

We Are Our Empires

Poetry based on Alan Moore's *Watchmen*

Scott Sherman

CHAPTER I

“The end is the beginning is the end.”

– Smashing Pumpkins

Friends

The Comedian

Ribcage hinges shatter,

father

coming home from work,

looking

for mother.

Jokes without punch lines.

Ashamed,

someone had

walked in on me

jacking off

to an earlier life.

Unhinged from crimson

T.V.-stained room.

Leave what's left of me on the sidewalk.

October 12th, 1985

Rorschach

they
from their

gushing
corruption.

scream

prying

redemption

to them no

all of them

plea
excrement

hives of
vermin will

up at me

for any

i'll whisper

and leave

voiceless.

existence will river down

into blood gutter

Straight Wrench

Night Owl

“Behold a range of exhausted volcanoes.

Not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest.”

- *Benjamin Disraeli*

Street lights throb,
apartment complexes map out exhaust.
Having slipped between doors,
Id greets me at the kitchen table.
Tells me how I’ve hung loose,
waiting to be catacombed.
It exits through the basement,
roaring into subway system.

Moon

Silk Spectre

Entirety of this cemetery,

where glass comes to die.

Bottles and burnt bulbs pierced,

growing moss inside rock bellies.

Banshees bellow over street lamp fires.

CHAPTER II

Retribution shambles,
beyond Armageddon face.
Empires forget to care.

Funeral

Ozymandias

"Firstly, let me say I'm pleased to see so many of you here."

Vacant voice travels by rain

My visage tremors sand,
ancient land mauls rebirth.

"What's going down in this world, you got no idea."

Empire self harbinger.

"Somebody has to do it, don't you see? Somebody has to save the world."

Wreck we must become,
planets stretch horizon,
melted by kingdom.

Vietnam

The Comedian, Dr. Manhattan

"It is not only the living who are killed in war."

- *Isaac Asimov*

You'd think a place would have seen enough fire,
in clouds, shot glass gun barrels, fields.
Artillery hugs the sun. On the fourth day
men fuck the world, seeding lead.

*Charred villages, boys
wearing necklaces of ears
wings
harbingers for headless.*

Sub-life swollen
bearing news of the malformed.
Country carves smiles.
Good joke.

*In a humid bar, I am all of me
awakened to myself
by a bullet.*

CHAPTER III

Fiends lay fire roses,
bearing down like an express train.
Symphony cuts. Curtains.

Shelter

Dr. Manhattan

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

- *GENESIS chapter 18, verse 25*

Mars

Pictures have made me indifferent

From dust trails

Nukes

Taking breath

Inferno

Men in bed and out

Towards harmless apocalypse

Virginal ships

Cannibalizing shores

Planets of spine and orgasm

Bleed

Mascara down faces

Dachau of thoughts

In the mind of

the collective person

Who splits dog skulls

vaginas

sunrise sky

In constellations of

broken dust

Wine

I still think of carnival.

CHAPTER IV

Sanguine face
aligns with hands
clutching each other.

Nodus Gordii

Dr. Manhattan

"Hope in reality is the worst of all evils because it prolongs the torments of man."

- *Friedrich Nietzsche*

All we ever see are old photographs.

1945, Brooklyn

My father's hands

spill

down

the fire
escape.

1959, Arizona bar,

Neptune waves laping against iris.

Today, meeting in a photo

on mars

before volcanoes

eternal churches of

s

p

i

bo n e &

muscl e.

August 1959,

LIGHT

tearing me into skeleton dust.

I am reassembled

into light.

My father has died

fuses travel under oceans

planet seeps firestorm.

In the mars sky

meteorites unload

a photograph.

CHAPTER V

Fallout kicks its way down firecracker fuse.

Chain-link fences ribcage rattle,

breaking playground shackles.

Iron phalanx into rising wind.

Meat

Night Owl

"Without change, something sleeps inside us, and seldom awakens."

- *Frank Herbert*

Spit lingers on lips, Laurie mouths my name.

Face crusts with dying sap, like an oak

drowning a forest in its outline.

Changing in front of me,

she says goodnight.

Blood clots.

Frozen dirt sheets

cauterize open body.

October 21st, 1985

Rorschach

"Tyger, Tyger / burning bright, / In the forests / of the night"

- *William Blake*

without my face

nobody knows me

this city is mother

with heart peeled open

on fire.

hive of fluorescent fornicating

dirty chest beat

collapsing onto me

without my face

swallowed up

in abusive orgasm.

CHAPTER VI

Wrought-iron sea.

Borne on backs of tombstones,

east east east east east

towards delta of quicksand and hungry scarabs.

East, where the sun waits to detonate in the sky.

October 25th, 1985

Rorschach

"If you gaze into the abyss, the abyss gazes also into you."

- Friedrich Nietzsche

First inkblot.

*Will you look at it for me,
and tell me what you see?*

Cataclysm street split open.

Vagina bursting with filth.

Dog head birthing maggots.

Blood crop circles backyards.

Butterfly.

Second inkblot.

How about this one?

Urns stuffed with bloated meat

smashed ceramic husks.

A mother's face, begging

to slow down

with the five dollars her skin is worth.

Behind the shout "ugly little retard,"

a marionette boy, strung to a ceiling fan.

Flowers.

First inkblot again.

Go on. Tell me what you really see.

Torn down the seam,

the underwear of a seven year old girl

adorning a cabinet

of fish hooks and meat cleavers.

Bodies raft down kerosene rivers,

Dog with head split in half.

CHAPTER VII

There is a dream.

A man's arm is elbow deep in a woman's mouth.

They mold into a crab of human limbs,

and move down an unlit hall.

Dream

Silk Spectre

Artifact womb

birthing cobwebs.

Dan and I are twins,

in sanguine smoke of a catacomb inferno.

Our faces are archangel.

Fallen, ethereal, impotent

celestial. We embrace

beneath four nuclear citadels.

CHAPTER VIII

An owl sits

in the forest tundra of New England.

It's eye, catatonic black clock,

saw-slit irises pointing north.

Veins Divine

Silk Spectre

"Grace / to be born and live as variously as possible."

- *Frank O'Hara*

Hunting

synthetic orgasm.

Obliterating

black sun empire.

Reviving

sanguine fortress.

Climaxing

wholly human,

obsidian blood.

Portcullis

Rorschach

"It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood."

- *William Shakespeare*

framed in iron rot

smoldering promise land

laid in boiled blood brick

empire of portcullis

cities drifting over magma

towards haunted Jerusalem

flock steals away

into parched night

forever cooking drought

sand turrets rise

a waterless God

buries coma denizens

CHAPTER IX

Mud fortresses hibernate,
waiting for the queue to dissolve
beyond earth's face.
Uniform seed planted,
lingering to be phoenix immersed.

Olympus Mons

Silk Spectre

*“As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence
is to kindle a light of meaning in the darkness of mere being.”*

- C. G. Jung

Side of a Martian road, brutally rescued,

wreck freezing in pheromone dust.

Dragged puking

to citadel on Mars. Horizon

layering the ground after a good shake.

Rusted Mecca receives straightjacket horde.

Terrain releases my face, sun splits skin.

I begin my orbit.

Fingerprints

Dr. Manhattan

Suspended on clay Mars.

Graveyard cosmic,

cosmic womb.

Miracle of fingerprints.

Hooked cries of gulls

suspended on clay Mars.

Graveyard cosmic,

cosmic womb.

CHAPTER X

Messiahs wait off the coast of New York.

Ignited fleets torch ocean, land cries paraffin.

Hawks

Ozymandias

Haunted artillery shells suburban kitchens.

Candy bars and alcohol keep well in the dark.

Hard dark.

Beyond the shore obsidian clouds congregate

like crows, their mouths open.

November 1st, 1985

Rorschach

World swollen with itself,
holy bile heart,
bubbling in torrents black
and white lava.

Vein rivers
lead to lighthouses
bordering frontiers.
Doors into vacant realms.

CHAPTER XI

Thundering horseback
splits open yearning maw
in Earth's belly.

Frontier

Rorschach, Night Owl

*"You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet,
there's no knowing where you might be swept off to."*

- J.R.R Tolkien

Railroad fossil follows
horseback brothers. War,
world leaking, filling
its own tomb. Famine,
screaming to taste, floating
on sand surface, void.

Colorless sibling fleet
tunnels tundra. Rip tide
latches, dividing
talons
garrote skin. Thrust
into tempest, breaking breath
on sand surface, voice.

Charred Heart Lighthouse

Ozymandias

Eyes stalk statue faces,

withered dust plague freighter

down river Styx. Kharon leaning

overboard, knifed.

Mummified cadavers roll

from sanctuary shore to abyssal

arms. Torn, dead

shrapnel left for void crows.

CHAPTER XII

“The beginning is the end is the beginning.”

– Smashing Pumpkins

A Stronger Love

Dr. Manhattan

"There is no escape – we pay for the violence of our ancestors."

- *Frank Herbert*

Midnight, November 2nd.

New York, festering prophet

of cataclysm, crusted blood pharaoh.

Sand locusts howl, God carapace.

Time loses track of me,

following to unknown.

Unknown, to love again. unknown. unknown. unknown unknown

Unknownunknownunknownunknown,

to love again, centered in

LIGHT.

Like blood running down my arm. I know.

Martyrs burst at the seams in front of me, now and forever.

I know. It will be a stronger, loving world to erode in.

Oh God, I know.