

himself) looks and sounds ridiculous. It's genuinely criminal that Doc Fate was axed to make way for this clown, but regardless of that the book isn't very good. Stevens is neither well-defined nor likable, the story makes no sense thus far, and the artwork is poor. This is one twist of fate we could have done without.

While *Fate* butchers one heroic legacy, another is admirably sustained in the pages of the *Flash*. I was among the many outraged fans when Barry (Flash) Allen was killed during the Crisis in '85 and replaced by his erstwhile sidekick Wally West. About a decade later, I can look at it more objectively: there never was any good reason to kill off Barry, and writer Mike Baron did his best in the early issues of the new *Flash* series to make Wally an obnoxious, womanizing jerk, but the character has mellowed considerably under subsequent writers. Wally's not the immaculately bland Barry Allen, but he's not a selfish, sexist moron either (nor had he been prior to Baron's inconsistent, iconoclastic tinkering): instead, the character has stabilized as a regular guy who actually has FUN being a superhero. Imagine! No overdramatic angst (as Wally himself notes), just a guy out for a good time while remembering (sometimes reluctantly) that super-powers come with responsibilities.

Series writer Mark Waid is unquestionably one of the best comic writers in the business right now, in part because he can open credibly human yet entertaining stories that resonate with the sense of wonder that made comics great. *Flash # 0* is exemplary of this heady storytelling mixture, and is also an excellent intro to the series as Wally's life literally flashes before his eyes in a time warp. The only sour note is the fact that the current "Terminal Velocity" storyline (leading to *Flash # 100*) reportedly signals the death of Wally West: his proposed replacement is teen speedster Impulse, an airhead teen-ager (the most popular revamping type apart from the aforementioned grim guys). Oh well, this is nice while it lasts.

Anyone remember *Green Arrow*? Y'know, bearded, green-garbed archer with a social conscience and a quiver full of gimmicky arrows? If not, don't feel bad. Oliver Queen is trying to remember himself, and he IS Green Arrow. Of course, he hasn't been himself lately. For the past decade or so, Green Arrow has lapsed into senselessly bloody vigilantism. That's both a betrayal of the original character concept, and unoriginal, unpalatable storytelling to boot. At any rate, after years of degeneration, Green Arrow realizes how far he's fallen when he's forced (during the events of *Zero Hour*) to kill his best friend, Hal (Green Lantern) Jordan.

*Green Arrow # 0* opens with Oliver Queen chucking archery and super-heroics for good, and ending up in a monastery to try to regain his lost moral focus. He begins to do just that, and picks up an admirer and prospective sidekick in the form of martial arts expert and starry-eyed aspiring archer Conner Hawke. When mysterious assassins try to off Ollie, he and his new friend leave the monastery to dope out this development, and the kinder, gentler Green Arrow's adventures begin anew. Scripting is pretty good, though the art by veteran Jim Aparo is a bit of a yawn, and sometimes awkward or

unclear in its storytelling: this is exacerbated tenfold by the colourist's many goof-ups of the characters' skin colour, all the more confusing since everyone in the monastery is bald and they all (including our heroes) start to look alike after a while. Quibbles aside, it's refreshing to see an attempt to return Green Arrow to greatness.

As for *Green Lantern*, there's no going back-- at least, not since the events of "Emerald Twilight" and *Zero Hour*. Those stories saw classic DC hero Hal (Green Lantern) Jordan driven



mad by the destruction of his hometown, Coast City, and turning against the Green Lantern Corps when they try to prevent him from "recreating" the city with his ring. The desperate Hal destroys the Guardians (and many of his fellow Green Lanterns) before absorbing their energy for himself, becoming a mad cosmic force. Then, during *Zero Hour*, he takes his plans one step further and tries to recreate the universe. Since this would entail destroying the old universe, Hal's heroic peers get miffed and gang up on him, culminating in his being fatally shot by old pal Green Arrow.

This leads into *Green Lantern # 0*, where the wounded (but still feisty) Hal retreats to Oa and makes a last-ditch attempt to tap the planet's power for his purposes. He is opposed by new (and sole remaining) Green Lantern Kyle Rayner (another of those airhead teenager takes on an old concept), who was given the last power ring as the Guardians' dying act. Despite some soul-searching, it comes down to a classic "this universe isn't big enough for the both of us" showdown in which Oa is blown up and takes poor, crazy Hal with it. This ties up many loose ends in Green Lantern continuity (not to mention serving as an epilogue to *Zero Hour*) and is a very moving story (Hal comes across as sympathetic and devastatingly tragic moreso here than he has anywhere else since his villainous escapades began), but it's still a kick in the teeth to see a classic character dealt such a lousy finale. Ah well, Kyle Rayner is tolerable, and *Green Lantern # 0* is a worthy coda to this zero-hooplah.

And speaking of butchered classics, how 'bout that Hawkman? For the confused or curious reader, the original Hawkman (Carter Hall) was an archaeologist who took to fighting crime with ancient weapons and a winged anti-gravity harness of his own invention after discovering through dreams

that he was the reincarnation of a heroic Egyptian prince. The later, modern-day Hawkman (Katar Hol) was a policeman from planet Thanagar who ripped off the original Hawkman's modus operandi (fighting modern-day crimes with ancient weapons) as part of his efforts to study Earth law-enforcement (co-incidentally, the Thanagarian police uniform was a near duplicate of the original Hawkman's in both form and function).

The original 1940's Hawkman has been in semi-retirement for a while, but the newer version was very much active after DC concluded its continuity-restructuring *Crisis on Infinite Earths* mini-series in 1985. Like the Atom, Hawkman seemed one of the few Justice Leaguers to escape grim revamping, but Tim Truman changed all that with *Hawkworld*, a mini-series (and subsequent regular series) which retroactively scrapped the modern Hawkman's previous continuity (despite his many post-Crisis appearances) and started him all over again as a grimmer, grittier, angst-ridden, armored, metal-winged, raygun-wielding lethal avenger.

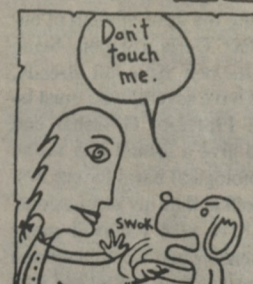
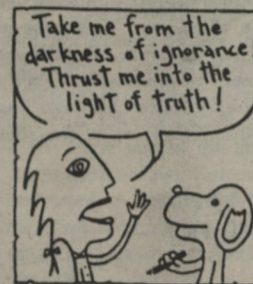
The revamping didn't go over all that well (and the multiple post-Crisis incarnations of Hawkman were confusing), so DC set out to overhaul the Hawkster in *Zero Hour*: it's explained therein that multiple contradictory incarnations of Hawkman were merely leftover temporal anomalies from the Crisis. Not only that, but this "Hawkgod" thing shows up claiming to have subconsciously

empowered and/or inspired all the various Hawk heroes, whom he sets about trying to conquer and absorb. The various divergent Hawkmen are swallowed up, but before the Hawkgod can devour the remaining morsels he's engulfed by some random time explosion (*Zero Hour*'s fulla them) which fuses him and the original Hawkman and Hawkgirl into the body and mind of Katar (revamped modern-day Hawkman) Hol, who as a result has the combined power and knowledge of all the Hawk heroes and the primal spirit that inspired them.

What does this mean? Well, Katar's stronger and faster, he can read people's auras and communicate with birds now, he has natural feathered wings that he can retract into his back at will, and he's relying on a combo of alien tech and ancient Earth weapons. This is all very cool and pleasantly evocative of the earlier Hawkmen, which was the intention. Unfortunately, it's marred by two things: first, the infusion of who-knows-how-many hawk heroes into Katar's psyche has left him rather dazed, slightly amnesiac, and morbidly philosophical. This could get old rather quickly. Second, despite his new penchant for introspection, he's more savage than in any previous incarnation: the zero issue concludes with his hunting down and bloodily slaughtering a gang of criminals who threatened his friends ("because I can," he says, when asked to justify this). Hawkman is visually and conceptually intriguing again, but in practice he's being played as a dime-a-dozen bloody vigilante. Stop him before he kills again.

Wow! Outta space, outta time, I'm outta here! Join me next week for more reading material about reading material (the universe is amazingly symmetrical, isn't it?).

-- Sean McQuaid



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