



# Fitzpatrick's War

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## **Fitzpatrick's War** Theodore Judson

An inspired first science fiction novel set several hundred years in the future when the world's population has been decimated by biological weapons. This book chronicles the Alexander-like rise and fall of Fitzpatrick the Younger, as told by one of his close companions.

## **Fitzpatrick's War Details**

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Author : Theodore Judson

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## From Reader Review Fitzpatrick's War for online ebook

### Phillip says

Rather than saying that this is a genuinely interesting steampunk novel, I'd say this has interesting elements to it. One of the things I find interesting here is the set of allusions upon which the novel relies, allusions to both history and literature. Most of these allusions surround Fitzpatrick the Younger, who is the main leader of the Yukon Confederacy throughout the novel. He is implicitly or explicitly compared to Alexander the Great, King Arthur, Richard the Lionheart, King David, and other figures. While none of these comparisons or allusions is in themselves particularly unique or noteworthy, the density of references makes this a really fun novel to read for its intertextual connections.

The other thing I find interesting is the uncertainty at the heart of this novel. The main text is the memoirs of General Sir Robert Bruce, a close associate of Fitzpatrick and key player in the war that raised the Yukons to domination of the planet. But this is presented as a scholarly edition with commentary on the text by Doctor Professor Roland Modesty Van Buren, and much of his scholarly commentary is devoted to claiming that Bruce was a liar (as regards historical events) and degenerate (in terms of loving his wife and not taking joy in killing his enemies). For the most part, I think we are meant to take Bruce's narrative as true, while questioning the official history from which Van Buren is working (and which Bruce claims was dictated by the increasingly deranged and paranoid Fitzpatrick). So, while we as readers are unlikely to accept Van Buren's ideology or the bases for his judgement of Bruce, the existence of the scholarly commentary undermines the authority of the main novel's tale in unique ways.

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### Jacob says

August 2009

Every good student of History knows of Lord Isaac Prophet Fitzpatrick, great Consul of the Yukon, the most heroic man of an heroic age. An Alexander the Great for the twenty-fifth century, he conquered the world in the name of the Confederacy before he was thirty; though his empire did not survive him, his life, his conquests, and his tragic death have been memorialized in the official histories, from Dr. Jonathan Gerald's The Age of Fitzpatrick to the epic poem "From the Atlantic to the Pacific" by Miss Mary Anne Collin.

His greatness is still remembered fondly a century and a half later--but not, it seems, by everyone. For this book, Fitzpatrick's War, or The Early Life of Sir Robert Mayfair Bruce, has recently resurfaced after some decades in well-deserved obscurity. Its author, Sir Robert Mayfair Bruce, a Knight and engineer from whose airfields the Yukons conquered China during the Four Points War, was supposedly Fitzpatrick's closest friend and most loyal servant. And yet, despite his supposed love for his Lord and Consul, Bruce's memoirs are full of the most awful and vicious slanders against the great Fitzpatrick. Was the Consul as brave, just, and heroic as History portrays him--or was he in fact the weak and insane tyrant Bruce (himself an immoral degenerate dominated by his lowborn wife, if any of his memoir is to be believed) claims him to be? Who are we to believe, learned historians or common liars?

Although this so-called history is nothing but an outrageous pack of lies, and Bruce was a bitter and angry man, his ugly portrayal of the great Fitzpatrick (which must not be taken seriously) has nonetheless been presented, fully restored, complete and unabridged, and helpfully annotated by noted historian Roland Modesty Van Buren. Perhaps, if nothing else, Bruce's lies should serve us to view History--*true* History, that is--with right and proper reverence. Ladies of good character are warned to avoid this book entirely and to

read Gerald instead. All others, proceed with caution.

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### **Isabel (kittiwake) says**

*A sort of madness overcame us; we had an infinity of bullets and an infinity of Chinese before us. Every one of our men felt he was killing thousands. Our infantry fired ever round the teamsters could carry to them; they fired until the raindrops sizzled on the rifle barrels.. Death ran wild. How terrible it is, I thought, that the Yukons should be so good at this.*

It is the early 26th century and the Yukon Confederacy (whose lands include North America, Australia, Greenland, Iceland and the British isles) is the most powerful country in the world. From its beginnings as a agrarian organisation based in North America, To start with I was surprised to see references to knights and hereditary lords, the Union Jack, and money being referred to as pounds and quid, but I soon realised that this must be due to the Yukon Confederacy wanting to distinguish itself from the American government that it replaced.

There is a steampunk feel to Yukon technology, since an emp field produced by satellites prevents the use of electricity on earth, and zeppelins are used for most long distance travel, as there are limitations to how high and fast steam-powered aeroplanes can fly. However, the Yukons have made advances in other areas, particularly with regard to technology with military applications, since they are a warlike society, whose men spend much of their lives in the armed forces. The human life span has also increased, with many citizens of the Yukon Confederacy living to 120 or more, as long as they avoid dying in an epidemic, being killed in a war, or being assassinated. A woman who died aged 81 is described as having died tragically early.

The memoirs of the General Sir Robert Mayfair Bruce paint a dark portrait of national hero Lord Isaac Prophet Fitzpatrick, Consul of the Yukon confederacy Robert and Fitz met when they were student officers at the War College, and Robert continually found himself compromising his ideals as Fitz consolidated his power and embarked on his plan to conquer the whole world.

Robert paints his close friend as a megalomaniac whose evil deeds were whitewashed after his death, while the historian who is re-publishing the memoirs in the late 26th century, apologises for publishing a scurrilous pack of lies written by a malicious and traitorous fantasist,. His copious footnotes draw attention to all the places that the memoirs disagree with the historical record, but reader can draw their own conclusion!

I had never heard of this author before finding this book on a BookCrossing bookshelf, but I found this book extremely enjoyable, even though military science fiction is not usually my thing. The one thing I didn't like so much was Robert's strange and submissive relationship with his wife Charlotte, which I found jarring. Overall this book wouldn't have been half as good if it had been presented as an ordinary novel; the historian's introduction and footnotes really make the book worth reading.

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### **Michael Havens says**

I confess to be crazy for narrative technique and experimentation. One of my favorite books of all time is Vladimir Nabokov's 'Pale Fire'. Italo Calvino's novels also come to mind, as does any work by Raymond Federman, who I had the honor of meeting at SDSU during Jewish Week almost nine years ago, and whose works are still some of my favorite reads. Theodore Judson's Science Fiction novel, 'Fitzpatrick's War',

utilizes the annotated notes of a "professor" in the same way as Nabokov's "editor and professor", Charles Kinbote, though not in the brilliant way that Nabokov employs the technique. Yet, what we have here is a novel with a lot of promise and challenges presented to the reader. Challenges which is missing in a lot of Science Fiction today, with the often cliché and all too often overburdened premise that Science Fiction is nothing more than adventure motif. Adventurous Science Fiction has its place, but it is refreshing to see a recent novel like this one on the shelves. Here is book I will have to think about for some time, if only to question whether I followed logic to its proper conclusion, or has any of the characters hoodwinked me. Though set six centuries in the future, the technology of the novel reflects a more Steampunk vision of the future; where electric and computerization practically disappears by the Storm Times, a period of revolution, discontent, and complete breakdown of society and government. It is also a period where reconstructing the past, and recovering the technology of the past is practically impossible. Many misunderstandings by both the characters in the memoir and the annotations by the professor are sprinkled about the book. It is also a society which is semi-feudal, with Lords, yet what seems to be a Parliamentary form of government, until the Hitlerian Fitzpatrick the Younger takes over, is mixed in. These factions play out a heart rendering drama of genocide and oppression as the novel progresses. In fact, it is Bruce's telling of history that Van Buren questions and becomes the basis of the novel's premise.

It is also a book where we are to judge the truth about the two narrators, Sir Robert Bruce, an engineer and military officer for the Yukon Confederacy, in the twenty-sixth century, and Doctor Professor Roland Modesty Van Buren, the editor of the "present" text of Bruce's, about two centuries later (There is no date of Bruce's death, so I have made an approximate guess at the two narrators chronological distance). Van Buren, from the very beginning, derides Bruce's narrative as a pack of lies. What distinguishes the tone of his annotations and criticisms is something akin to the denunciations of "bourgeoisie living" during the Chinese Cultural Revolution in materials and public confessions. Such instances cover a range of criticism from mild rebuke ('Fitzpatrick's war, 462), begrudging caveats of acknowledgements, followed by an experts correction (424), to pure revulsion in branding Bruce a liar (144, Editor's Afterword, etc.). This has to be weighed by Bruce's own narrative, which sounds clear cut and reasonable, up until the last chapter, where a grand conspiracy which begs credulity is explained. The thing that keeps this book going is looking at the two narratives and figuring out who is expressing the truth, Bruce or Van Buren, or if Van Buren is not himself a conspirator, as well as a past historian, Professor Gerald, which Van Buren uses as a primary source.

Other things seem to be implicated that is never fully answered. Is the government a quasi-Theocracy? It is interesting how this question was raised on more than one occasion when seeing the cultural perspective of the twenty-sixth century and how they square with the mores and legalism in the novel (275, etc.), and how other religions are marginalized (80) to the domination of the United Yukon Church, or U.Y.C. How government utilizes and consolidates power through the U.Y.C. is never fully explained in detail, but is only hinted about here and there through the book.

History is another subject that is raised both contextually and philosophically in the book. In fact, this may be the crux of Judson's point in the novel, to ask the question of how much meaning does one generation give to history and another employs it later? We are never given any answers to this question, but are left in the end to one's own opinion of it within the pages of the novel.

One distraction in the novel seems to be Bruce's passivity throughout the book. He is seen as a mild mannered person, whose naïveté is only partially shattered near the end of the book (and never really eradicated). For all of the substantive narration his telling seems to imply, his character seems to have too much of it without much emotive backing. He seems to show more of it later in the book, where his own actions weigh on his conscience, but his passivity caused my suspension of disbelief to wane a bit.

The ending will cause some to ponder and think about the implications of Bruce, Van Buren, Fitzpatrick the Younger, Professor Gerald, the society and history they have created for themselves, and what the possible future holds for them. Judson doesn't give us the answers to these questions, and that's what makes this book all the better. It is a thinking man's Science Fiction; giving us a speculative fiction that has all the ramifications of our own century and problems through the lens of the future without giving away the author's views. It made Fitzpatrick's War' all the more refreshing and caused me to make this a consideration when rating the book in the end.

At the time of the publishing of 'Fitzpatrick's War' (copyright 2004, first paperback edition by Daw, August 2005), it was Theodore Judson's first novel. I am intrigued if he has put as much detail and energies in further works and will be looking out for him in the future.

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### **Bill says**

Despite what the jacket said about this book, it was neither made interesting used of the steampunk genre is hovers so closely around nor was it filled with anything of interest. I had been misled to believe that there would at least be some element of subterfuge, backhanded alliances, or anything that would have redeemed a novel about a scandalous, fictitious war. Instead the novel was filled with arrogant 20-somethings whose only purpose in life was to make snide comments about 20th and 21st century culture.

In addition to the flawed character personalities, each major plot point was carefully explained to the reader by the narrator, leaving nothing for the reader to discover on their own. The annotations made by a second fictional author did nothing to improve the story and seemed to serve mainly as a way to pad out the print area. These extraneous comments served merely as a primal chest beating display for another fictitious learning facility and added no value of the additional insights that a literary device of this nature could provide.

All in all, this book was boring and fit only for those who enjoy reading books written by an author who views his audience with contempt.

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### **P says**

Fantastic. Highly recommended.

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### **Zach says**

It's like someone figured out the premise for a novel that would appeal to me more than anything else in the world (a post-apocalyptic novel annotated by a revisionist historian after the re-emergence of civilization) and then set about disappointing me, on purpose, in every way they possibly could.

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### **Jon says**

It turned out to be "future history" book about a 25th century where electricity was unusable due to the machinations of an elite technocratic secret society. In fact, the elite secret society schtick gets a bit tiring in SF novels, and it's probably the weakest point of this book. Fortunately, the society is not the primary focus of this book. Instead, it tells the story of one of Fitzpatrick's compatriots, Robert Bruce. Fitzpatrick is a latter-day Alexander the Great, conquering the world at a young age (and dying before he gets to enjoy his rule). Lest you think I am giving away too much, this is all revealed in the prologue, which is written by a 26th-century historian. The historian's frequent footnotes attempting to discredit Bruce's story add a bit of levity to

the book.

The book takes place in a well-imagined future world -- probably the best part of the book. The plot is mildly interesting (maybe more so for Alexander devotees), and the characters are well-drawn enough. The ending doesn't really leave room for a sequel, which is probably just as well...the author could probably do a better job in his second SF novel setting things up.

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### **Raving Redcoat says**

An absolutely charming work of post-apocalyptic / steampunk world building. Highly enjoyable, especially the remarked by the alleged editor who disagrees with the narrative. Highly recommended!

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### **Bill says**

This is my stepson's favorite book, which is why I read it. I would usually not be attracted to a fantasy science fiction novel. I was wrong to the extent that this book is much more than that. Essentially the thinly disguised retelling of Alexander the Great's story but set in an electricity-free 25th century, the book is clever and well written and contains enough action, compelling characters and a charming love story to keep things moving.

The book is structured as a memoir written by the main character (Sir Robert) that has been discovered by a college professor writing in the 26th century. This memoir is framed by an introduction and afterword and heavily footnoted. In this way, we have the reality of the Theodore Judson's novel wrapped around the scholarly treatise which is wrapped around the memoir which may or may not be accurate. Within this, Judson makes critiques of everything from the concept of the history books being written by the winners, to religion, and to ambitious men who want to be great men.

Definitely not your average book. Check it out.

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### **Jack says**

Creative tale following the career of a military officer from his time as a cadet and up the ranks, told in the larger context of the rise of a neo-Alexander the Great. The relationships and various military postings are reminiscent of W.E.B Griffin's *Brotherhood of War* series.

Described as a steampunk sci-fi novel, but the book primarily focused on the war-mongering NeoAlex and his cult of personality and megalomania, with the corresponding moral dilemmas of his officers and former classmates as they gradually take over the world and kill millions.

I do not recall ever reading from the steampunk genre, and I certainly cannot accurately describe it, so I cannot comment on how steampunky this book is. There was some machinery that operated on steam, but no lengthy discourses on the science of fictional steam technology. Steam: because world electricity was controlled by a group who eliminated it for the rest of the world with EMPs; breakdown of society; back to agrarian roots and feudal system, etc. etc.

Controlling society called "Yukons;" was disappointed to learn this was not because actual Canadians now ruled the globe.

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### **Rebecca N. McKinnon says**

Pros: - Depth of the worldbuilding here is just phenomenal. - One of the rare times expository, tell-not-show storytelling has actually engaged my reading. - High concept thematic plot filled with characters that intrigue (yes, even the unlikable ones).

Cons: - Dense prose interspersed with slow pacing caused me to return this library book a week late even after renewing it three times.

I recommend it, but you need to take your time with this one. Buy a used copy if you're broke. It'll cost you the same as the library's late fees!

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### **Andy says**

2.5 -3 stars. Post-apocalyptic steampunk and political intrigue in alternate-future Earth. It's presented as an alternate history/autobiography of a fictional character, Sir Robert Bruce, with a "real historian" making comments in footnotes throughout. At first this was tough to get over, but it blended more over time. Mostly these comments are to show how elitist, racist, sexist, and backward the supposedly enlightened future society remains, while the narrator brings all the warts of the story out with his side of the truth. Interesting experiment.

The world building kind of threw me for a while. They don't use electricity, but do use advanced steam power and advanced chemistry, etc. Somehow the technocratic elite still has satellites, but I didn't feel this was well explained. I rolled with it, and it certainly came up a lot as a communication advantage for the protags, but it kept bugging me.

Character-wise, it is quite a gut punch to see a talented, low-born, ambitious yet honest man follow a high-born, ambitious friend to dazzling heights and then watch almost all his friends betray or warp or destroy all the good his military and country ever stood for. I particularly felt for Hood, an older and accomplished general who goes through a severe moral crisis along with Bruce. Some of the machinations of the characters also felt a little forced with little explanation or harder to follow, but you generally got the gist that just about all the nobles and wealthy friends in this society were absolutely terrible people. I also thought the love story between Bruce and his wife felt a little hackneyed at times, but more often than not it was genuine and it was nice to see at least somebody else other than Hood whom Bruce could trust and love without reservation or suspicion. They felt real together, and they made a great family.

If you like steampunk/post-apocalyptic settings, or if you like stories that focus on the writing/interpretation of history and its effects on society, you should give this a try. If those aren't your bag, I don't know that you'd be missing too much.

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### **C Keel says**

Modified from an original review for PPLD Teens.

This is a steampunky, military sci-fi novel that takes place in the 25th century and chronicles the life of Sir Robert Mayfair Bruce, an military engineer working for the United Yukon Confederacy, a vast empire that controls all of North America and large parts of the rest of the world. The book is written as a historical memoir/biography that has come under scrutiny for supposedly lying about the life of one the Confederacy's greatest leaders, an Alexander the Great-like young man named Fitzpatrick who is viewed as a hero many years after the events in Robert Bruce's publication. The novel is made even more intriguing by the fact that it is "annotated" by a fictional scholar who frequently refutes the facts described by Bruce. This begs the question "Do we want the 'nice' version of history, or the truth?"

Bruce is as excellent narrator, generally engaging and observant, and it is easy to see why he is so charmed by Fitzpatrick. His motivations are clear and his interactions with other characters are authentic and believable. That said, it is occasionally annoying that he lets his love interest, Charlotte, boss him around so much, but other than that, he is likable and real. (If you like Nick Carraway from *The Great Gatsby*, you'll probably like Bruce.) Speaking of Charlotte, I think she was one of this book's only major weaknesses. She seems unrealistically perfect -- intelligent, witty, independent, defiant, feisty, and not much else. She has an unhealthy amount of control over Bruce to the point that the reader questions his abilities as a leader since he seems to have no figurative backbone when it comes to Charlotte's manipulation. He does everything she tells him without question, in spite of the fact that she isn't terribly likable. Fitzpatrick himself was well-done. His charismatic, megalomaniacal character develops subtly over the course of the book, and his rise and fall, involving a descent into moral depravity and possibly madness, is fascinating. Likewise, secondary characters are also well-developed.

This book moves rather slowly (the "War" of the title takes about 300 pages to begin), and occasionally the author gives excessive detail to things that don't need it while omitting other details that could have fleshed out the world, so suspension of disbelief is required to enjoy some things. Otherwise, the alternate reality is well-developed and appropriately detailed, with an intriguing history, society, and politics. If you don't like long books with minimal action, don't read this. But if you enjoy an intellectual steampunkish adventure with well-drawn characters that raises interesting points concerning how history should be portrayed, I recommend trying Fitzpatrick's War.

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### **George Snare says**

The book started off slow but finished really. Glad I stuck with it.

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