



## **The Enemy is Within!: A Harry Heron Adventure**

Patrick G. Cox

*Xlibris*, 351 pages, (paperback) \$13.99 UK, 978-1-4535-7551-2

(Reviewed: February, 2012)

A deeply considered and undeniably compelling science fiction adventure, Patrick G. Cox's action-packed sequel to his 2006 debut novel *Out of Time* continues the story of a trio of young seamen who are transported from the 19th century 400 years into the future.

In the first book, a time-space anomaly takes 16-year-old midshipman Henry Nelson-Heron, Ferghal O'Connor, and Ship's Boy Danny Gunn from the HMS *Spartan* into the 23rd century, where they are forced to not only adapt to a radically different environment but to also, somehow, try to find their place in their brave new world.

As this novel begins, Henry – now being looked after by his distant cousin Commodore James O'Niall Heron – enrolls in the Fleet Service College with his buddy Ferghal, where they hope to eventually graduate and help the Confederate States and the World Treaty Organization in its escalating war against the Consortium. (In the first story, they were captured by the Consortium and subjected to experiments before escaping.) But even as students attending a Fleet college, they are not safe from Consortium operatives, who want the reward that comes with recapturing them – and their precious DNA. Henry and Ferghal are unknowingly put in harm's way time and time again but always seem to turn the tables on their adversaries with ingenuity and good old-fashioned know-how.

While the storyline is essentially conventional – and predictable – military-powered science fiction, the narrative's real force comes from Cox's insightful character exploration and examination of the societal advances – and declines – since the early 19th century. Although humankind's technological development is initially mind-boggling to Henry, his sense of honor, unwavering idealism, and acumen put him well ahead of his classmates.

The novel's dynamic teenaged heroes and young adult tone make this blend of historical naval fiction à la Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin saga (*Master and Commander*) and space adventure appealing to young and old readers alike.