

Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

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Steampunk

(_estetikk) Ordet er lagd som en parallell til “cyberpunk”. Estetikken er basert på retro-scenarier fra den industrielle revolusjon på 1800-tallet (Rauscher 2012 s. 227). Steampunk-verk er inspirert av teknikk og samfunn på dampmaskinens tidsalder. Slik verk inngår i det som har blitt kalt “retro-futurist aesthetics” (Harrigan og Wardrip-Fruin 2009 s. 379) og “the Victorian science-fiction aesthetic now called steampunk” (Patrick Barkham i <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/29/sp-bryan-talbot-grandville-father-of-british-graphic-novel>; lesedato 05.09.16).

Innen litteratur er steampunk en hybridsjanger, en blanding av fantasy, science fiction og historisk roman. Handlingen foregår vanligvis i viktoria-tiden og teknologien er mekanisk enkel (dampmaskiner, urverk o.l.). Det brukes ikke elektrisitet eller bensin. Verkene er ny-viktoriaanske, en viktoriaansk fantasy. Steampunk kan være både romaner, tegneserier, filmer m.m. *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (1999) er en steampunk-tegneserie av Alan Moore og Kevin O’Neill. Forfatteren og musikeren Paul Shapera har produsert *The Dolls of New Albion: A Steampunk Opera* (2012).

Steampunk er retrofuturistisk, og “retrofuturism is the way *the present* imagines the past seeing the future” (Mike Perschon i http://www.purespec.org/downloads/Perschon_Editorial_Summer2012.pdf; lesedato 11.06.13). Verkene viser en både fortidig og framtidig tekno-kulturell verden (en “hva om”-verden). De viser “What the past would look like if the future had happened sooner” (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/>; lesedato 10.06.13). I likhet med science fiction kan verkene romme en blanding av dystopi og utopi.

Steampunk kan oppfattes primært som en stil og en estetikk, snarere enn en sjanger. “Steampunk is a hard subgenre to evaluate since the decision to classify a novel as steampunk often relates to aesthetics and may have little to do with the overall plot or feel of the novel. Thus, most steampunk novels fit into other genres as well, such as steampunk-romance, steampunk-adventure, steampunk-mystery, dark-steampunk and so on.” (<http://www.rantingdragon.com/>; lesedato 18.04.13)

Steampunk er “usually set in an anachronistic Victorian or quasi-Victorian alternate history setting. It could be described by the slogan “What the past would look like if the future had happened sooner.” It includes fiction with science fiction, fantasy

or horror themes. [...] Steampunk is a subgenre of fantasy and speculative fiction that came into prominence in the 1980s and early 1990s. The term denotes works set in an era or world where STEAM POWER is still widely used – usually the 19th century, and often set in Victorian era England – but with prominent elements of either science fiction or fantasy, such as fictional technological inventions like those found in the works of H. G. Wells and Jules Verne, or real technological developments like the computer occurring at an earlier date. Other examples of steampunk contain alternate history-style presentations of “the path not taken” of such technology as dirigibles or analog computers; these frequently are presented in an idealized light, or a presumption of functionality. [...] [Steampunk kan også være et] lifestyle choice, wherein the participants embrace deliberate anachronism and quasi-anachronism as seen in steampunk fiction. Often characterized by modifying one's electronic gadgets to make them look a century out-of-date. [...] A type of subculture that mixes the clothing styles of past generations (such as the Victorian era) with modern conveniences, creating inventions that look as if they could have been created generations ago.” (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/>; lesedato 11.04.13)

“Steampunk = Mad Scientist Inventor [invention (steam x airship or metal man/ baroque stylings) x (pseudo) Victorian (or Edwardian) settings] + progressive or reactionary politics x adventure plot.” (Jeff VanderMeer sitert fra <http://www.nypl.org/blog/2013/05/16/steampunk-introduction-teens>; lesedato 19.06.13)

Den britiske forfatteren Sharon Gosling har uttalt: “For me, steampunk is the plucky adventurousness of Victorian sensibilities re-imagined with extra, fantastical machinery. It's an attempt to see what would have happened if that era could have been even more plucky and adventurous than it already was.” (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/childrens-books-site/2013/feb/28/sharon-gosling-top-10-childrens-steampunk-books>; lesedato 10.06.13)

“As a vehicle for storytelling, the steampunk ethos can be applied to any time and any place – Wild West steampunk, American Civil War steampunk, future history steampunk – but wherever and whenever you place it, its roots are set firmly in the technology, social divisions, fashions, mannerisms and culture of post 1850 Victorian England. The iconic machinery of that age was – and still is – a symbol of strength, hope and ambition. It was powering the Victorians into a bright future. For the educated classes, it promised the spread – and thus an affirmation – of their cultural values (of “civilisation”). For the working classes, it hinted at a possible future release from the backbreaking drudgery of labour – for surely machines would do all the ugly, horrible, uninteresting jobs? [...] Steam technology was not exclusive. It represented a shared vision. Every class of citizen could engage with it, because it was so blatant. The boilers and furnaces, the pipes and valves, the pistons and crankshafts, the funnels and wheels – every part of every engine was visibly working to advance the Empire to which the people belonged.” (Mark

Hodder i <http://booktionary.blogspot.no/2010/10/steampunk-spirit-of-time-by-mark-hodder.html>; lesedato 22.02.13)

“Steampunk rejects the twenty-first century in part, in that it dislikes the anonymity of science and technology and the carelessness of costuming that characterizes most fashions today. But steampunk is at the same time a thoroughly modern phenomenon if only because what we cherish is optimism and progress. We long for the turn of the century (not the most recent one [dvs. år 1900, ikke år 2000]) because it was a time of invention and experiment. Everything seemed possible before the First World War so crushingly frustrated the ambitions of thinkers and tinkerers alike. Steampunk revives that nineteenth century mentality and mixes it with twenty-first century innovation. Steampunk’s charm is that very impossible combination of yesterday’s mindset and today’s knowledge and knowhow – in the broadest possible definition. So let’s not just look back. Let’s remember what made yesterday so great instead and built it anew.” (Nick Ottens i <http://www.ottens.co.uk/gatehouse/Gazette%20-%2018.pdf>; lesedato 26.03.13)

“[S]teampunk stories may:

- Take place in the Victorian era but include advanced machines based on 19th century technology (e.g. [romanen] *The Difference Engine* by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling);
- Include the supernatural as well (e.g. *The Parasol Protectorate* by Gail Carriger);
- Include the supernatural and forego the technology (e.g. *The Anubis Gates* by Tim Powers, one of the works that inspired the term ‘steampunk’);
- Include the advanced machines, but take place later than the Victorian period, thereby assuming that the predomination by electricity and petroleum never happens (e.g. *The Peshawar Lancers* by S. M. Stirling); or
- Take place in another world altogether, but featuring Victorian-like technology (e.g. *Mainspring* by Jay Lake).

[...] There are steampunk games (e.g. *Bioshock II*), steampunk graphic novels (e.g. *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*), and even steampunk movies (e.g. *Sherlock Holmes*) and TV shows (e.g. *Warehouse 13*). There is even steampunk music and steampunk performance art. [...] People has “steampunk’d” everything from computers, desks, telephone, watches and guitars to cars, motorcycles, and whole houses. These objects can vary from a grungy look of a forgotten antique to the shiny overwrought newness of a Victorian gentleman’s club. Think brass and copper, glass and polished wood, engraving and etching, and details for the sake of details. So, steampunk is also a design aesthetic. This aesthetic carries over into personal style with both clothing and jewelry being made in a “steampunk” style. The clothes are not exactly Victorian, adding in technological bits or hints of a

more adventurous life than a typical Victorian citizen likely enjoyed.” (<http://www.steampunk.com/what-is-steampunk/>; lesedato 22.02.13; kursiveringer av HR)

“Jules Verne: Grandfather of steampunk. No one will argue that Jules Verne, just like that other founding father of science fiction, H.G. Wells, is not just important to steampunk but somewhat of a hero to many steampunk enthusiasts. He was one of the first to write what would ultimately become steampunk [...] the world experienced unprecedented technological progress.” (Hilde Heyvaert i <http://www.ottens.co.uk/gatehouse/Gazette%20-%204.pdf>; lesedato 26.03.13)

På nettstedet <http://www.rantingdragon.com/> var det i april 2013 en liste over spesielt gode steampunk-bøker. De 7 første bøkene på lista:

“1. *The Anubis Gates* by Tim Powers (1983)

This multi-award-winning novel is considered one of the founding works of the subgenre. It takes first place on our list as a perfect entry point into steampunk by virtue of being both a classic and a highly accessible work much loved by fantasy and science fiction fans. *The Anubis Gates* is a dazzlingly imaginative tale with an eccentric cast of characters including an English Professor, an ancient Egyptian sorcerer, poet Lord Byron, and a werewolf with serious hair growth issues.

2. *The Diamond Age: Or, a Young Lady's Illustrated Primer* by Neal Stephenson (1995)

The Diamond Age is technically set in the future and should therefore probably be classified as post-cyberpunk, however it takes place in a neo-Victorian society and contains many elements typical of steampunk. The ‘Primer’ itself is a remarkable interactive book intended to educate aristocratic young ladies. However, what happens if this knowledge falls not into the hands of its intended audience, but finds its way to a street urchin in the city’s slums? The winner of both the Hugo and Locus awards, *The Diamond Age* is almost prescribed reading for any speculative fiction fan and a must for anyone seeking a well-rounded steampunk ‘education.’

3. *The Difference Engine* by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling (1990)

The Difference Engine is considered by many to be the foremost example of the steampunk subgenre and is therefore a must-read for any budding steampunk aficionado. The story takes place in an alternative 1855 London where not only is the industrial revolution in full swing, but the computer age has begun over a century earlier after the invention of a revolutionary analytical engine by mathematician Charles Babbage.

4. *Mortal Engines* by Philip Reeve (2001)

Another novel set in a neo-Victorian far future era, *Mortal Engines* is the first book in Reeve’s acclaimed quartet by the same name. A favorite for both young adult

and older readers, it is set in a post-apocalyptic world complete with roaming ‘traction cities’ and a strict social class structure. Municipal Darwinism is the order of the day, with larger cities hunting down and consuming smaller settlements for their resources. The starting line says it all, really – “It was a dark, blustery afternoon in spring, and the city of London was chasing a small mining town across the dried-out bed of the old North Sea.” A stunning tale of adventure, sinister plots and betrayal, *Mortal Engines* is possibly the most famous steampunk novel written in the last decade and begins what is considered by many to be one of the finest – if not the finest – steampunk series.

5. *Infernal Devices* by K. W. Jeter (1987)

A classic by the very man who coined the term ‘steampunk,’ *Infernal Devices* tells the story of George Dower, an idle young gentleman who has inherited his father’s watchmaking business despite having little inclination for clockwork. George, however, is blissfully unaware of the full extent of his father’s creations. This novel of Victorian London features automatons, fish people, time travel and sexual intrigue.

6. *Boneshaker* by Cherie Priest (2009)

Boneshaker is the first book in the award winning series *The Clockwork Century* by Cherie Priest, the ‘high priestess of steampunk’. Set in an alternative 1880’s America in the midst of civil war, *Boneshaker* is an engrossing and ultimately human tale involving a son’s quest to clear his father’s name and a mother’s quest to protect her son. Successfully combining elements of fantasy, science fiction, history and horror, *The Clockwork Century* series comes highly recommended. [...]

7. *Perdido Street Station* by China Mieville (2000)

Another award winner, *Perdido Street Station* is set in the strange world of Bas-Lag where thaumaturgy (magic) and steampunk technology coexist. This outrageously imaginative novel is a bit of a departure from more traditional steampunk, and is probably best defined as ‘weird fiction’. [...] Not all steampunk must be confined to Victorian London. Furthermore, this novel frequently appears in lists of the best science fiction and fantasy novels of all time.” (<http://www.rantingdragon.com/top-20-steampunk-books-an-introduction-to-the-genre/>; lesedato 18.04.13)

Amerikaneren Barry Sonnenfelds western-komedie *Wild Wild West* (1999) er et steampunk-verk. Handlingen er lagt til det ville vesten, ikke England. Briten Peter Lord animasjonsfilm *The Pirates! Band of Misfits* (2012) har tydelige steampunk-innslag, f.eks. med dronning Victorias luksuriøse oceandamper.

Leslie Anderson, Angela C. Castillo, Daniel Lind m.fl. publiserte i 2016 *Steampunk Fairy Tales*. “Written by authors from three different continents, every enchanting tale combines the futuristic Victorian concept of steam and fashion with memorable

stories, from the recognizable “Jack and the Beanstalk”, to other popular and unfamiliar works from Germany, France, Italy and Japan. With steam driven gadgets such as mechanical goggles, hoverboards, and an orchestra of automatons. Steampunk Fairy Tales is a charming and unique collection of works for current lovers of the genre, and those just diving in.” (<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/29630871-steampunk-fairy-tales>; lesedato 31.10.19)

“Steampunk is ... Reaction, Rebellion, Resolution. When people are first exposed to steampunk, they may read stories set in an alternative Victorian history, they may see movies filled with creatively designed if not primitive versions of modern technology, and they may see people in the real world wearing stylish if anachronistic clothing and using decoratively modified devices. [...] While the term ‘steampunk’ is a tongue-in-cheek reference to ‘cyberpunk’, coined by K.W. Jeter in 1987, and it is not the ‘punk’ of ‘punk rock’, it can be argued that all three have a similar basis of feeling and response. [...] Reaction: an idea evoked by some experience; a response that reveals a person’s feelings or attitude; doing something in opposition to another way of doing it that you don’t like; [...] Rebellion: refusal to accept some authority or code or convention; refusal of obedience or order; [...] Resolution: finding or being a solution to a problem; a decision to do something or to behave in a certain manner; resolute = firm in purpose or belief.” (Kevin Steil i <http://airshipambassador.wordpress.com/2010/04/18/steampunk-is-%E2%80%A6-reaction-rebellion-resolution/>; lesedato 16.04.13)

I litteratur og andre kunstarter finnes det en “ ‘punk’ attitude: a refusal to accept the world as presented, with a correlating desire to reshape it, and ultimately action to bring those envisioned changes to reality. Individuals with their independent ways and views, with a more encompassing or outsider attitude, and with a desire for something at least different if not more fulfilling, see how their own status quo is lacking or oppressive and seeks to make a change for themselves in their own lives for their own happiness. Punks test the limits of societal acceptability, confront conformity and complacency, and create jarringly unexpected new forms of expression.” (Kevin Steil i <http://airshipambassador.wordpress.com/2010/04/18/steampunk-is-%E2%80%A6-reaction-rebellion-resolution/>; lesedato 16.04.13)

Punk har et motkulturelt preg, og ofte dystopiske innslag.

“Punk constructed a whole aesthetic out of a reality of socioeconomic alienation and discrimination. This aesthetic did not merely show how and why dominant ideologies marginalize dispossessed strata of the population. In fact, it cultivated and magnified anything that mainstream culture would deem least savoury; it deliberately exaggerated the features that would make it the object of revulsion and aversion and intensify the establishment’s desire to outlaw it. Punk sought rejection with a self-destructive determination by defiantly constructing a simultaneously desecrated and self-desecrating subculture. Murky, earthy, scruffy, rough, hollowcheeked and chain-laden, versed in gutter-snipe registers and punctuated with symbolic ornaments replete with horrific connotations (such as the swastika), the average punk figure would instantly stand out as a *sinister* counterpart to the

glamorous and ostentatiously elegant rock stars of previous generations. Moreover, as Dick Hebdige observes, ‘the punk look was essentially undernourished: emaciation standing as a sign of Refusal. The prose of the fanzines was littered with references to “fat businessmen” and “lard-ass capitalists”.’ ” (Dano Cavallaro i http://is.muni.cz/www/175193/25476916/Cyberpunk_and_Cyberculture__Science_Fiction_and_the_Work.pdf; lesedato 06.05.13)

Den britiske forfatteren Philip Pullmans roman *Northern Lights* (1995; også kalt *The Golden Compass*) har noen steampunk-innslag, men disse ble langt tydeligere framhevet da den amerikanske regissøren Chris Weitz filmatiserte boka i 2007, med tittelen *The Golden Compass*. Weitz plasserer historien éntydig innen steampunk-estetikk. Steampunk-stilen fra boka blir forsterket gjennom det visuelle uttrykket i filmen.

“Gaslight Romance[:] There is a growing habit whereby almost every fantasy which deals with the Gaslight Period is labelled Steampunk. It is useful, though, to limit that term to what are in effect historical Technofantasies – to books which fit directly into the form developed by Tim Powers, K W Jeter and James P Blaylock from models derived by Michael Moorcock, Christopher Priest and others – books whose principal plot-driver is technological Anachronism. GR is accordingly our default term for Urban Fantasies (and other generic fictions) set in the high Victorian or Edwardian period, usually but not invariably in London; their tone is often melancholic and there is often an underlying sense of the transitoriness of imperial glory. Many GRs directly refer to the losses of innocence at the beginning of the period – through the American Civil War and the Indian Mutiny – or to the bloodletting of World War I at its end. Greyness, twilight and fog are more than local colour in GRs; they are its pervading metaphor. Both Steampunk and the GR can easily be set in Alternate Worlds; both can represent Fantasies of History. Recursive Fantasies featuring iconic figures from the gaslight era – Sherlock Holmes, Jekyll and Hyde, Dracula, H G Wells’s Time Traveller, G K Chesterton’s Man who was Thursday, Fu Manchu, etc. – are GRs. There are also a number of books – like Kim Newman’s Anno Dracula (1993), E L Doctorow’s The Waterworks (1994) and F Gwynplaine MacIntyre’s The Woman between the Worlds (1994) – which examine the period and its tropes with a modern or Postmodernist sensibility, rather than merely recycling the old tropes.” (http://sf-encyclopedia.uk/fe.php?nm=gaslight_romance; lesedato 17.08.20)

I tråd med steampunk-fenomenet finnes det dieselpunk, atompunk og solarpunk (oppkalt etter energikilder), men også cyberpunk (science fiction med cyberspace-tematikk).

Alle artiklene og litteraturlista til hele leksikonet er tilgjengelig på <https://www.litteraturogmedieleksikon.no>