampunk Reloaded

*Ann VanderMeer (Editor) , Jeff VanderMeer (Editor) , G.D. Falksen (Contributor) , Gail Carriger (Contributor) , Cherie Priest (Contributor) , Daniel Abraham (Contributor) , Caitlín R. Kiernan (Contributor) , Stephen Baxter (Contributor) , more... Evelyn Kriete (Contributor) , James L. Grant (Contributor) ...less*

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Blending the romantic elegance of the Victorian era with modern scientific advances, the popular Steampunk genre spotlighted in this collection is innovative and stimulates the imagination. This artfully assembled anthology of original fiction, nonfiction, and art can serve as an introduction to the Steampunk culture or provide dedicated fans with more fuel. Stories of outlandishly imaginative technologies, clockwork contraptions, eccentric heroines, and mad scientists are complemented by canon-defining nonfiction and an array of original illustrations. This collection showcases the most sensational Steampunk talents of the last decade, including Daniel Abraham, John Coulthart, William Gibson, and Margo Lanagan, and demonstrates exactly why the future of the past is so excitingly new.

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"The Unblinking Eye" by Stephen Baxter

"Lovelace & Babbage" by Sydney Padua

"The Persecution Machine" by Tanith Lee

"Flying Fish (Prometheus)" by Vilhelm Bergsøe

"The Gernsback Continuum" by William Gibson

## Steampunk II: Steampunk Reloaded Details

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# **From Reader Review Steampunk II: Steampunk Reloaded for online ebook**

## **Amanda says**

Better by far than the first anthology in the set, in spite of doubling up on a story also featured in the Extraordinary Engines anthology edited by Nick Gevers.

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## **Juli says**

I enjoyed this collection.

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## **Stutley Constable says**

I admit, I am fairly new to Steampunk, but I was under the impression that it was a genre of adventure, science, romance and mystery. What I got from this book was a mix of those elements, but generally in a very boring package.

The ideas behind the stories were imaginative enough, but the execution of most of them was dull and lifeless. Some of the stories had no clear link to Steampunk at all. They were more in line with fantasy, and not particularly interesting fantasy.

I was also under the impression that a writer of Steampunk would have an understanding of machinery and the properties of metal and other things related to the Victorian mind set. No, I did not expect a minute technical understanding of metallurgy. But a passing knowledge of what things are made of would have been a good start for a few of the authors who contributed their work to this book.

If you want something to put you to sleep at night, buy this book. There are a couple stories in it worth reading, but don't expect much in the way of a page turner.

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## **Debbie Zapata says**

I ordered this book in a fit of indulgence a couple of years ago, along with a lot of other titles from Thriftbooks. I had never intentionally read steampunk before, but had heard about it and decided this would be a painless introduction.

Well, turned out to be not so painless. Of the 26 stories in this volume, only five held my attention to the end. The others would either be too weird for me to start with or else lost my interest after a few pages. I skimmed the first pages of those other 21 stories, but just couldn't get myself to finish any of them.

Of the five I did finish, Wild Copper by Samantha Henderson was my favorite, with The Cast-Iron Kid by Andrew Knighton a close second.

I'm glad I tried the book, but I'm also glad to put it away. Maybe someday I'll give it another try. I might need to be in the proper mood, who knows.

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### **Grady McCallie says**

Somehow, this took me a long time to work my way through. None of the stories were terrible, and some were great. My favorites included: Shweat Narayan, *The Mechanical Aviary of Emperor Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar*; Stephen Baxter, *The Unblinking Eye* (which ends inconclusively within the world of the story, but with a great reveal for the reader); and Margaret Ronald, *A Serpent in the Gears*. At least the first two of these, strictly speaking, reach well beyond steampunk into fantasy, or alternate history; and what makes each so effective is that it has a strong and interesting story/idea at the core. Other stories suffer from the characteristic flaw of weak steampunk - distinctive Victorian trappings, but no heart. One of the last stories in the book, Vilhelm Bergsoe, *Flying Fish Prometheus*, is reminiscent of a Jules Verne (mis-)adventure. First published in Danish in 1870, and translated into English for the first time in this collection, it compares favorably with the rest of the stories by living authors.

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### **Fleece says**

really hit and miss and the essays are infuriating

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### **Cindy Matthews says**

Steampunk II: Steampunk Reloaded is a good anthology as far as anthologies go, but not all its stories are equal. The inequalities are evident both in entertainment value and even in meeting the very definition of being an actual steampunk story. A rather surprising inclusion is a recently translated piece written in 1870 by Danish author Vilhelm Bergsoe. "The Flying Fish Prometheus" is by far the best of the group. It truly has every element in it that a steampunk story should have--including the Victorian values and social structure along with the wildly creative steam tech. Stories by Cherie Priest of "Boneshaker" fame, G.D. Falksen and Tanith Lee are also outstanding. Artwork that includes "Lovelace and Babbage" and essays on what exactly is the steampunk movement are also strong offerings. A good intro into the genre for those who have stumbled into steampunk through fashion or other creative endeavor.

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### **Andrea Blythe says**

Steampunk Reloaded is a rather good collection of steampunk tales. It has it's ups and downs, but overall the stories are enjoyable. Along with the stories, there are a couple of interesting non-fiction pieces and a round-table interview about the future of steampunk.

Here are a few of the stories that I especially enjoyed:

-- In "The Unblinking Eye" by Stephen Baxter, Europe has advanced steam technology, but has never

ventured toward the new world. Rather it is the Incas, who have developed their own advanced technology, and have ventured into lands unknown, colonizing each new territory they come across. come to pay Europe a visit.

-- Caitlin R. Kiernan tells the story of a maimed young woman, who has been outfitted with steam-powered limbs in "The Steam Dancer."

-- "The Mechanical Aviary of Emperor Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar" by Shweta Narayan, presents a new take on a traditional folktale, involving the beautiful clockwork birds of the Emperor's aviary.

-- "Wild Copper" by Samantha Henderson can barely be labeled steampunk genre. It's more of a fairy story, in which a girl offers to serve Oberon to save her brother. Steampunk or not, this is still a great tale.

-- An lonely orphan builds himself a mechanical friend in "Tanglefoot (A Clockwork Century Story)" by Cherie Priest. But his souless begins to take on a life of its own.

-- "The Anachronist's Cookbook" by Catherynne Valente rails against the accepted politics of a steampowered era as it presents the exploits of an angry and vicious young woman.

While there were a couple of stories that I was not a fan of (i.e., "A Secret History of Steampunk" by The Mecha-Ostrich and "Flying Fish Prometheus" by Vilhelm Bergsøe), overall I enjoyed this collection of steampunk fiction and art.

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## **Suzanne Lazear says**

I don't give stars or ratings, that's just the way my reviews are, but that doesn't mean the book isn't great.

The award-winning editorial team Ann & Jeff Vandermeer does it again with their sequel to their original Steampunk anthology. "Steampunk II: Steampunk Reloaded" brings together a triumvirate of Steampunk spectacularness — original fiction, reprinted short stories, and non-fiction.

The twenty-seven stories and articles represent a broad cross-section of Steampunk by some of the best in the genre. "Tanglefoot" by Cherie Priest is a Clockwork Century story. There are also stories by G.D. Falksen ("The Strange Case of Mr. Salad Monday) and Tanith Lee ("The Persecution Machine").

Besides the usual stories and "What is Steampunk" articles there's a couple of unusual pieces that add depth and spark to an already good anthology. "Ada Lovelace: The Origins" by Sydney Padua is a delightful alternate history comic. "The Secret History of Steampunk" by The Mecha-Ostrich and Catherynne M. Valente's "The Anachronist's Cookbook" also make for interesting reading.

My favorite story isn't actually a fiction piece, but Gail Carriger's non-fiction article "Which is Mightier, the Pen or the Parasol?"

This is a well put together anthology suited for both lovers of Steampunk and those new to the genre. The cover is beautiful and the anthology as a whole is artful, from the incredible illustrations to the advertisements in the back. Even the designs around the page numbers and title fonts add to the ambiance and aesthetic, pulling the whole anthology together in a way that makes it more than a mere collection of stories.

Link to review: <http://ageofsteam.wordpress.com/2010/...>

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## **Susan says**

I requested this Steampunk II at the library in order to read one story within it, "The Strange Case of Mr. Salad Monday" by G. D. Falksen, and ended up reading beyond Mr. Falksen. Steampunk is a difficult genre to define (is it even a "genre"?) and this book only confirmed how difficult it really is. Science fiction meets Victoriana, with Egyptology, alternate history, and many other odd bits stirred in here and there. The writing that captured me the most included whimsy or a touch of The Twilight Zone. One story blended Pacific NW Native American folklore with the faery kingdom. Oberon and Titania in exile near Puget Sound. Wow.

Anthologies can be a mixed bag. Steampunk II: Steampunk Reloaded was most assuredly a mix but I enjoyed it. It was a good introduction to the many sides of steampunk short-story fiction.

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## **Dan Sihota says**

I have never really been a big fan of science fiction or fantasy, and it wasn't until I began reading ebooks that I first heard of the genre known as "steampunk". I was curious to read something in this genre, and quite a few people recommended a good place to start would be by reading one of the anthologies edited by the husband and wife team, Ann and Jeff VanderMeer, so when I came across a copy of this book, I decided to give it a go.

The best thing about anthologies, with so many stories to choose from, is that you're bound to find something you enjoy. On the downside, there are going to be stories you enjoy a little less. I won't review each story individually, just to say that it's a nice good mix of stories which I enjoyed reading.

On the downside, I didn't enjoy the non-fiction pieces, I'm not even sure they were even relevant, and the last story in the collection, "The Mecha-Ostrich: A Secret History of Steampunk", which is over twice the length of a typical short story, I found to be a little too long, especially for something I didn't find particularly interesting.

I'm not sure what fans of steampunk will make of this collection, but for someone like me, someone with little prior knowledge of this genre, this is a book well worth reading.

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## **Shel says**

Some I loved, some I could have done without. A collection worth reading, if steampunk interests you. I

quite enjoyed the two nonfiction essays at the end, as well.

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## **Debra says**

Solid steampunk fiction--even better than the first one, in my opinion! My faves are: "Machine Maid" by Margo Lanagan; "The mechanical aviary of Emperor Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar" by Shweta Narayan; "A serpent in the gears" by Margaret Ronald; and "The strange case of Mr. Salad Monday" by G. D. Falksen. But it's all solid! A MUST read for any steampunk fan.

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## **David Brawley says**

2.5 stars

The more steampunk I read, the more I become convinced that it does not deserve to be considered its own genre. This collection, which seems to have been put together as an attempt to show that it is its own thing, and in the process manages to do exactly the opposite. A diverse collection, spanning all sorts of genres, where the only thing linking them together is the Victorian ascetic, and even that sometimes feels totally unnecessary and even tacked onto what would otherwise have been a fine story.

While there were a couple of good stories in this too long collection, they were vastly overwhelmed by far too much drek in desperate need of editing.

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## **Stefan says**

Steampunk II: Steampunk Reloaded is the second steampunk anthology edited by Ann and Jeff VanderMeer, following 2008's first installment. It contains about twice as many stories as its predecessor, but unlike the first collection the quality is more uneven here, resulting in a less impressive but still fascinating anthology that should please fans of the genre.

While the first anthology only contained one story I was less than happy with, there are at least four or five in Steampunk II: Steampunk Reloaded that I could have done without. There are also a few stories here that are at best marginally connected to steampunk, although that probably depends more on how you define steampunk. After all, there are probably as many definitions of steampunk as there are readers. Maybe the best way to define the genre is simply not to, instead following the famous old "definition" of obscurity: "I know it when I see it."

Still, even if you go by that rule, "The Gernsback Continuum" by William Gibson, while a brilliant story that everyone should read, hardly feels like steampunk, unless you consider "any story that imposes science fiction tropes on an earlier period of history" a valid definition. Regardless, it's hard to complain about a story that's so famous and so excellent. Another example of a great story that seems to be at best peripheral to steampunk is Stephen Baxter's "The Unblinking Eye," which feels more like an elaborate alternate history that happens to have airships in it. Similarly, "The Unbecoming of Virgil Smythe" by Ramsey Shehadeh is a quirky and highly entertaining story that mixes Murder on the Orient Express with trans-dimensional aliens, but if it didn't happen to be set on a steam train, I doubt anyone would even consider it as steampunk. Still, all three of these stories are excellent, whatever subgenre you stick them in.



Other highlights of the collection that feel more authentically steampunk are Jeffrey Ford's "Dr. Lash Remembers," about a steam-borne plague affecting the sufferers' perception of reality, and Caitlín R. Kiernan's "The Steam Dancer (1896)," a beautifully written, melancholy tale about a dancer made whole by steam-driven technology.

My single favorite story in this collection is Margo Lanagan's "Machine Maid," a steampunk story that feels like a true period piece aside from the steam-powered automata. It features an awkward but unforgettable protagonist and some of the best writing in the collection.

Another excellent story is "As Recorded on Brass Cylinders: Adagio for Two Dancers" by James L. Grant and Lisa Mantchev, describing the meeting of two relics of the steam age in a modern mall. It almost feels like a steampunk version of Kage Baker's *COMPANY* universe. While it lays on the emotion a bit too heavily at times, it's a gorgeous, touching story that employs many of the standard themes and devices of the genre but still comes out looking and feeling original.

A true gem, appearing towards the end of the collection, is Catherynne M. Valente's "The Anachronist's Cookbook." Its protagonist — who puts the "punk" back in steampunk in a big way — resembles a Victorian version of Richard K. Morgan's Quellrist Falconer. Also riffing on the political side of steampunk, but entirely on the opposite end of the scale in terms of seriousness, is G.D. Falksen's "The Strange Case of Mr. Salad Monday," a fun story about a steampunk version of the blogosphere and an intrepid detective trying to catch a suspected socialist dissident.

Cherie Priest contributes "Tanglefoot," a story set in the same world as her *CLOCKWORK CENTURY* books, but despite its charm, the story unfortunately goes on a bit too long for my taste. More successfully, Daniel Abraham delivers "The Adventure of the Emperor's Vengeance", a solid and entertaining story about Balfour and Meriwether, two agents of the British Empire attempting to stop a curse from the past.

Closing out the fiction portion of the anthology is one of the strangest stories I've read in years, "A Secret History of Steampunk" by a collection of writers and artists working under the pseudonym "The Mecha-Ostrich." It reads somewhat as if Jeff VanderMeer were being remixed by a handful of authors, or possibly vice versa. It cleverly connects to several other stories in the collection, and while it's not entirely successful, it's definitely innovative and unique.

The final section of the collection offers two non-fiction pieces about the non-literary side of steampunk (about fashion and the DIY/Maker culture, respectively) and a brief "Roundtable" interview about the future of steampunk. This section makes the anthology relevant not just as collection of stories but as a snapshot of an entire subculture, as does the artwork, which is one of the only aspects where *Steampunk II: Steampunk Reloaded* has the upper hand over its otherwise stronger predecessor. There are a few neat Terry Gilliam-circa-1970-style illustrations mixed into the book, and the Mecha-Ostrich story features some especially gorgeous artwork.

*Steampunk II: Steampunk Reloaded* is another strong collection of stories from a subgenre that seems to be gaining in popularity every single day. If not for a handful of entries that bring the overall quality of the collection down, this would be another unqualified winner. If you're new to the genre, I'd still recommend picking up the earlier *Steampunk* anthology first, but this second collection contains enough excellent stories to make it worth your time if you want to dig a little deeper.

(This review was also published on 11/16/2010 on [www.fantasyliterature.com](http://www.fantasyliterature.com))

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