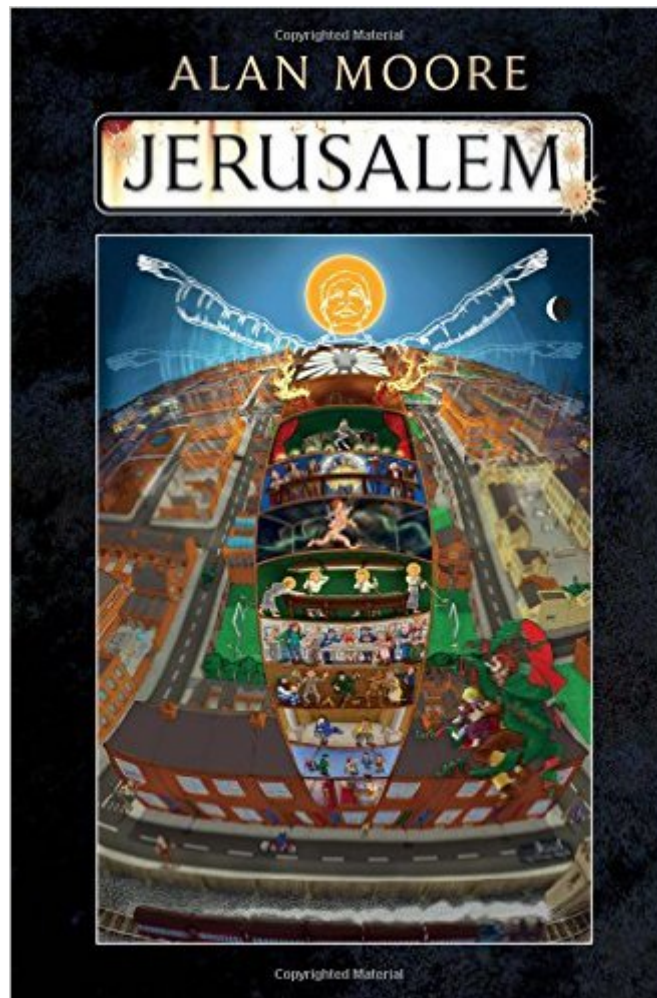


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Jerusalem



Synopsis

Fierce in its imagining and stupefying in its scope, *Jerusalem* is the tale of everything, told from a vanished gutter. In the epic novel *Jerusalem*, Alan Moore channels both the ecstatic visions of William Blake and the theoretical physics of Albert Einstein through the hardscrabble streets and alleys of his hometown of Northampton, UK. In the half a square mile of decay and demolition that was England's Saxon capital, eternity is loitering between the firetrap housing projects. Embedded in the grubby amber of the district's narrative among its saints, kings, prostitutes, and derelicts, a different kind of human time is happening, a soiled simultaneity that does not differentiate between the petrol-colored puddles and the fractured dreams of those who navigate them. Employing a kaleidoscope of literary forms and styles that ranges from brutal social realism to extravagant children's fantasy, from the modern stage drama to the extremes of science fiction, *Jerusalem's* dizzyingly rich cast of characters includes the living, the dead, the celestial, and the infernal in an intricately woven tapestry that presents a vision of an absolute and timeless human reality in all of its exquisite, comical, and heartbreaking splendor. In these pages lurk demons from the second-century Book of Tobit and angels with golden blood who reduce fate to a snooker tournament. Vagrants, prostitutes, and ghosts rub shoulders with Oliver Cromwell, Samuel Beckett, James Joyce's tragic daughter Lucia, and Buffalo Bill, among many others. There is a conversation in the thunderstruck dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, childbirth on the cobblestones of Lambeth Walk, an estranged couple sitting all night on the cold steps of a Gothic church front, and an infant choking on a cough drop for eleven chapters. An art exhibition is in preparation, and above the world a naked old man and a beautiful dead baby race along the Attics of the Breath toward the heat death of the universe. An opulent mythology for those without a pot to piss in, through the labyrinthine streets and pages of *Jerusalem* tread ghosts that sing of wealth, poverty, and our threadbare millennium. They discuss English as a visionary language from John Bunyan to James Joyce, hold forth on the illusion of mortality post-Einstein, and insist upon the meanest slum as Blake's eternal holy city. 1 map; 3 illustrations

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Customer Reviews

Renowned for his graphic narratives, Alan Moore creates this massive work of prose fiction, rivaling in length and in ambition. While not his first novel, it continues themes begun two decades ago in . In twelve deft chapters, dramatized the evolution, in dazzling linguistic and intricate historical terms, of Moore's native Northampton. inflates this setting even as it narrows it down to a few blocks of the once-bustling Boroughs, which exist in a "simultaneous eternity" as developers build and then tear down this English city's core. Its working class dwellers find not an afterlife so much as a recurring existence, within a "trans-temporal chess game." Defying the span of a brief review or facile summation, Alan Moore's evocation of his hometown sustains the meticulous composition of his graphic excursions. Lacking the brevity of a speech bubble or the compact limits of a comic-book format, challenges any reader's attention. Heady passages unfurl, as many of those taken up into the elevated realm of Mansoul, towering over the Boroughs (yet less apparent to those below still living) enter under the influence of Bedlam Jennies or Puck's Hats, fungal concoctions inviting comparisons to "eating fairies," amid a paranormal panorama of undines, Salamanders, and an Ultraduct. Those in this vortex may travel, in one case surpassing H.G. Wells' , to witness beyond "the death of day." Moore's inventive powers accelerate here, but they might bewilder, especially in the middle sections of this triple-decker tale which is a Victorian trope renewed. Rather than faltering, pressing on unveils to one's mind many wonders. Facing this other-world, two intermarried families comprise the central characters which Mansoul invites or repels. The Warrens arrive first. Siblings artist Alma and laborer Mick introduce us, via the largely omniscient narrator's voice, to their scrappy surroundings, after demolition of its imperial-era landmarks. then ambles back a century and a half, when Ern worked on London's St. Paul's. Mick, Alma and Ern receive eerie revelations from angels and Builders. Moore gradually reveals the reason for these ancient architects, and he populates the story-line with more Warrens and Vernells, who also have their own close encounters with those who hover about Mansoul. Named after John Bunyan's , "it was the very seat of war." Here, clashes summon demons. Mansoul, made of "congealed dreams and

memories," stands for Moore's version of space-time itself. "Think of your life as being like a book, a solid thing where the last line's already written while you're starting the first page. Your consciousness progresses through the narrative from its beginning to its end, and you become caught up in the illusion of events unfolding and time going by as these things are experienced by the characters within the drama." This scene's shifty teller boasts a lineage back to the apocryphal . He tells Mick, swept up on a memorable "Sam O'Day ride" through the dark and the light as "an astral toddler," how "life and death" work, with admirable if surprising clarity. Sam continues: "In reality, however, all the words that shape the tale are fixed upon the page, the pages bound in their unvarying order." In the mind of their reader, progress occurs, but this remains an illusion. Instead, the book of life can be read over and over. So, every day "and every deed's eternal." Sam urges on his transported charge a motto Moore shares: "Live them in such a way that you can bear to live with them eternally." , for Moore, represents more than his fantastic plot. It stands for a credo, one that in our world refusing conventional belief may survive past piety or doubt. For, as an eighth-century monk learns, when he tries to center Northampton at the exact crossroads of England, hauling a stone from the real Jerusalem all the way to St. Gregory's Church, mysticism can tempt earthly calculations and thwart clerical confidences. The uncanny interactions the Warrens and the Vernells endure closer to the present (having taken ten years for Moore to write, most of this action stops in 2006) echo. A freed slave from America, the son of immigrants from post-war Sierra Leone, Ern's demented son, Buffalo Bill, Oliver Cromwell, the author of "Amazing Grace" and the members of the band Bauhaus fill the parade of figures who pass through or set up home as mortals in Northampton. What connects them, surmises Moore, is a gothic, altered, visionary sense. Their exchanges upend conventions. Moore favors his own detached telling more than the chronologically faithful linguistic ventriloquism of dialects and vocabularies that kindled , but some chapters in this one-volume trilogy adapt their own styles. Notably, a play starring Bunyan, the mad poet of nature John Clare, James Joyce's daughter and psychiatric patient Lucia, her friend Samuel Beckett, St. Thomas Becket, a "half-caste woman" elsewhere appearing as Marla Stiles and a married couple stirring up the Warren-Vernell mix demonstrates Moore's knack. He creates a Beckettian drama even as he satirizes its content, improving on its form as he links it to local history. And, as with the analogy that other Sam shows, characters repeat and return throughout this unvarying book's order. It's not all gloom. Humor surfaces, whether poking fun at Alma's scarecrow appearance, the simply wrong name of Newlife granted a hideous corporate block, or an everyday night down the pub. Hapless Ben Parritt "looked round appraisingly at the establishment's half-dozen other clients, motionless upon their stools like ugly novelty-set chessmen, sidelined and

morose."Moore varies approaches, when he lets one character late on burst into rhyme, or earlier when Lucia's monologue descends into a verbal morass of , fifty daunting pages mirroring the opening of , when Moore reduced the consciousness of a Neolithic boy to 4000 stunted words. Here, Moore opens up rather than contracts his expressions; that contrast will weary some while exciting many. A reader may wish to pause, and let this epic find its rhythms within oneself. Moore never seems to flag in this telling. One part begins with Bob Goldman's gumshoe parody before settling into a more Moore-ish pace. But this may be an inevitable capitulation to the weight of the imaginative universe built here that threatens to crush any single inhabitant's utterances or ego. In this gigantic production, Moore avoids cliché, he regales us with a local chronicle demanding immersion into its erudition and he plays fairly with expectations. How this new ends will be discovered by the dogged, but the conclusion, circling back to the invitation offered Mick by Alma, satisfies and stuns. Having announced retirement from the graphic arena, in this printed spectacle, Moore dazzles.

Epic in scope, I'm about half-way through and can only say wow. Just wow. His prose is polished to the point of perfection and his imagery is vivid. It's evoking a sense of both loss and joy inside of me; rekindling memories of my own childhood haunts in my small town, tied to a metaphysical and fantastical rendering. I'm reading a true classic of my time and I imagine I feel like a reader did reading a Dickens' novel the year it was written or stumbling upon Frank Herbert's Dune in 1965. It's a labor of love, but one that will influence me for the rest of my life and those that choose to embark down the cobblestone and back alleys of Moore's brilliant imagination will be moved. Some might think it pretentious and it probably is, but it's got the imagination and literary chops to back it up. Immerse yourself in its beauty. 5 stars!

I will be reading this extraordinary novel for the rest of my life. Joyce and Becket are named here as comparable writers but has anyone said the book has the ability to grip you and hold you and never fully let you go like DICKENS. THIS IS EITHER PRE-MODERN OR POST-MODERN OR BOTH. It's unclassifiable and that's one of its many strengths. Dickens with an extra-dimension of speculative science, mysticism and something which can only be called 'the Moore effect'. Get your copy now. You'll be reading it and loving it for the rest of your life.

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