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Infinite crisis in Ozymandias' and Batman's republic: the Dystopian visions of Frank Miller and Alan Moore on social order and civil liberties

Luis Gomez Romero

McGill University, lgromero@uow.edu.au

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Infinite crisis in Ozymandias' and Batman's republic: the Dystopian visions of Frank Miller and Alan Moore on social order and civil liberties

Abstract

The word crisis derives from the Greek , ***** "judgment." Interestingly, DC Comics published in 1985 a twelve-part series titled Crisis on Infinite Earths whose main goal was to clean up the chaos of narrative parallel universes which DC's writers had established over the past forty-five years, in order to start afresh with one single story continuity. While a miserable fail as an attempt at simplification, Crisis on Infinite Earths still inaugurated an era of multifaceted, elaborate and rich superhero comic books. Frank Miller's Batman: The Dark Knight Returns (1986) and Alan Moore's Watchmen (1986) are the first instances of such revisionary superhero narrative, which drawing from the dystopian tradition critically addressed and assessed the conservative conceptions of social order and civil liberties championed by the New Right during the eighties. Utopian and dystopian visions have historically found in popular culture a fruitful terrain where conceptions about justice, social order and freedom are discussed, supported or challenged in times of crisis. Comic books are particularly permeable to such condition of popular culture. Therefore, a creative dystopian reading of Miller's and Moore's revisionist superhero stories may raise a necessary awareness of the dangers of vigilanteism, whether it is practised by hooded übermenschen or by uncontrolled State agencies which we have consented to supersede liberty in the name of security. Today as in 1986, we should recall Juvenal's Satire VI quotation that, respectively, explicitly and implicitly infuses Moore's and Miller's superhero narratives: "Quis custodiet ipsos custodies" (Who watches the watchmen?).

Keywords

ozymandias, crisis, infinite, order, social, moore, alan, miller, frank, visions, dystopian, republic, liberties, batman, civil

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Gómez Romero, Luis. McGill University

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