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by

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**Airships and Angels:
Concept and Collaboration**

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Airships and Angels: Concept and Collaboration

by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the Montgomerys, the Wildenbergs, the Zehentmeiers, the Krumholts, and the Winship grads.

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I would like to thank my collaborators- Kristina Kumholt, Rudy Ramirez and Anthony Guillen.

I would also like to thank Michael Arthur for his generosity in taking me under his wing and showing me a different way to create work. I would like to thank Susan Mickey for all the support, especially in those early days. I'd like to thank my committee: William Bloodgood, Charlie Otte, and Richard Isackes for their patience and encouragement.

Abstract

Airship and Angels: Concept and Collaboration

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

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Airships and Angels is a faux Victorian travel journal created through collaboration with Kristina Krumholt and Rudy Ramirez. Ultimately, the goal of the thesis project is to disrupt traditional hierarchical creative processes by challenging the order in which artifacts are crafted during the creation of a narrative structure and, ultimately, a performance. The end product is a leather book that is shared in the manner of rare books (by appointment and in a controlled environment) for a week, and two special two-night readings with projected imagery at the end of the week.

In this process I first created concept art and the text was created afterwards by Krumholt. Once the text was complete the two artifacts were brought together and developed further. Eventually all the images were drawn and the book was printed, bound, and performed.

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CONCEPT

It wasn't until graduate school that I decided to think of myself as a performance artist and narrative designer. The skills I have gained provide me with a vocabulary through which to speak, but those skills are not my major interest. My interest is narrative structure. As I've gone through the process of creating this thesis, I find that my journey and my goals have been about trying to attain what automotive designer Freeman Thomas calls "good design." In an interview with the magazine Fast Company in 1999, Thomas states that: "Good design begins with honesty. Good design asks tough questions. Good design comes from collaboration. Good design comes from trusting your intuition" (Thomas). As someone who considers herself a narrative designer I've found that good narrative and good design are inextricable and ideally, they rise and develop simultaneously.

This project, while the primary focus was on "good design" was taken to a point of traditional performance. For the purpose of this paper, I will define "performance" as being an event that involves at least one viewer who was not a creator of the project and a performative act. A "performative act" can be an artifact or an event that implies an action. "Artifact" is terminology used to describe objects that are created during, and as a result of, a creative process that leads to a performance. More than just a by-product of a performance, artifacts are imbued with intent to be communicative and while they exist as milestones in a process that culminates in a performance, the artifacts are themselves performative acts because they imply further actions. A model implies a set, which implies a world and a narrative.

In the last century the creative process has been initiated more frequently by un-hierarchical collectives alongside the more traditional *auteur* models. Yet despite this change in hierarchy of artists, hierarchies still exist within the process itself in the assumption that certain elements must take precedence over others. In Aristotle's *Poetics* we see established an order, more appropriate for Greek tragedies than today's performances, that lists the elements of plot (narrative), character, thought (thematic content), diction (text), melody (music) and spectacle (visual elements, not limited to scenery) in descending order of importance to the creation of the performance. The theatre artists of the last century have worked extensively to challenge this ordering and as a result, Aristotle's ranking of elements is outdated. Today we know that effective performative events can be created that emphasize spectacle, character, or diction rather than plot. The purpose of this thesis is to challenge this pervasive system by disrupting the order in which the narrative and its incumbent documentation is generated. In essence, I am exploring the methodology of good design.

Since the goal of this project is to attempt to subvert traditional creation processes, I decided that the artifact's creation would begin with the creation of concept art followed by the creation of plot and text rather than the other way around. Concept art is meant to:

“convey a visual *representation* of a design, idea, and/or mood for use in films, video games, animation or comic books *before* it is put in the final product... it aims to convey the overall design vision...the purpose of the concept artist is to quickly explore ideas and communicate them as effectively as possible” (Pickthall).

By creating the imagery myself and having the plot and text created afterwards by Kristina Krumholt I hope to shift the perception of these artifacts from being markers in a process to being performative acts in their own right. In order to ensure that this process is protected Krumholt and I set up rules and created a structure in which we could work. We decided that, in order to keep the artifacts as powerful as possible that we would keep communication about our thoughts and our research to a minimum. We decided on New York City, Dublin and Paris as locations. Other than that we kept communication regarding the project to a minimum. Since our obligations did not allow for us to create the narrative and the design simultaneously, I believed that keeping our research and thinking behind the artifacts separate would prevent either artifact from becoming prescriptive. It is an alternative method dictated by schedule but a viable option in trying to challenge a traditional way of working.

I decided that I would give the imagery to Krumholt in a suggested order, which she could use or ignore as she saw fit. She also had the freedom to choose as many or as few of the drawings as she wanted, as well as the right to emphasize certain elements of drawings, or even request slight changes to drawings. These rules were put in place not only to prevent the imagery from being too prescriptive but to give my collaborator equal power in this process. Originally I was to hand over the drawings to Krumholt in August and she would return a first draft by January, at which time we would begin active collaboration to redraft and develop the text and imagery further. I intended to make more drawings once the text was submitted, in order to fill in any gaps that might occur,

but the concept art would form the basis of our world, which we decided would exist within the genre of science fiction.

In addition to being interested in narrative structure, I am drawn to science fiction as a genre of work. My work in graduate school does not fall under that descriptor but I still find it satisfying because it is shared with an audience. Everything a designer puts in front of an audience is inherently political because it presents a worldview – a set of choices, and a set of possibilities. Though not every act may be so grand as to unroot the paradigms of our time, our small choices, about who people are and what their values are, is communicated to an audience. One of the characters in an Umberto Eco novel Baudolino states: “there is nothing better than imagining other worlds...to forget the painful one we live in. At least so I thought then. I hadn’t yet realized that, imagining other worlds, you end up changing this one” (Eco). World creation is just as relevant a concept in fantastical or “realistic” worlds, and it is this manner of thinking that has allowed me to “ask tough questions.” While this character elegantly lauds the power of utopian world creation, exploration of dystopias can be just as fruitful.

Both Krumholtz and I decided to engage in this world creation within the sub-genre of steampunk, which is defined by as “a writer of science fiction which has a historical setting (esp. based on industrialized, nineteenth-century society) and characteristically features steam-powered, mechanized machinery rather than electronic technology” (Steam). We have found most of the things (since steampunk goes beyond literature to include fashion, television, film and music) that claimed to be steampunk to be largely neo-Victorian and nostalgic of all things British from that period. For myself, a

Black feminist, and for Krumholtz, a historian studying early empire in India, a straightforward nostalgic narrative was problematic. Steampunk as a genre is fertile ground for exploring utopic and dystopic visions since it is based in history and changes in the past we know, or think we know, would result in changes in our own world. Historical narratives that imply change in our world today are interesting for people like myself who view their work through a political lens.

Fictional historical narratives fall on a continuum from fantasy to allohistory. “Allohistory,” a term coined by historian Gavriel Rosenfeld, is used to describe: “counterfactual historical speculation” (Rosenfeld 90). A fictional historical narrative that leans towards fantasy is set in the past, can refer to some historical figures or events, but also must contain fantastical elements such as the presence of magic. On the other end of the spectrum is allohistory, which is highly “realistic”. Most allohistorical stories tend to be anchored to, what historian Gavriel Rosenfeld calls: “point[s] of divergence” which are pivotal points in history that: “have left their mark on the world of today and that continue to resonate in the present” (Rosenfeld 94). Regardless of where on the spectrum fictional historical narratives fall they are, as Rosenfeld argues for allohistory, “uniquely presentist. It explores the past less for its own sake than to utilize it instrumentally to comment upon the present” (Rosenfeld 93). For this spectrum we can also apply Rosenfeld’s categories of optimistic or pessimistic, wherein a fictional historical narrative either looks back at the past nostalgically because of an unhappiness with the present, or looks back at the past and highlights all things negative in order to glorify the present and the progress we’ve made from then, respectively. These two categories, represent the

poles on the spectrum of fictional historical narrative and as such they are inherently political.

The creative structure Krumholt and I agreed on, as well as the genre chosen, all served my interest in “good design.” I was honest about who I was and my interests and together with Krumholt I chose a structure that would not only allow us to work in a different way but also allowed us to explore themes that asked tough questions. I set up rules to allow my collaborator equal freedom, and though I never stopped questioning our process, I trusted the path we chose.

COLLABORATION

In the preparation stage of this process I travelled to all the places my collaborator and I had chosen for the project. One of my interests in exploring steampunk and empire is how to create a sense of “other” visually. It was my own personal challenge to see if I could relate the idea of foreignness and “other” through the drawings, which would be the eyes of the narrator. I decided that the best way to do this would be to travel and to keep my own journal where I could reflect and draw.

One of the major influences in the project is artist Michael Arthur. Arthur works in live performance and creates work live to accompany whatever other action is happening on stage. Often his drawings are projected above the performance so that the audience may enjoy them simultaneously with other parts of the performance. Arthur not only helped me break out of my comfort zone when it came to drawing, but demonstrated through his own work unhierarchical processes. The narrative in his work is created simultaneously with the combination of imagery and song in the performance. Though the end product is different, the process is precisely what I want for my own project.

By the time I returned from summer and had spent time in New York, Dublin, and Paris, I had drawn very little and missed the first deadline. In my travels I was driven by two questions, the first being: how do I share histories that have been forgotten? And the second, how do I honor a place’s history with allohistorical narrative? The first question arose in New York, when I learned that some Victorian workers unions included African Americans and women and were structures wherein workers were able to find incredible agency. There are so many stories that aren’t being told and though I initially thought the

project would be on the fantasy end of the spectrum, this discovery made me want to pursue allohistory. The second question was prompted by Dublin, where every museum included a history lesson about the struggle for Irish independence. I was concerned that picking a divergent moment in the Victorian age might diminish this fight. In the end I decided that I would honor this history by including an image of one of the symbols of this oppression: the British Black and Tans. As an answer to my first question I tried to break the rules and offered to send Krumholt my research, which she refused. When the time came, November 12th, she received only the 49 drawings, in a suggested order, and my travel journal.

Krumholt returned the first part of the text to me on January 18th, and the second part on February 11th. During the time she was writing it became apparent that she would not be able to include the Paris location in the time she had left. With the whole text submitted, it also became apparent that we could not begin a more collaborative period. I reworked and developed the first draft alone, while my collaborator was unavailable for question. It was during this time that I realized that Krumholt had created the world with a text of around 45,000 words and only 29 of the images I had made. I also found that she had ignored or changed the labeling and titling of images I had given her.

Time was short and a lot of drawings were still needed, so I began to work. Luckily, I had a breakthrough. I came across a book about the work of famed production designer Ken Adams. In the introduction Christopher Frayling has this to say about Adam's work:

“for him the point of art direction was to create an *idea* of place rather than a real place; that “realism” was in any case a style that changed with the times... he downplayed the precise delineations between draughtsman in favor of the dramatic intensity of the film-maker, and noted his own gravitation towards a more theatrical approach which was nearer drama and narrative than architecture. Merely imitating reality was a dull thing to do” (Adam 7)

This book was inspirational because, not only did it talk about designing and realism in a way that rang true, but also provided some insight into style. Frayling states this in the compilation of Adam’s work:

“The roughs and early drawings are particularly interesting, Nearly always in black and white, these bold expressive sketches are as much about light as about physical space, shaped with a broad wedge-shaped Flowmaster pen. They eliminate unnecessary details, have a strong vanishing point, and it is they – rather than technical drawings – that are Adam’s starting point. ‘This is’ he says, ‘something to do with the way my mind works’” (Adam 8).

I was very fearful to start the drawings because I felt pressured to make each of them perfect, but seeing the energy of Adam’s sketches brought me out of my shell. It also made me question the way I was making the images. The precise pseudo-scientific drawings I had been creating were fine in theory, but now that the text could also provide information I realized that I could be less precise in my drawings. For me, it was more important to create a holistic piece where the text and images looked like they were crafted by the same hand. My intuition led me to pursue the impulsiveness of travel drawings. I returned to my time with Michael Arthur and soon found myself, working with pen and ink. This change improved my drawings, and this thesis, immensely.

Once I had completed all the drawings I felt were necessary to fill in the gaps in the story, and the text had been redrafted, I printed and bound it. The artifacts at this point were joined together in a traditional leather-bound journal. With the book complete, I

began to prepare for the performance itself. Rudy Ramirez joined the team as an actor and collaborator and we found that he was able to read the text in roughly four hours. We rehearsed together and were eventually joined by Anthony Guillen, our media operator.

The show opened April 11th and ran through the 14th. There were two runs of the performance with each reading taking two nights. During the readings, the drawings in the book were projected above Rudy as he performed. The audience was invited into the room and was provided with a British cream tea service. The attendance varied greatly from night to night, but I consider the performance a success.

CONCLUSION

In the end, I do not believe that I effectively subverted traditional creative hierarchies. Since Krumholt used so few of the images and since she often ignored and changed annotations, which was not allowed in our rules, my priorities during the process shifted from changing the way in which work is created to creating a complete story. I responded to the text by creating more imagery to fill in the gaps and enhance the story, but this new focus meant the text was the dominant artifact. However, I know that the narrative we created would not exist without either of our artifacts and the structure we created for our collaboration.

The artifacts came together in the book, which people responded to strongly. Since the book was a hand-crafted object, many were afraid to interact with it, but once they were encouraged I found that they were eager to spend time with it. Now the book, rather than being a step in the creative process, was part of the world we had created. The book created a level-playing field where the text and images were no longer separate artifacts, but important parts of the same narrative. The performance readings, which physically separated the text (which was spoken) and images (which were projected), still felt unified because of the efforts made to create a “good design” in the story before it was bound in a book. I believe that the tea-service also helped to create this unified feeling because, not only did it make the audience more comfortable and engaged, but it also made the audience participate in a nostalgic historic activity which prepared them for the world of the book and the story.

I've learned that "good design" comes from effective, and frequent, communication. I wish now that Krumholt and I had more back and forth and communicated every chapter (or entry for our project) rather than at the end. That being said, I am extremely proud of the work I created with my collaborators. I believe we succeeded in creating a "good design" even if we did not get there the way I thought we would. We also created a complete world that is very different from the one we live in, while using it to comment on our own society and our perceptions of the past.

Appendix A: Letter to Kristina Krumholt

November 12, 2012

Dearest Christina,

This is only a temporary font, but I thought it would do nicely for right now. So, as we discussed I will put the drawings in a suggested order which you can use and ignore as you choose. Each image has a number written on the back to reflect the order I envisioned. Here are images. I'm not sure if it's enough to make a world, but I suppose we shall see. I feel like I should have something more to say, since I'm writing you a letter, but I don't suppose I do. Here are the images.

A zoopraxiscope is an early film device considered to be the first projector (although sometimes there's just a peephole that people look through). There are images painted on a glass disk and they wizz 'round and 'round. The images varied slightly and when they rotated they moved. The images completed an action of some sort and communicated something. Still motions creating the illusion of movement. The zoopraxiscope only works if each image is close enough to the one before and after it so that the movement is smooth. In this I've failed you. There are many gaps in this world and there is nothing smooth here. Nonetheless the time to hand these off to you is now. So, if you please, press your eye up to the peephole and tell everyone what you see.

*Yours,
Jocelyn Pettway*

Appendix B: Font Inspiration

These words were written
by Mr Thomas Hilker March
the 21st 1803 the night before
he was executed at the Dock

Dear Father & Mother & Brothers
& sister & all my relations this
is my last night in the world
of the last night I write thus to
leave my love to my Uncle George
& all the rest of his family & dear
Father I think some have been the
Niece of my body but I hope the Lord
will save my soul & that they will
put up a tomb stone at my grave
to be a warning to the young men
to be a warning & against bad
Advice which has been my fate

and for my Father to be good to
you both for it is a very thing to
for get you when you read this &
hope my soul will be at rest
over & over remembered me to my
sister & Mr. Gammon & Mr. Hilker
Dear Father & Mother this give my
Father Joseph I think of me as
he succeeds I hope in God it may
be good to him to leave off from
well for ever & ever your Thomas
Hilker

March - 21 - 1803 My Dear
Father I hope this will be shown
to you that I consider my destiny
the being cut off in the prime of
which I hope will be a warning to
all young men like me & for the
sake of God & my family let my fate
be always in your memory to

Letter from Thomas Hilker

Appendix C: Excerpts from Personal Travel Journals

TEA LOUNGE, PARK SLOPE BROOKLYN
MAY 24, 2012

ANOTHER MISTY MORNING. I AM SHOCKINGLY WELL RESTED BUT I KEEP WANTING MORE. DESPITE WAKING EARLY IT'S BEEN A RATHER LATE START. I WAS WATCHING SNIPES ON A PLANE AND LAST NIGHT I HAD NOT SET OUT TO MAKE RESERVATION. I HAD NOT SET OUT TO MAKE A SOCIALIST UTOPIA, THOUGH I SEEM TO BE LEADING THAT WAY. EVERYTIME I DO SOMETHING THAT WOULD NATURALLY LEAD TO SOMETHING BAD, LIKE CHILD LABOR, OR POLLUTION, I ASK MYSELF "WHY? WHO SAVES?" I THINK THOSE QUESTIONS ARE HOW UTOPIA'S START. THOSE QUESTIONS ARE NOT STEERING ME, THE PATH TO A COMPLETED THESIS THOUGH.

NOW FOR THE EVENT WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR. AM IN DEPTH ANALYSIS OF MY FOOD AND PERSONAL ECONOMY. BREAKFAST COST \$5.50 AND IS CHINESE AND RAISINS AND A LOT OF LOVELY PERSONAL TEA. I WILL BUY TEA FOR THE OFFICE THIS MORNING. DAMN I LEFT MY IRON TABLETS AT HOME AND HAVE NOW SUBJECTED MYSELF TO CHINESE FOR NOTHING.

I WAS CLEANING RATHER INTRICATE IMAGES YESTERDAY SO I DID NOT GET MANY IMAGES DONE. I WILL MAKE MORE PROGRESS TODAY. I'VE BEEN FIGHTING WITH ALL FEEL PRINTS BUT APPARENTLY THAT IS NOT HOW HE MAKES HIS MONEY. HE DOES NOT CARE ABOUT PRINTS. NEXT WEEK BEHOLD HIS FRIEND COATING THROUGH WITH A TUBE OF THE CEILING CANOPY. MY LIFE IS CHANGING.

FIND AN OLD PIC ON NY CURRENTS NEAR BROOKLYN TRADING PAPER THOMAS EDISON HAD A FILM STUDIO

COVER
OCCUPY
DRUG WRIGHT-CURVES
THEY ARE THE
TINY WINDHOUSE-COPYRIGHT
DE-LETE EMBROIDERED LINE
AND HYPERLINKED
VERY WINDY GIRLS
CITY CENTER-CLAY SIGNATURE

VERA WANG GIRLS
ADELE
KATIE PERRY
SEAN LENNON
INSET PHOTO
NEW STRIKE LEE
INSET PHOTO RALEIGH
INSET PHOTO NEW YORKERS

ALL 4-THIRD SENT
TO DEPARTMENT (4)
STAFF SUMMER STAGE
NEW WORKERS
CLEAN ALL IMAGES
100 DDP
100 FILES MORE.

LAURE QUINN
GIL SCOT HERON

MAIL

CAROL GARDEN

MAY 27, 2012

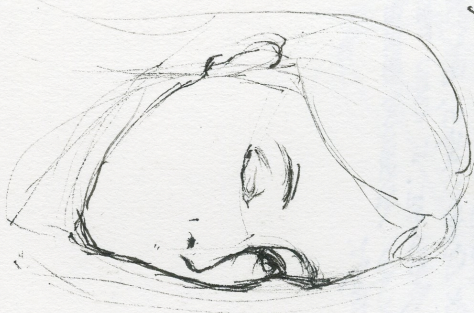
WHO GETS A SUNBURN IN NEW YORK CITY?!

YESTERDAY I ENDED UP SPENDING 3 HOURS IN LINE TO GET ON THE FERRY TO THE STATUE OF LIBERTY WHERE THE MUSEUM WAS CLOSED, BECAUSE IT WAS SO HOT, I SPENT \$6 ON WATER. I WAS MAD.

ELLIS ISLAND WAS TOUCHING. THE EXHIBITS WERE GOOD AND THOUGHTFUL. HOWEVER, THE DISPLAY ON THE SUFFRAGETTES INSPIRED ME. THEY CHOSE ELIZABETH CADY STANTON TO REPRESENT EARLY WOMEN'S WBS. ITS A GOOD CHOICE AND SOMEONE I'D READ BEFORE. BUT TO REPRESENT HER AND THE MOVEMENT, THEY CHOSE A SHOCKINGLY EXIST THAT EARLY WOMEN'S RIGHTS RHETORIC WAS EXIST, BUT TO HAVE THIS QUOTE, WHICH WAS MORE EXIST THAN ALL THE QUOTES IN THE ANTI-IRISH, ANTI-CHINESE, AND OTHER QUOTES WAS ABSURD. THEY WANTED TO SHOW HOW HATED WAS USED AGAINST THEM BY THE POWERS THAT BE TO KEEP THEM POWERLESS. FINE. THAT SHOULD TOTALLY BE THERE... AS ITS OWN SECTION. THE DISPLAY, LIKE THE POWERS THAT WERE, ~~BE~~ COMPLETELY DELEGITIMIZED THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

BY MAKING THE MOVEMENT THE PET PROJECT OF WEALTHY, EXIST, WHITE WOMEN.

I STAYED HOME LAST NIGHT BECAUSE MY SUNBURN MADE ME SUELY. TODAY I WILL BE AT MARY. HOPE FULLY I WILL DO SOME NICE DRIVING. I THINK I NEED TO DO SOME MORE WORK ON MY THESIS. MAYBE I CAN PUBLISH IT ON GRAPICALLY LATER. FIRST, I THINK ITS TIME FOR SOME THUNDERBOLTS.



WHERE TO BEGIN? THE NATIONAL TRINITY MUSEUM IS THE MOST EXCITING THING WE DONE IN DUBLIN. IT WAS AMAZING! I GOT A PRIVATE TOUR THAT LASTED NEARLY 2 HOURS. I FOUND OUT SOME AMAZING THINGS (SEE NOTES). I GOT TO TOUCH EVERYTHING THERE... PRICELESS THINGS. I ALSO THINK I TOOK THE PHOTO FOR THIS TRIP FOR IRELAND. IT'S THE PRESS LINE FOR THE IRISH INDEPENDENT HEADER. THERE ARE SOME GOOD PICTURES OF THE MUSEUM.

APPARENTLY THEY SOMETIMES HAVE OPEN DAYS WHERE MEN WHO USED TO WORK THESE PRESSES IN THE PAST COME IN AND WORK THE PRESSES IN THE MUSEUM. I WOULD LOVE TO DO SOME SORT OF PRODUCTION THERE. IT'S BEAUTIFUL. A FADING ART... MACHINES STILL WORKING AFTER CENTURIES... STORIES! MY TOUR GUIDE SHOWED ME THE TYPES IN THE PROCLAMATION! IT WOULD BE A BEAUTIFUL THING! THE BUILDING IS IN A CHAPEL OF A FORMER BRITISH MILITARY BASE. THERE IS NOTHING ABOUT IT THAT ISN'T DELICIOUS.

BACK AT BAGGOTS HUTTON YOU FOR A DINNER OF ~~tea~~ AND A CASSEROLE. (ALREADY HAD A PEPPY CIDER... THAT STUFF REALLY HIT THE SPOT!). I BOUGHT SOME BOTTLES OF BORDEN AND SOME CHOCOLATES FROM BUTLERS. I WILL GIVE HER THOSE AND A TWENTY TONIGHT TO PAY FOR THE EXTRA NIGHT AND FOR BEING SO KIND TO ME. I ALSO BOUGHT MYSELF A MINI MEAD.

ON THE WAY TO THE SMUTTY BAR WHERE I HAD THE CIDER, I PASSED THIS PLACE CALLED 'MARKERS', LONDON. IT WAS A TAILORING SHOP AND THEY HAD A REALLY GOOD WINDOW DISPLAY. I PEAKED IN AND THEIR PHOTO-GRAPHS WERE REALLY NICE. I LOOKED FURTHER AND NOTICED THAT THEIR WALL APPEARED TO BE COVERED IN REVENUE MARKS. IT WAS THEN THAT I NOTICED THAT THEIR WALL PAPER WAS MADE UP OF TAILOR'S PATTERNS. I PEAKED OUT HOPEFULLY THE PICTURES TURNED OUT WELL ENOUGH THAT I CAN SEND THEM TO SUSAN, BICH AND RENEE.

IT HAS BEEN A VERY NICE DAY. I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT MY TIME IN DUBLIN IS ALMOST DONE. IT WAS ALSO BEEN A VERY EXPENSIVE DAY. I WANT TO GO HOME AND EDIT MY NOTES. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO UPDATING MY FLICKR.

Appendix D: Invite for Thesis

Airships and Angels

April 8th-April 14th

Friends and Colleagues,

Airships and Angels is a collaborative project that resulted in the creation of a faux Victorian travel journal and 2 two-night performance reading events. Please join me in celebrating this stage of my graduate education. Sign up to view the journal or/AND come to a performance!

1) The journal will be available for **Private one-hour readings** for the Entire week. To sign up, please visit:

<http://airshipsangelsprivatereading.brownpapertickets.com>

2) The two-night performance readings on **April 11th - 12th** and **April 13th-14th** from **7-9pm** will be done by Rudy Ramirez. Tea and snacks will be provided for free. To RSVP a spot please visit:

<http://airshipsangelsperformancereading.brownpapertickets.com>

Should anyone run into any problems reserving places for the private readings or the performance readings please email me at jpettwa@gmail.com. Please be advised that there are limited amounts of teacups for the performance readings. Walk-ups are welcome to join but should provide their own cups.

Appendix E: First Entry of *Airships and Angels*

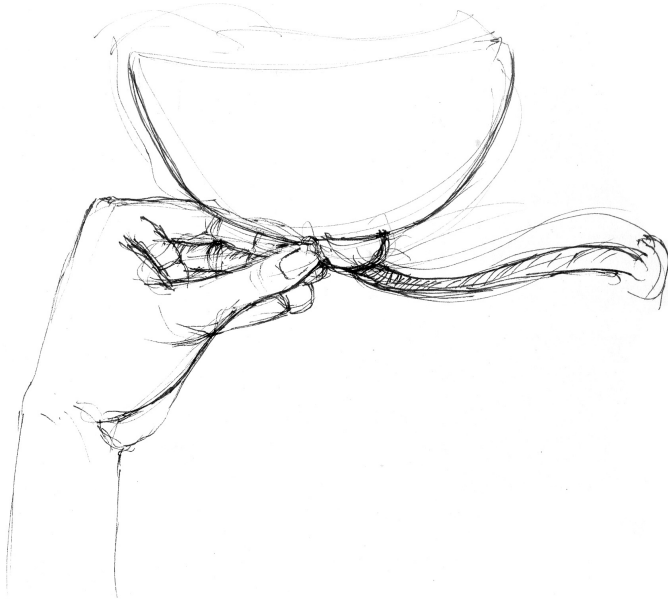
**Format and font have been changed for the thesis paper*

Ananda Ranga Kumar

29 May 1884

Memsahib Prudence MacPherson, the long-suffering wife of Colonel James MacPherson, died today. It was half past four this morning, at an altitude of some 5500 feet, when the summer sunrise was just beginning to light the far waters of the Mediterranean, which stretched before us like a band of fire on our eastern horizon . Her spirit manifested only

a few minutes later, full-formed if hazy, turning the flickers of our night lanterns blue even as the cabin boys rushed to dim them with the dawning of the day .



I had known she was ill . It had been the talk of the captain 's mess for some days, but even the doom-sayers, I think, were surprised with the rapidity of her demise. Perhaps the monumental effort of birthing a child - a son, no less - in the sticky heat of India, raising him past his first teething, and then fighting with her own matriarchal claws against paternal attachment to get him a berth on this ship - to send him home, as was proper, for an education far away, perhaps all these things had wilted her as they had done so many others.

Perhaps that is why the late memsahib MacPherson had chosen this airship to bear her and her issue away from the subcontinent, bound not for London, but to the more distant skies of New York. She had an aunt there, or so conversation said, and thus her now motherless boy - whose name, I am afraid, I have never been able to remember - would not stand at the docks alone and unloved. Prudence, it seems, lived up to her name in preparations for her death, and none can fault her for this.

But, of course, as much as a sick and

dying woman can be the talk of bored passengers, I had little invested in the case itself. Certainly, memsahib MacPherson had been no more eager for my company than women like herself ever were, and even the discussions of her impending death-I had heard them, I had not been part of them. This was an affair for white women - and for the white men who surrounded them.

Hardly, then, would I have had any reason to note with such care the moment of her passing were it not for the awful shrieks of her young son 's ayah that emitted from her cabin room almost the instant her eyes were closed. Whatever disdain I might have felt from memsahib MacPherson, I had no hesitation whatever to responding to a distressed lady, and I hurdled myself from my own berth towards the sound posthaste - indeed, with more haste than might otherwise have been advised. Despite my speed, by the time I arrived, I found I had been beaten to the chase by many of the passengers of our airship. Some of the women, who were joining their gentlemen in their efforts at speed, wore their morning frocks with only unpinned ruffles to betray their rush.

Before this gathering crowd was an alarming enough scene, by any account. Here lay the memsahib MacPherson, dead and quiet and looking far older now than ever



I remembered, with her young son sitting at the bedside in as good an approximation as one so young can manage of disinterested and polite grief. In sharp contrast to this restful scene were the shrieks that awoke me, and that now continued to pierce the air. Their source was Mala, the young ayah who had accompanied the MacPhersons, and the best efforts of the ship's

captain seemed ill-equipped to calm or even restrain her.

One of the men in the crown before the cabin stepped forward. Red-coated, he was in a moment recognizable as a British officer, but his youthfulness - plus the very fact that he was aboard with us, to America, and not to his purported homeland - made me wonder if he might be fleeing some indignity behind. Certainly, his attempt at decisive action, which comprised of shouting gruff and poorly pronounced Hindustani at the terrified girl, who was clearly enough screaming in the sharp and fluid vowels of Tamil, did little to

advance my estimation of him. I shuffled forward to offer my own services in my native language, and, while the officer was hardly grateful for the correction, the captain accepted me quite readily .



"Miss Mala," I said, my Tamil no doubt having grown formal with disuse, "my name is Mr. Ananda Ranga Kumar, if you will allow so straightforward an introduction. Please, we have only concern for you, and we would know the cause of your troubles ". Screaming no longer, thrashing no more against the captain, she stared at me with bright eyes that blazed green, an unexpected contrast to the glistening black hair braided down her deep olive neck. It was apparent from even this momentary glance that the honorable Captain MacPherson had a local appetite that predated his decision to send for his now departed European wife, and it was to his credit that he held himself responsible enough for the fruits of such excursions to provide for the girl as an ayah.

"Surely you can see, Mala spat at me in a tone more disrespectful than she would have dared - or even known to dare - in English, "my troubles, they lie before me. Memsahib MacPherson is going from this world ".

"She is gone, child," I replied, voicing my disapproval at her address with an adamant switch back to

English, "and your grief at this passing is worthy loyalty to her memory, but you must calm yourself. It is not seemly for an ayah to carry on so before her charge."

The bright eyes were furious. "And if I grieved for her, would your words be comfort? But I do not grieve. I only beg of the captain- let me ease her passing!"

With her words, the panorama shifted before me, and I wondered at the completeness of the transformation. What a thing to forget! What a thing to overlook! Foolish, I had assumed the crowd before me- the captain - had arrived with the same motives as myself, to comfort and to calm a frightened girl. Only now did I realize why I had been last to arrive. They had come instead for an eager vigil, and it was that very eagerness that prompted Mala 's fright .

Memsahib Prudence MacPherson, fragile flower that she was, wilting like jasmine in the sultry climes of Madras, had done her duty well. A son she bore, a promising one, and no doubt it was in an effort to provide for him that she had thrown herself upon this last journey. So

central a fact, so easy to forget.

*The British scholars in their
theologies- the leatherbound books, they clutter my father's
durban like furniture, new shipments brought each month by air
and sea and curious ambassadors- they say that only mothers
manifest as ghosts in their dying breaths because only mothers
love their children enough to penetrate the planes. But I have
known of mothers who did not love, whose spirits stood bright
from their bodies, and I have known of fathers who loved with
painful intensity, whose souls made no such leaps. I will let it be
beyond my knowledge how these ghosts come to be. In my home,
in my way, it matters little. In my world these ghosts are a deep
illomen, a tragedy, a horrific symbol of a mother who was not
loved enough by those that surrounded her to send her on to the
next world, the next life. After all, a few herbs shaken, a saltpeter
sprinkled, some chants sung- it is the work of a few minutes to
prevent ghosts, whatever love or hatred their might have been in
life .*



And sure enough, on the floor of the cabin, I saw now those same packets of herbs and minerals. No doubt Mala had dropped them when the captain had interrupted her.

"Captain Jobson," I said, "she would help the memsahib in the custom of her caste. She means no harm, but the duty is a grave one of her people, as it is to mine. It would be great dishonor to her if the lady 's spirit were to come again."

Jobson 's face contorted with anger.

"The woman died on my ship," he barked. " If she wants to come back and watch over her son- watch over the rest of us too, no doubt -then it won 't be the voodoo of some common garden Cheechee that ends our luck!"

I had always found Jobson a polite enough man to his face, and to hear this sort of vehemence and insult shocked me. Mala, too, jerked in indignation, sharply

enough that she slipped out from his guarding hands, and in a moment she was back to her herbs and prayers.

Almost before I could process the events, I found myself shoved back as the men behind me surged forward in one motion. Hands grabbed at Mala, tearing her tools from her, and her bleating cries began again. Shouts, tears, and now the shrill panic of the MacPherson boy filled and echoed and piled on each other, suffocating the air from the tiny room.

"Monster! Monster!" One woman, her face having now passed humanity with rage, hissed towards Mala.

The talentless officer was among the loudest of the crowd, and he began to shake Mala hard enough that I could not still my protests. Unheeding, he shouted, "You 'll cover Cawnpore with the ghosts of our mothers, but you 'll destroy them where they 'd do some good, eh, darkie?"

I wondered if any image instantly inspired the same sort of shock as the one he described. That infamous well at Cawnpore when, before my time, in 1857, the

army and much of the population of north India had risen up in revolt against the British. Blood and death and panic. That was the story of 1857, on all sides and in all places, but perhaps nowhere quite so much as Cawnpore, where more than a hundred British women and their children had met their deaths. The well into which their bodies had been thrown fairly bubbled with spirits, or so said the bloodmad survivors who made enough ghosts of their own in revenge. The name was still a fuse today. And I doubted the fact that neither Mala nor myself had even been a thought when the events occurred, nor the fact that they had occurred some several thousand miles away from our southern homes, would act much in our favor. It was not just her safety that I worried for now.

Somehow Jobson rose above the hubbub, and he shouted furious orders to place Mala in the brig. The officer, who still shook her angrily in his arms, and a few similarly clad comrades rushed to do his bidding, almost crushing her as they pushed her through the hall. She turned back to stare again, not at me, but at the weeping boy and his dead

mother, and I saw such humiliation on her face, such embarrassment, such grief, such failure. The corpse before me seemed mundane, but there were no words for this.

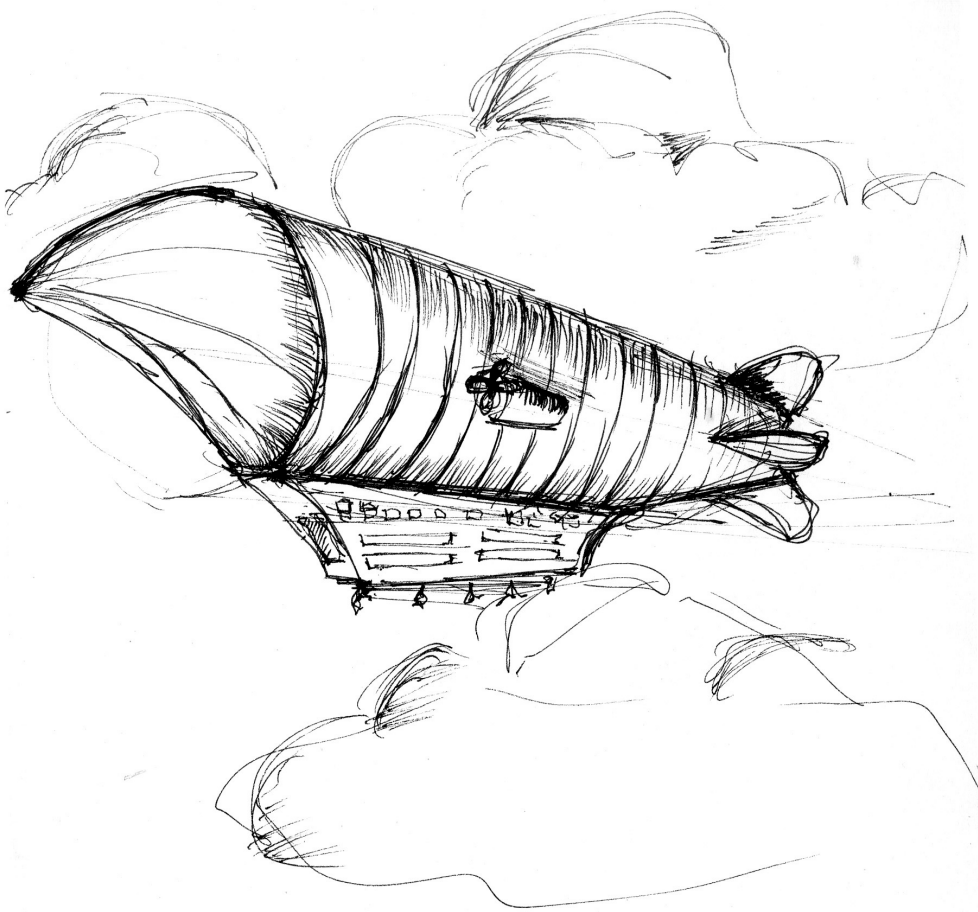
Aching for the girl, but with neither the authority nor the power to so much as comment on the proceedings, I could only count myself lucky that I had not been caught up in the turmoil. I feared my fortune had given way, though, when the crowd 's murmurs started again. But when I turned, my guard up, I saw no eyes towards me. All were forward. All were on memsahib MacPherson, and I saw that the long-awaited moment had come .

Not yet cold, she began again. A blue glow began to shine from her eyes, from her nose, from her slightly opened mouth. Gasps, murmurs, some irreverent speculations on the definition the spirit would reach disturbed the air, and mist spilled upwards. A cloud at first, and then a sphere, growing more and more formed with every second .



"Mama!" Her son exclaimed. The mist gave way to eyes and nose and mouth again, no longer with the pallor of death, but almost too bright to look at, joined by spilling white hair, arms, and the sag of the rustled night-dress in which she had died. So clear was she that one could see the age brought too soon to her face, the tension that had built in her

chin with the stress and fears of her life. In a flash, that blue light that had become her was around us, diffused around us and into every lantern of the room, spilling blue light across the hall out into the sunrise.



"O Mama," the boy said again, and he held out his hand in hope, but the spirit made neither movement nor smile.

Never had I seen a ghost before.

Certainly, the women of my family would have been as determined in settling the passage of their own as Mala had tried to be. Never had I given such things much thought, and I found myself now frightened to think of them, to see a spirit so starkly before me.

Now, I wondered how the science and theological journals had convinced themselves of such make-believe stories. This was no soul. Her eyes shown empty. Her blank mouth hung untroubled even by the gentle gust of breath.

This spirit that stood before us - who turned the same gaze both on the child of her loins and me, the barely tolerated Indian princeling - that form had nothing of the memsahib Macpherson 's soul, not love, not hatred, not even grace. But the lights flickered blue, so the captain cheered, and the little crowd applauded, and all ignored the little boy who cried for Mama.

Appendix F: Collaborator Bios

Kristina Krumholt is a penname.

Rudy Ramirez is currently a PHD student at the University of Texas at Austin studying Performance as Public Practice. He is currently the assistant artistic director at the Vortex theatre and a performance director for Austin Bike Zoo.

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<<http://www.fastcompany.com/38985/design-freeman-thomas>>.

Vita

Jocelyn Denise Pettway is originally from Germany. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Emory University in 2010. She received her Master of Fine arts from the University of Texas at Austin in Theatrical Design, with a scenic design focus, in 2013.

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This thesis was typed by the author.