**WHITSON — Steampunk**

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**Steampunk and Nineteenth-Century Digital Humanities**

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This poster presentation will share some of my insights regarding the use of the steampunk aesthetic to inspire retro-computing projects under the umbrella of 19th-century digital humanities. Nineteenth-century DH turns to forms of material programming using microprocessors to construct gadgets inspired by Victorian narrative and design. As part of their enthusiasm regarding the aesthetic, steampunk fans have constructed everything from small Stirling engines using the steam from a teacup to the massive three-story Victorian home on tank-treads lovingly named the Neverwas Haul by attendees to the Burning Man festival.

For me, 19th-century digital humanities appeals to Garnet Hertz and Jusi Parikka’s notion of zombie media, the idea that programmable microprocessors can help resurrect seemingly dead media and revive them for study within the digital humanities. I am currently working with a $17,000 internal seed-grant to develop steampunk projects for the digital humanities, and I am in the design stage for a retro-computing project for an NEH Digital Humanities startup grant that will examine how to develop a functioning computer using only the technological affordances of the 19th century. My poster will illustrate the designs of my retro-computing project, and the novels and histories that help me to imagine its look and feel. It will also call for examining the 19th century as a resource to emphasize what Kari Kraus calls the conjectural side of the digital humanities: one that focuses on futures and alternate histories as alternatives to the technological present. I am eager to find collaborators as well as scholars willing to help me envision where I might go next with this project.