

# KIRKUS REVIEWS

## TITLE INFORMATION

### OUT OF TIME

D.E. McLean

XlibrisNZ (154 pp.)

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## BOOK REVIEW

This sci-fi debut brings a young man through time and into the company of an eclectic airship crew.

In 1867, former burlesque dancer Millicent Darlington captains the airship *Elizabeth Anne*. She and her crew, based in the gold mining settlement of Grahamstown, prepare to take cryptozoologist Lady Elspeth Lovelace to investigate “several mysterious disappearances of whaling ships.” The *Elizabeth Anne*’s odd crew includes Jonas Enoch Emerson, a secret assassin for the Ministry of Dark Affairs; Dr. Persephone Mockett, a specialist in mechanical body enhancements; and Lenore Ravenwood of the Ministry of Technology and Alchemy, among others. While heading out to sea, Lenore detects an open time portal, disguised as a cloud. Millicent’s crew confronts a pirate ship run by time-traveling “time slavers” and rescues a young farmer, covered in cow dung. They learn that he’s a New Zealander named Kev and explain to him that, if not for their intervention, he would have been sold on the black market and lost forever. Persephone assures him that after completing Lady Elspeth’s research, the crew will return him to the past, where she thinks that he belongs. However, after some adventures involving a kraken and the mistaken arrest of crewman Sherlock Whitley, Kev realizes that his return will be more complicated than initially thought. In this jubilant steampunk adventure, McLean plays with the culture-shock of time travel by having the crew assume Kev is from the past, when he’s actually from 2017. After all, the year 1867, as presented here, features bionic body parts (including Millicent’s left eye) and personal aircraft like the Hummingbird, which impress Kev but leave him thinking that “there must have been some kind of apocalypse or something.” The author’s episodic narrative develops many members of her large, outlandishly named cast and allows a romance between Kev and Persephone to blossom. Further complications arise, however, when Kev begins to recognize the landscape of Grahamstown, and Professor Archibald Quatermain Popkiss is enlisted to solve the mystery of the farmer’s origin. A sublimely orchestrated twist ensures that readers will return for a planned sequel.

An endearing romp through a joyously conceived steampunk world.