

# Fantasy Book Critic

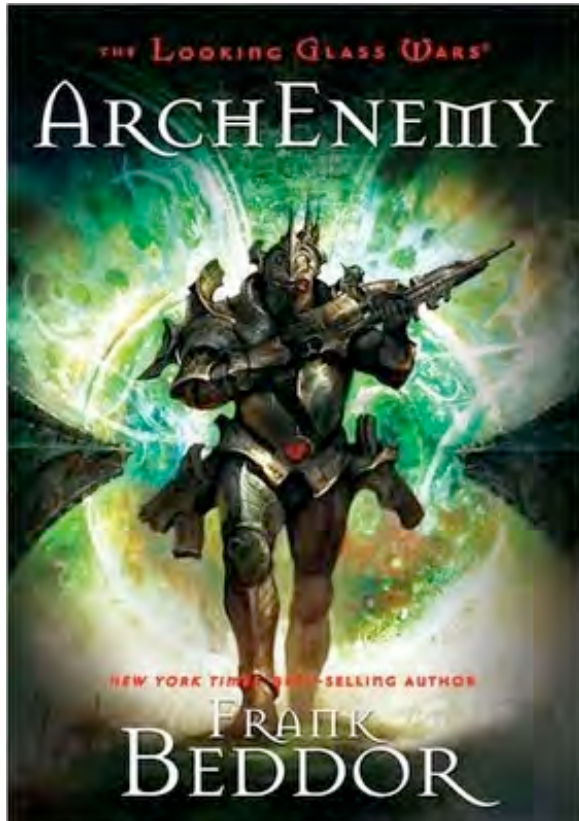
MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2009

“ArchEnemy” by Frank Beddor w/Bonus Review of “Hatter M: Mad With Wonder”

(Reviewed by Robert Thompson)

Official The Looking Glass Wars Website Official Card Soldier Wars Website

Order “ArchEnemy” [HERE](#) (US) + [HERE](#) (UK) Read **Fantasy Book Critic’s** Review of “Seeing Redd”



**AUTHOR INFORMATION:** Frank Beddor is a former world champion freestyle skier, film producer (There’s Something About Mary), actor, and stuntman. Beddor is currently the CEO of the production company Automatic Pictures and the *New York Times* bestselling author of **The Looking Glass Wars Trilogy**. He is also the co-writer of the **Hatter M** graphic novels.

**PLOT SUMMARY:** The power of Imagination has been lost! Now it’s all about the artillery as AD52’s, crystal shooters, spikejack tumblers and orb cannons are unleashed in a war of weapons and brute force.

As Alyss searches wildly for the solution to the disaster that has engulfed her Queendom, Arch declares himself King of Wonderland. Meanwhile, deep within the Valley of Mushrooms the Caterpillar Oracles issue this prophecy: “Action shall be taken to ensure the safety of the Heart Crystal. For Everqueen.” But who is **Everqueen**?

As the metamorphosis of Wonderland unfolds, enemies become allies, bitter rivals face off, and **Queen Alyss** and **Redd Heart** must both confront their pasts in

this thrilling, no-holds-barred conclusion to the *New York Times* bestselling series...

**CLASSIFICATION:** **The Looking Glass Wars Trilogy** is a mix of fantasy, science fiction and historical fiction that audaciously reimagines **Lewis Carroll’s** “*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*” and “*Through the Looking-Glass*”. In the trilogy, characters die, blood is spilled and the villains are scary, but overall the books adhere to their YA rating. Even though aimed toward a younger audience, I would still highly recommend the series to adults as well as younger readers...

**FORMAT/INFO:** Page count is **384 pages** divided over three Parts, fifty-eight chapters, a Prologue and a Coda. Also includes interior illustrations provided by [Vance Kovacs](#) (AD-52 breakdown, Part One), [Tae Young Choi](#) (Part Two), [Jennifer Bricking](#) (Part Three) and [Brian Flora](#) (Part Four). Narration is in the third-person via multiple characters including **Alyss Heart**, **Redd**, **Arch**, **Dodge Anders**, **Bibwit Harte**, **Hatter Madigan**, **Homburg Molly**, **Charles Lutwidge Dodgson**, etc. “ArchEnemy” is the concluding volume in **The Looking Glass Wars Trilogy** after “*The Looking Glass Wars*” and “*Seeing Redd*”, and wraps up the series nicely while also leaving openings for possible sequels...

**October 15, 2009** marks the **North American/UK Hardcover** publication of “ArchEnemy” via [Dial Books](#). Cover art provided by [Vance Kovacs](#).

**ANALYSIS:** “In *The Looking Glass Wars*, readers are introduced to a Wonderland quite different from the one depicted in Lewis Carroll’s books. Earth and Wonderland are parallel universes connected by portals (*The Pool of Tears*). Wonderland itself is a fantastical landscape where magic (*White Imagination/Black Imagination*) and advanced technology exist side-by-side. Alice Liddell is actually *Alyss Heart*, future queen of Wonderland whose empire was usurped by her evil aunt *Redd*. The Hatter is really *Hatter Madigan*, the queen’s personal bodyguard and expert fighter; the White Rabbit is *Bibwit Harte*, the Heart family’s tutor; the Cheshire Cat is *The Cat*, *Redd*’s deadly assassin; *Tweedledee & Tweedledum* are represented as *General Doppelgänger* who can split his body into two personas *Doppel & Gänger*; the caterpillars are actually oracles; and *Reverend Dodgson* aka *Lewis Carroll*, is the writer who twisted *Alyss*’ real-life confessions into the fairy tale that became known as *Alice In Wonderland*...” – Taken from **FBC**’s review of “*Seeing Redd*”

“*ArchEnemy*” is the third and final volume in **The Looking Glass Wars Trilogy** and what a finish it is! In the wake of events in “**Seeing Redd**”, most notably the activation of **WILMA** (Weapon of Inconceivable Loss and Massive Annihilation), Imagination is now diminished throughout Wonderland and various factions are taking advantage including **King Arch** of the Boarderlands and an anti-imagination rebellion led by the Lord and Lady Clubs. Unbeknownst by all is the dire repercussions that the lost Imagination is having on Earth. To make matters worse, the enigmatic caterpillar-oracles are pursuing their own agenda, one that includes the **Heart Crystal**, the mysterious **Everqueen**, and **Homburg Molly** who is still reeling from the terrible loss and shocking revelations experienced in “*Seeing Redd*”...

Backed by electric pacing, heart-pounding action, interesting subplots like **Alyss & Redd** working together and the events played out in Oxford, and satisfying resolutions (*Alyss vs. Redd*, *Dodge vs. The Cat*, *Hatter M & Homburg Molly*, *Alyss & Dodge*, etc), the story is one of “*ArchEnemy*’s” greatest strengths. Other strengths include the book’s witty humor (*Redd*’s home turned into a tourist attraction, *Bibwit*’s incessant chatter, and the caterpillar-oracles’ love for tarty-tarts are just a few examples) and **Frank Beddor**’s glowing imagination. Personally, what I love most about “*ArchEnemy*”, and the trilogy as a whole, is the creativeness of the author which is evident in everything from Wonderland itself (*Wondertropolis*, *Outerwilderbeastia*, *Boarderland*, *Everlasting Forest*, *Chessboard Desert*, *the Pool of Tears*, *Mount Isolation*, *Valley of Mushrooms*) and the unforgettable cast of characters to the technology (*Glass Eyes*, *AD52s*, *cannonball spiders*, *crystal shooters*, *mauler rifles*, *whipsnake grenades*, *spikejack tumblers*, *the Crystal Continuum*) used in the trilogy as well as Wonderland’s flora/fauna (*jabberwocks*, *gwynooks*, *hollizalea*) and even measurements (*spirit-dane lengths*, *gwormmy-blinks*, *lunar hour*).

Comparatively, **The Looking Glass Wars Trilogy** may lack the substance, characterization and complexity of such popular children’s series as the *Harry Potter* books, **Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials** and **Garth Nix’s Abhorsen Trilogy**, but as a whole is just as fun and entertaining. In the end, “*ArchEnemy*” closes out **Frank Beddor’s The Looking Glass Wars** in exciting fashion and cements the trilogy as one of the best new YA fantasy series currently published...

#### **BONUS REVIEW – “Hatter M: Mad With Wonder”:**

“*Hatter M: Mad With Wonder*” written by **Frank Beddor** and **Liz Cavalier**. Illustrated by **Sami Makkonen**. Cover by **Tae Young Choi**. Release Date: **October 15, 2009**. Published by **Automatic Pictures** (Preview included below).

“*Mad With Wonder*” is the second geo-geographic novel which chronicles **Hatter Madigan**’s 13-year search for **Princess Alyss** who was lost on Earth after escaping through the **Pool of Tears**. This time around, **Madigan**’s quest takes him to America during the Civil War and finds the *Milliner* crossing paths with circus freaks, a group of outlaws, **Mr. Van de Skülle**, a child gifted with the power of healing, and a vampire as well as being imprisoned in an insane asylum...



The first **Hatter M** volume was nominated for an **Eisner Award** and won the **2009 Silver IPPY Award** for Best Graphic Novel, so “*Mad With Wonder*” had some large shoes to fill. On that note, the graphic novel comes up short in the story department, mainly because nothing really happens. To be clear, stuff does happen in “*Mad With Wonder*”—there’s plenty of Milliner action with **Madigan** rescuing innocents and dispatching enemies, not to mention the usual twisted humor that can be expected from **Frank Beddor** like the escapades that Hatter’s hat finds itself in as well as revisiting the Milliner’s training—but overall the graphic novel leaves the reader hanging, especially in regards to **General Jubal Early** which will be explored in the third **Hatter M** volume.

As far as the artwork, I love **Ben Templesmith’s** style but was a bit disappointed with his efforts in the first graphic novel, particularly the coloring. So I had no problem with **Frank** going with a different artist on “*Mad With Wonder*” and felt **Sami Makkonen** was an inspired choice. I had never heard of the artist before but was blown away by his blend of detail, ambiance and surrealism. In short, **Mr. Beddor** picked a winner with **Sami Makkonen** whose work instantly improved the visual side of the **Hatter M** graphic novels.

Overall, because of the story I felt “*Mad With Wonder*” was a step down from the first **Hatter M** geographic novel. Despite this, the graphic novel as a whole is more than worth its cover price because the book is loaded with awesome extras like a preview from the third **Hatter M** volume, an excerpt from “*ArchEnemy*”, striking illustrations, and a ton of information that ‘proves’ Wonderland’s existence. Plus, “*Mad With Wonder*” is still a blast to read, especially if you’re a fan of **Frank Beddor’s The Looking Glass Wars...**

