

WATCHMEN (spoilers)

The Urth list — 3 messages, 3 voices, 15 Sep 1999

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Alex David Groce — 15 Sep 1999, 12:07

I finally got around to reading Moore's WATCHMEN yesterday, and this morning got an email from a friend 2/3 through CLAW asking if the House Absolute is the "Satan's castle."

This brought to mind a comparison I made last night. Veidt's plan, I think, marks him as a diabolical monster, arrogant and "evil" (not in the comic book sense of a man who thinks of himself as evil and glories in it, but in the sense that one might call Mao or Hitler evil). The others who say "well, it wasn't nice but it did the job" seem similarly tarred. However, Severian's similar "renewal of the Earth" from (apparently) less immediately threatening circumstances kills far more people but doesn't bother me morally. Severian is still very much a good guy, in my book.

Does anyone else who's read WATCHMEN agree with my assessment of Veidt, and if so, what precisely (I think I can say in general) make Severian's case so different? (Or, since I know there are some on the list who see things differently, what makes Severian the same?)

Also, I'm assuming that between the TALES OF THE BLACK FREIGHTER and the Ozymandias comparison, Moore at least strongly implies the same judgment, although I think it's (nicely) ambiguous.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32

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Jim Henley — 15 Sep 1999, 21:03 · follows Alex David Groce

-----Original Message-----

From: urth-errors at lists.best.com [mailto:urth-errors at lists.best.com]On
Behalf Of Alex David Groce

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if so, what precisely (I think I can say in general) make
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different? (Or, since I know there are some on the list who see things
differently, what makes Severian the same?)

I completely agree. Veidt's a rotter. The rest of them are indeed culpable for going along with it.

As for what makes Severian different? Um, excellent question! And I'd tell you but... it would spoil the satisfaction of working it out for yourself! Yes, that's it!

Um, actually, I can think of about three very equivocal things in Severian's favor. I am not

prepared to say they add up to a justification:

1) Severian knows he's doing "wrong" in addition to doing good. "Yes, he [Baldanders] is a bad man, as I am and you are." (From memory, please don't shoot me over variations.) Merits: Eh.

2) If you buttonholed random Urth citizen number 43,256 and said, "The New Sun you wish for may come, but it will definitely mean your - and I mean your - death," maybe most of them would say "okay." Merits: Eh. Most of the sailors were against it, although we can suspect that many of them are from times before the Old Sun had cooled so much as it has in - given S's problems with temporality, let's say Agila's - time. Also, should majority rule apply on this one anyway? I doubt it. Also, we could always ascribe any favorable responses to "conditioning" - been raised in that faith from birth and all that.

3) The Universe of the New Sun really works that way. That is to say, there really is a God and it really is his plan. Merits: Good work if you can get it.

Also, I'm assuming that between the TALES OF THE BLACK FREIGHTER and the Ozymandias comparison, Moore at least strongly implies the same judgment, although I think it's (nicely) ambiguous.

The last page of Watchmen puts the line "Nothing beside remains" into my head. It seems unlikely that Veidt's scheme will last because his deception seems perishable. In some ways this dodges the harder question which is, "Well, what if he could have perfectly deceived everyone?" For me the answer is easy - he's still a bastard. But that won't be true for everyone.

Note: The foregoing bloviation on matters of ethical opinion was loosed solely because precisely that was requested. <g>

Best,

Jim

"These are the days of empty kitchens"

-- Sheryl Crow

Michael Straight — 17 Sep 1999, 08:47 · follows Jim Henley

A few more tidbits about Watchmen/Severian (plenty o' spoilers)

It's been pointed out in newsgroup discussions, that Veidt's plan is particularly suspect because he gets his information about the world by...watching television! Perhaps Moore is saying, yeah this daft plan could work if the real world was the world you see on TV.

Veidt has been accused of sadism, from the murder of the Comedian and his secretary to coming up with a plan to "save the world" that requires killing so many people. If he were genuinely interested in saving the world, you'd think he'd have put his energy into getting Dr. Manhattan to step in and fix things, rather than driving him off.

For that matter, his efforts to hide from Manhattan show his misunderstanding of how Jon sees the future. Jon doesn't look into the future in order to change it.

Does Severian even know what bringing the New Sun will do to the Urth before he does it? Somehow I thought he was suprised by all the destruction it caused. If so, he seems not at all comparable to Veidt.

-Rostrum