

Grant Morrison encompasses worlds. A Scots writer, he is deeply expert on American comics, influenced by English romanticism, possessed of a style resonant of both Germanic psychological theory and French literary philosophy, and best described by a Greek prefix - "meta." Morrison almost always aims to achieve something metanarrative, metatextual, and often metaMorrison. In *The Multiversity: Pax Americana #1* Morrison wants to examine the ideas of time and perspective and how comic books, with their visual nature, sequential presentation, and easy-to-manipulate physical form allow chronology and viewpoint to shift radically at the will of the reader. He chooses to make this examination in the form of a fused love-letter to the Charlton heroes of old and to one of his own elder colleagues, Alan Moore. In this story, Morrison places the Charlton heroes in a plot very reminiscent of Moore's legendary *Watchmen*, while manipulating time and narrative order as Moore did in his famous 1983 short comic *The Reversible Man*. Morrison does not succeed fully at his games with time, to see a better example of that read Tom King's recent *Grayson Futures End #1*, but his homage to *Watchmen* strikes home, perhaps because the Charlton heroes Captain Atom and The Question provided the original models for Moore's Doctor Manhattan and Rorschach. The heroes, located on Earth-4 in the new multiverse, live in an America led by corrupt President Charles Eden. The very nature of superheroes stands in question after former President Harley, son of famed comic-book artist Vince Harley, died at the hands of the hero Peacemaker. Meanwhile The Question searches for the answers to a long-suspected conspiracy, while the Ted Kord Blue Beetle provides the voice of the establishment and Captain Atom muses on time and dimensions with the aid of the haunted comic running as a thread through the entire *Multiversity* series. In the end we discover that President Harley wished to die so that he might obtain resurrection at the hands of Captain Atom, thus providing the world with a living symbol of peace and resurrection. But this Christ-like narrative masks another. In keeping with his earlier work such as *Final Crisis*, Morrison sees great threads of character and plot all spooling out from a single sharp act. In the former book, Batman's wounding of Darkseid provided a pivot point for all of the cosmos. In this, the President as a boy mistakenly shot and killed his own father, who in addition to working as a comic book artist moonlighted as Yellowjacket, first of the Charlton heroes. Thus do the villains, the Gentry who reach across the Multiverse corrupting everything, enter this world. Thus are comics, and fathers, and heroism, betrayed and slain by their own children. And thus did the boy grown to man seek a measure of redemption that he did not achieve, for Captain Atom was lost in time and dimensions and no resurrection came. Frank Quitely's naturalistic images and Nathan Fairbairn's bright, brittle colors let all this play out with an air of nature grown fragile and about to shatter. The post *The Multiversity: Pax Americana #1* appeared first on *Weekly Comic Book Review*.

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