An action-packed saga of wartime secrets, forbidden romance, weird science, and the fall of two royal houses.

FEMOPOLIS

A series that combines the lush look and rich characters of a BBC period drama with car chases, gunfights, explosions… and robots.
The World

It is sometime after the turn of the twentieth century. Revolutionary devices such as telephones, aeroplanes, and automobiles are becoming more commonplace.

The matriarchal American Empire, which stretches from the Atlantic seaboard to the Utah Territory, is locked in a prolonged war with New Spain over control of California.

Chicago, a teeming hub of commerce and politics, is the empire’s capital city. But everyone calls it Femopolis, since the government is mostly run by women.

Our story traverses the cityscape, from overcrowded tenements to opulent drawing rooms, following interconnected lives. It involves mystery, star-crossed lovers, weird science, political intrigue, bombings, assassinations, and riots, as well as aerial and cavalry combat.

In this souped-up soap opera, the consequences aren’t just the loss of a spouse or a business, but of a continent!
The Situation

Strange things have been happening around Countess Gale lately. She was already leery of the mechanical servants that popped up as the latest fad among the Great Houses of America. Now government officials are falling victim to suspicious accidents, her lover Nick Bowman is being followed, and a young girl who is heir to the Empress’ throne has abruptly vanished.

Meanwhile, the war with New Spain is going badly for the empire, causing discontent on the home front. At the Ministry of Science, the enigmatic Professor Auxo undertakes a series of classified projects, supposedly related to the war. Some believe he has sinister motives and plot to stop him.

During a street riot, a homeless young girl is injured and is rescued by Nick Bowman’s parents. They quickly realize this waif is the imperial heir, deliberately abandoned as part of a political power play. Soon, the girl and her adoptive parents are in the center of the action as the plot thickens.
Countess Gale

This twentyomething naïf finds herself suddenly next in line to be the Empress of America. When she falls in love with Nick Bowman, a dashing aviator, Gale’s biggest worry is the scandal of consorting with a man below her station. Instead, their relationship leads her into a complex, shady world that her privileged life never prepared her for. Gale gets wise fast and, after an attempt on her life, starts trying to unravel the secrets and mysteries of Femopolis.

Lt. Nicholas Bowman

Nick is a young pilot who’s seen action on the front lines in the Great War with New Spain for control of California. The war, a largely ritualized aerial conflict, has been going on for generations. As a decorated hero, he’s now on detached duty in the capital to help drum up good press and funding for the war effort. At the same time, because of his mother’s involvement with a clandestine group called the Blue Light, Nick gets inadvertently caught up in skirmishes with shadowy agents. Reluctantly, he involves his lover Gale, even though it puts her life in jeopardy.
**Ethan Bowman**

Nick’s father is a burly, brawling skilled laborer. A champion of the underdog, he is quick to organize others to protest against injustice. At one of his rallies in support of an eight-hour workday, a mysterious figure hurls a bomb at police as they disperse the crowd. A homeless waif named Iris is caught up in the ensuing melee and suffers a traumatic injury. Ethan, feeling responsible for the tragedy, takes it upon himself to nurse the little girl back to health.

**Iris Bracemantle**

A ragamuffin who can’t remember anything from before her injury during the riot. Iris finds a loving home with the Bowmans but raises dangerous questions in their minds: Who abandoned her, and why? After her unofficial adoption, Iris is often seen in the company of a dog that she claims can talk.
Peg Bowman

A functionary in the Ministry of Science, Nick’s mother is adept at solving puzzles. After her husband Ethan brings home Iris, Peg discovers that the girl is heir to the House of Bracemantle, first in succession to the throne—ahead of Countess Gale.

Peg is also part of a secret society called the Blue Light. Convinced that the orphaned heir is part of a government conspiracy, Peg draws her husband and son into the intrigue. It turns out she’s right.

John Wellington Wells

Leader of the Blue Light, an underground organization dedicated to uncovering the secret behind the technological marvels of Professor Auxo. Previously the Minister of Science, Wells was ousted by Auxo but isn’t out for revenge. Wells is one of a handful of scientists who recognize that Auxo’s work is more than a century ahead of everything else in this world—a dangerous anomaly that demands investigation.
Some years ago, this brilliant but inscrutable man arrived in Femopolis from parts unknown. Auxo quickly ingratiated himself at court by showing off advanced technology, far beyond anything anyone had ever seen. After charming the Empress into appointing him Minister of Science, ousting John Wells, Auxo launches a series of ambitious projects at the ministry. All details are classified for national security reasons, but Peg Bowman and Wells, among others, are on Auxo’s trail.

Femiquins

Auxo provides secretarial and household automatons to many of Chicago’s elite citizens. Although the androids look more like puppets than people, it seems they have minds of their own, with nefarious purposes. Ultimately, we learn that Auxo designed them to spy on the power brokers of Femopolis.
The Senior Librarian

The very learned head of the Library of Concordia acts as our narrator, recounting to a future audience how the end of the matriarchal empire came to pass. The Library is a vast repository of knowledge and artifacts, and she is its living search engine. Countess Gale often visits the perceptive sage for her profound, if occasionally perplexing, advice. The Librarian answers to the petty and partisan Minister of Information.

Planchet

This teenage apprentice to the Senior Librarian is as clever as she is beautiful. Planchet helps Countess Gale investigate Iris Bracemantle’s disappearance, but also passes information to Professor Auxo. Planchet is a reed that bends in the wind. Like Auxo’s origin, her loyalties are never fully revealed.
Admiral George Dewey

The Minister of War, who answers only to the Empress, becomes a pivotal figure in the scheming that swirls around her. Only a year earlier, Nick Bowman served under him in the Battle of Los Angeles. The young aviator respects Dewey and, in confidence, tells him about a conspiracy involving Auxo. At the same time, Auxo invites the admiral to join him in a military coup against the Concordia and end matriarchal rule. Dewey’s decision could shape the fate of the American Empire.

The Concordia

The empire’s governing body, equivalent to a senate. Its members are all female and all from the Great Houses of America. For centuries, since Britain’s Elizabethan Dynasty, it’s been accepted that women are the best political and business leaders, while men are more suited to labor and soldiering. Men are also allowed to serve in the Council of Ministers, as the heads of agencies such as Commerce, War, Science, etc.

Recently, a series of misfortunes has befallen key ministers, weakening the Concordia’s political power.
The Empress

Rarely seen in the series, the Empress leads an insular life. She has been completely deceived by Auxo, trusting him to run much of the government. Auxo has the Empress convinced that Countess Gale arranged the disappearance of Iris Bracemantle, the imperial heir.

The Great Houses

Fifty aristocratic clans, known as the Great Houses, control the American Empire. The matriarchs of these families hold seats in the Concordia, and the sons are expected to serve as officers in the military. Heirs to the throne are chosen from the Great Houses by an electoral college, which is a hotbed of political machinations.

As with the Council of Ministers, well-timed misfortunes have lately befallen the leaders of several influential houses.
The Secrets

Not until we’re well into the story does the audience learn that there are two surreptitious opposing forces at work. The first helps maintain the matriarchal government, while the second seeks to topple it.

Secret #1:
The decades-old war between the American Empire and New Spain is a sham. It’s being deliberately perpetuated under a secret pact between the supposed enemies. Only the Minister of War and the Empress know about this scheme, which is intended to keep the male population occupied and generate profits for the empire’s military economy.

Secret #2:
Professor Auxo is not from this world—he is, in fact, stranded here by accident. His escape plan is to take over the government and gain control of large-scale resources that he can use to find or create a way home. All the science fiction elements in the saga can be traced back to Auxo, from creepy robot servants to Iris’ talking dog.
Themes

A strong recurring theme in Femopolis is the individual's responsibility for asking questions and taking action.

Countess Gale must break the rules by venturing outside her protected, narrow world in order to grow and learn the truth. Nick Bowman must weigh the cost of putting Gale in danger for what he believes is a good cause. Ethan and Peg Bowman put their lives on the line to protect Iris and identify her enemies.

Through its rich tapestry of characters, the series also explores issues related to politics, power, profit, and propaganda.

The Empress and Auxo exemplify the dangers of an isolated leader with corrupt advisors. The Concordia and the electoral college are republican ideals tainted by money and nepotism. In the neverending war with New Spain, patriotism is being used for political and financial gain.

Femopolis reminds us that no nation is eternal and that “Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.”
Authors’ Notes

Femopolis is a period piece that takes place in an alternate reality and at an unspecified time. This offers a lot of flexibility in how to depict the world.

For example, actors could be dressed in contemporary off-the-rack clothes with retro cuts and accessories. Anachronistic elements in sets and locations wouldn’t necessarily need to be removed. Many museum facades and other existing buildings could be photographed with minimal redressing.

Action sequences can also be creatively handled. Combat scenes are viewed from pilot Nick Bowman’s perspective in a cockpit, conveying a sense of scale without having to depict infantry battles in detail.

The story can be told using visuals that suggest the scope of a David Lean historical epic film, within the practical realities of a television budget.