

## Identity in *V for Vendetta*

الهوية في الفاء تشير إلى فانديتا

Noha Alhussein Mostafa

PHD student

الملخص تسعى الورقة إلى فحص الجوهر الأدبي لـ Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta*. تهدف هذه الورقة إلى فحص العلاقات بين الصورة والنص في *V for Vendetta* أثناء استكشاف العديد من تقنيات ما بعد الحداثة. تتبنى الورقة نظرية سكوت ماكلود في صناعة الرسوم الهزلية من خلال تعمية كل من الكلمات والصور اعتماداً على خمسة خيارات: اختيار اللحظة، اختيار الإطار، اختيار الصورة، اختيار الكلمة، واختيار التدفق. يحاول تحليل ما إذا كان تعمية نص الصورة في *V for Vendetta* يوفر مرحلة عميقة لموضوع الهوية.

### Abstract

The paper seeks to examine the literary essence of Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta*. This Paper aims at examining image-text relations in *V for Vendetta* while exploring many of the postmodern techniques. The paper adopts Scott McCloud's theory of making comics by blinding both word and images depending on five choices: choice of moment, choice of frame, choice of image, choice of word, and choice of flow. It attempts to analyze whether the image-text blinding in *V for Vendetta* provides a profound staging for the theme of Identity.

This paper considers Alan Moore as a remarkable postmodern author who has paved the way for comics to be regarded as a sophisticated literary genre. Generally, postmodernism refers to certain features of post- World War II literature. It can be thought of as a movement that emphasizes that "there is a better world than the modern one". (Lemert 22) Thus, Moore can be thought of as one of the pioneer postmodernists who have believed that comics stands out as a postmodern genre in terms of themes and techniques. Alan Moore manages through integrating words and images to apply many postmodern techniques, including but not restricted to hybridity, deconstruction, irony, intertextuality, historiographic metafiction, nonlinear narratives, different and unreliable narrators, and a tendency towards scattering chaos in opening and closure.

Alan Moore is "born in 18 November 1953", he is a great English comics' author. It is signified, "Like all great writers, Alan Moore has unmistakable voice, the power of which comes from an understanding of humanity in all its weakness and its failings, combined with a sense of empathy, tinged with an air of disappointment, a hint of unspoken frustration." (Williams and Lyons P.36-7) Booker affirms, "Alan Moore has gained increasing critical acclaim for the complexity and sophistication of his work...He has provided a new and more respected outlet for the comics art form." (xxi) Inevitably, *V for Vendetta*, has played an evolutionary role to the art of comics. It is stated states, "Alan Moore carefully puts together words and images to form his masterpiece, *V for Vendetta*. Through this novel, it

---

is evident that there is an underlying message that the author is trying to convey." (Wiradharma, "Comic Analysis")

It is hard to ignore the contribution of *V for Vendetta* in signifying comics as a postmodern literary medium. It is suggested, "Its negative themes laid the groundwork for the dystopias prevalent" post war. It is characterized by complex storylines that focus on the protagonists who, despite their heroism, are imperfect and vulnerable. Here, a postmodern technique is utilized, which is deconstruction, as V, the hero protagonist, commits murders, which deconstructs the traditional norm that stresses on the idealism of heroes, who should be flawless. Booker adds, "The theme of vengeful justice is seen frequently in the actions of this age's increasingly violent characters." (14) V represents "a ruthless avenger who sets out to assassinate leading members of the regime – all of whom transpire to be associated with a concentration camp where 'V' was once incarcerated and tortured". (Chapman 305) Thus, Alan Moore's brilliant work, *V for Vendetta*, deconstructs the myth of ideal superheroes, so comics seems darker and gloomier by his sophisticated social and political criticism. It is suggested, "This consistency enables Moore's writing to engage in a steady stream of commentary upon the politics of the 1980s. Not all of this is directly analogous with the changes in Britain and the United States during the rise of the new right. Instead, Moore uses historical criticism to contextualize contemporary concerns." (Little 148)

The comics is about the motivating story of V's mission to rebel against the "Norsefire" government, which has eliminated whoever and whatever that impeded its own idea of ideal societal perception. It is noted, "though a cursory glance may suggest to some individuals that comics are simple or simplistic", they have the ability to "deal with real-life issues". (Kelly 7) Comics, unlike what they are generically perceived to depict, offers a wide range of complex themes. In *V for Vendetta*, minorities and dissenters have been sent into resettlement camps, where they have been tortured and murdered. They have murdered Muslims, Blacks, and homosexuals as well. Books, films, and music have been forbidden since they contain information regarding previous cultures. Booker adds, "It became evident that society became a slave to propaganda." Here, there is a direct reference to another postmodern technique, which is the involvement of different and more likely unreliable narrators who may manipulate the reader's perception and try to gain their compliance. V tries to send a message to people to rebel against such repressive government. V begins his revolution by destroying political buildings, and assassinating significant individuals who contributed to the oppression of society till he has been fatally shot. Evey Hammond has been his first student whom he decides to teach her how to rebel. Moore acclaims extensively that a bullet can kill a person, but an idea is bulletproof. Booker explains, "As V dies, he passes on his legacy to Evey, who adopts his costume, sending his body in an underground train full of explosives to destroy

---

Downing Street. Evey announces that with the government gone people must now choose what comes next." (666) Here, another postmodern technique is adopted, which is historiographic metafiction. The mask of V, muses the assets of rebellion against repression, as it creates a modern version of Guy Fawkes figure who rebelled against the increasing oppression of the Roman Catholics in England during the reign of James I. (Di Liddo 174)

Identity is a very crucial theme that *V for Vendetta* is concerned to tackle through both words and images. This postmodern word-image hybrid script successfully narrates the story, reflects the theme of identity and creates literature. *V for Vendetta* expresses disappointment at the oppressive discriminative policies adopted by the government of the United Kingdom, especially by its Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, whose policies tend to deprive the citizen of London of their identity. *V for Vendetta* attempts to propose predicted scenarios about futuristic London if such policies become perpetual. In *V for Vendetta*, it is suggested that people's true identities are sometimes imprisoned behind their false sense of themselves and their abilities. People, to set free themselves and retain their own identity, need to be true to themselves and their principles. They need to realize that they always hold the key to their identity because if they realize that nothing can deprive them of their identity. Thus, the paper analyzes the amazing ability of *V for Vendetta* in tackling the theme of identity in a shrewder way than other established literary genres through both words and images through Scott McCloud's five choices: choice of

moment, choice of frame, choice of image, choice of word, and choice of flow.

*V for Vendetta* begins with a mysterious figure wearing a Guy Fawkes mask, later identifies himself as V, rescuing a teen girl named Evey from being raped and killed by fingermen, a vice detail on stake-out. After rescuing Evey, V takes her to the roof of a building. V tells her that he is out this night because of an exceptional occasion. He says, "Tonight is special. Tonight is a celebration. A grand opening." (Moore 13) It is the fifth of November, while inviting Evey to watch the beginning of his rebellion, a postmodern technique is utilized, which is intertextuality, as V quotes the Guy Fawkes rhyme, "Remember, remember, the Fifth of November, the Gunpowder treason and plot. I know no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be forgot." (V, 1989, P.14) like Guy Fawkes, who repelled against the increasing oppression of the Roman Catholics in England during the reign of James I, by attempting to detonate the Parliament, V starts his rebellion by blowing up the houses of the parliament, then he lights the sky with fireworks. Here, a postmodern tendency towards scattering chaos in the opening, as it will later spread in the closure, is utilized. After Evey has watched the explosion and fireworks, V blindfolds her takes her to his place which he calls the Shadow Gallery. There, Evey becomes fascinated by V's framed images, huge book collection, and music because she has never had access to any of those things. Evey, along with all the citizens of London, have never had

---

access to any of these sorts of things as they are prohibited by Fate.

In the shadow Gallery, V and Evey begin to talk to each other. Their chats are a way to get acquainted with each other. Evey explains to V how terrifying her childhood was. When she was seven, she suffered the catastrophic consequences of a world war. Then, when she was eleven, her mother died. Afterward, at age 12, a terrifying party called Norsefire took over. Shortly later, her father was taken away and never seen again. For four years, she had been obliged to work in a factory with many other children, and has lived in a cold dirty accommodation with insufficient food or money, until she considers working as a prostitute. Here, a postmodern non-linear technique is utilized while Evey was recalling what has happened to her in the past.

V, then, blew the statue of Justice, consequently, Anthony Lilliman, the Bishop of the Church of England as well as the voice of the Norsefire government in Sundays' sermons and a good servant to this fascist party deprecates this incident. He makes full use of his divine impact on the people and promotes for the discriminative principles held by the Norsefire government. Then, he criminalizes V and accuses him of being a wicked figure who is as cursed as Satan is. Like Satan, he wants to whisper to the vulnerable parishes and tempts them with evilness. After the sermon ends, the readers are dazed to see his Grace getting ready to molester a young girl, which turns out to be Evey. Here,

irony technique is utilized. Ironically, the preacher, hiding under his religious cloak, seeks to manipulate the people's perception, gain their compliance and damn V as a sinner as well as avoid his temptation. However, he himself is a perverted sinner who is tempted with evilness. V kills the Bishop, Evey is distressed because she becomes an accomplice in a murder. It has been Evey who has wanted to help V, but she has not recognized what is getting herself into. Later, she admits her association in the assassination of the Bishop and apologizes to V. Yet, she promises she will never do such thing again, even for V.

After calming Evey down, V visits Dr. Surridge and kills her. While investigating the murder of Dr. Surridge, Eric Finch, the head of the Nose, the police division, discovers Dr. Surridge's diary of her time at Larkhill and reads it. He reveals to Mr. Susan, the head of the Norsefire government, "And I still don't know who codename 'V' is. But I think I know what he is." (Moore 79) He then audibly reads few extracts. This diary exposes the true identity of the Norsefire government, whose atrocities match those of the Nazis. Much like Auschwitz, Larkhill was a concentration camp where inhumane experiments were carried on involuntarily. The readers learn some clues as to why those inmates were imprisoned and subjected to this hormonal experiment as those subjects were black, or Asian, or homosexuals.

The readers see glimpses of the sufferings of the subjects that were experimented; more than 75% of the

subjected inmates became terribly sick and deceased within four days. Few days later, all of the subjected inmates deceased, except V, "The man in Room 5", physically he seemed fine, but mentally, he suffered from a psychotic breakdown. (Moore 81) Aiming at studying V's case, he was allowed to order fertilizer, ammonia, and grease solvent, to cultivate the camp's garden, and decorate the staff quarters. Yet, V used fertilizer, ammonia, and grease solvent to formulate mustard gas and napalm and blew up the Larkhill camp. Here, again, a postmodern non-linear technique is utilized while recalling what has happened in the Larkhill camp.

Later, V deserted Evey in the streets of London. Then, he invades the NTV broadcasting unit to broadcast the video he has taped to the people of London, while fingermen are determined to storm in, prevent V from running his video and contain the situation. In his tape, V criticizes the people of London and threatens to let them go because of their lately bad performance as citizens. It is noted, "Furthermore, in his Guy Fawkes speech directed at the British public he does not offer assistance. Instead, he himself appears like the authoritarian boss of a company, making his employees accountable for the state the country." (Vanderbeke 214) V, then, criticizes the corruption of the Norsefire government, as he says, "The management is very bad. In fact, let us not mince words...The management is terrible". (Moore 116) Then, again, V scolds the people of London because they "don't seem to want to face up to any real responsibility or to be your own boss", instead, they submissively submit

themselves to the besmirched government. (Moore 114) V adds, "We've had a string of embezzlers, frauds, liars and lunatics making a string of catastrophic decisions. This is plain fact. But who elected them?" (Moore 116) It is explained, "V's speech, which, rather than being a mere accusation, intends to awaken the citizens from their long passivity." (González 211) Thus, V condemns the people of London for electing them as he says, "It was you! You who appointed these people! You who give them the power to make your decisions for you!"..."You have accepted without question their senseless orders." (Moore 117) V gives the people of London a two years opportunity to mend their life or they are going to be fired. V declares, "I will, however, be generous. You will be granted two years to show me some improvement in your work. If at the end of that time you are still unwilling to make a go of it, you are fired." (Moore 117-8) Fingermen manage to break into and fire a hail of bullets at the figure they think to be V.

Being abandoned, again, elsewhere, it seems that nothing has changed in Evey. Evey moves on from V's companionship to Gordon's, a suspected man who embraces Evey in his home. Gordon invites Evey to a bar where they listen to a song about the expedience of the practices of Norsefire government. Gordon and Evey notice Robert, Gordon's ex-convicted friend and an ex-cooperator to the Norsefire government, while seeking a deal from Creedy, the head of the secret police, known as the Finger, to save his mother but he fails. Frustrated for being let down by the government that he once escorted, Robert bursts about how

---

the people of London should not be living the way they do and suggests that it would be better if a bomb falls and kills all of them. Suddenly, a group of secret finkermen reveal themselves and attack him brutally. As things get nasty, Gordon leads Evey out of the bar. Yet, a small change in Evey emerges, seeming partially revolting, Evey reveals that Robert is right, "We shouldn't have to live like this. Should we?", and Gordon agrees with her, "No, kid, we shouldn't. What are you going to do about it?" (Moore 130) Although V has let Evey go, V appears to be keeping his eyes on her.

Shortly after, a felonious man called Harper stabs Gordon to death. Evey, feeling agitated by the fact that is alone again, decides to revenge for his death by attempting to shot Harper. Unfortunately, someone prevents her and knocks her out. Then, Evey awakes to find herself in a place presumed to be a prison operated by the Norsefire government, where Evey gets exposed to a brutal torture while being accused of the attempted murder of Creedy, and being asked to give information about V. In her cell, Evey finds a letter from an ex-prisoner called Valerie. Valerie's letter describes the life before and after the Norsefire government's inauguration and suggests that her captors can take everything from her but not that last inch of herself. Here, again, a postmodern non-linear technique is utilized while recalling what has happened in the Norsefire government's realm. If people maintain control of "that last inch", they can retain freedom and identity. (Moore 159) The interrogator reads a confession that he wants Evey to

sign stating that V has brainwashed and sexually abused her to make her help him. Evey refuses, saying, "No" even after threatening to execute her. (Moore 161) A guard urges Evey to sign the confession, saying, "Sign that statement. You could be out inside three years. Perhaps they'd find you a job with the Finger. A lot of your sort get work with the Finger". Yet, Evey refuses again, saying, "But I'd rather die behind the chemical sheds". So, he replies, "Then there's nothing left to threaten with, is there? You are free." (Moore 162) Evey is given an opportunity to save her life, at the expense of her "last inch". (Moore 159) Rather than sacrificing her own identity, Evey refuses. Evey's own greatest opponent is her own cowardice and fear. She proves herself by refusing to sacrifice her identity, she realizes that she is truly free, and can do as she pleases. Near ahead, Evey discovers that the guards are just scarecrows, as is the interrogator and all that she has heard has been a tape recorder. Evey manages to get out of the prison to find herself in the Shadow Gallery where V looks forward to seeing her.

Startlingly, Evey discovers that V is the one who has tortured her. Evey becomes so annoyed. V claims that he has done this horrible thing out of love, "Because I love you! Because I want to set you free." (Moore167) V leads Evey to her identity by making her face her own fear; V makes Evey experience what he has gone through in the prison run by the Norsefire government. V wants Evey to realize that he has not imprisoned her because she has already imprisoned herself inside the false principles

imposed by the Norsefire government as well as her false sense of happiness. V reminds Evey with the misfortune fate of all whom she has loved. All that V wants is to make Evey feel freedom. V tells Evey, “You were in a cell, Evey. They offered you a choice between the death of your Principles and the death of your body...You said you’d rather die. You faced your own death, and you were calm and still.” (Moore 171) V assists Evey to gather herself and stand on her feet then he leads her to the roof of the Shadow Gallery. V tells Evey that “no more blindfolds” shall be used, which illustrates that V can see Evey as a matured figure, she is no longer blindfolded by her desire for false happiness, thus can perceive the reality of her country. Evey says, "Everything's is so... different..." (Moore 172)





(Fig. (1) - Moore 167-172)

In these panels, action to action and subject to subject transitions are utilized. These transitions help in furthering the plot while laying out Evey's complete transformation. For the first few panels, stunned Evey is displayed, while taking some time to incorporate V into the panels. Evey's shock resembles that of the readers, for the readers have seen her suffer through torture and unspeakable horrors, never thought of it to turn out to be a ploy by V. Then, the panels display both V and Evey's points of view. V challenges Evey's mistaken identity, by making her go

through fake imprisonment so he could make her get rid of it, and get her to let in freedom. For Evey, all the injustice that people face in their everyday life is “Just life, that’s all, it’s how life is”. (V, 1989, P. 170). However, for V, what Evey considers life, is imprisonment, the happiness that Evey values is none but a masked complacency. The seeking of false happiness is what has kept Evey and the people of London from rejecting oppression; it is what has kept them meek. What V aims for with Evey is to get her out of her complacent bubble, and help her see the world for what it really is and discovering the true identity of the Norsefire government.

The selection of camera angles and distances best reflects the difficulties Evey faces in accepting of her transformation. As high, eye-level, and low angles are displayed, the readers get transfixed while the story of the realization of one’s identity is utilized. The use of high angle in the panels where Evey confronts V with the aggression of his ploy, demonstrates how V rises above Evey’s emotional distress and anger while he stands still, guiding her towards processing her imprisonment experience.

Low angle is utilized in eight panels. The panel where Evey tells V that she has been living happily in the shadow gallery till he has thrown her out, then in the panels where V tells Evey that this false happiness has imprisoned her, then in the panel where V reminds her with the beloved ones that she has lost within the Norsefire’s reign. It is then utilized in

the panels where Evey is running from V as he tells her the truth about life, bars, and her self-imprisonment, then in the panel where V resembles his former transformation with Evey's ongoing transformation and finally in the last panel where Evey displays freedom. Low angle is used in all of them to illustrate Evey's lack of control over her life, her false sense of perception of the reality, her tendency for escapism, her sense of powerlessness and stimulate her sense of insecurity and distress. However in the last panel it is used to depict Evey's transcendence, her silhouette is human however she gets rid of all that weighs her down.

Eye-level is the most commonly used angle, it helps the readers to identify with the characters and get more engaged in the ongoing actions. It is also used to allow the readers to take sides and draw their own conclusion about what is happening within the panels; as some may justify V's questionable ploy as it achieves its goals and eventually Evey develop her own identity, whereas others may accuse him of adopting the same horrible methods of the Norsefire government that he always rejects.

In addition to camera angles, different distances are displayed to add meaning. Extreme long and long views are utilized to highlight Evey's distress and her shock after realizing the place where she is. They bring out her false sense of place when she notices that her imprisonment has not been real and all that time she has been in the shadow gallery. They play the same role with the readers; they reveal to the readers that what has been previously

---

perceived as a prison running by the Norsefire government turns out to be the shadow gallery. Medium view is used to frame the interaction between both V and Evey and elaborate their relation to one another. Evey confronts V for what he has made her go through. Then she runs away and eventually falls, but V is there to help her rise as he did back in Larkhill. As V takes Evey to the roof, he watches in awe as Evey sheds the layers that tied her down, he watches her as she reaches for her freedom with open arms, no longer tied down with fear, naivety and cowardice.

Close-ups and extreme close-ups focus on displaying Evey's changing feelings, and attitudes clearly, while processing this ploy and realizing the truth, to show how deep this experience has changed her. They also focuses on V's attitude, it is noted, "When Evey confronts him with his actions, V appears dismissive and almost unfeeling, even claiming that he had to make her suffer out of love." (Vanderbeke 214) V cares less for Evey's emotions but cares more for standing behind her till she reaches her freedom and retains her identity.

As for the choice of image, Evey's change is visualized through character design, facial expressions and body language. While V is the one who has orchestrated the entire thing, in this scene he is merely a commenter or rather a bystander, he only guides Evey to process and prosper. It is explained:

The imagery in this situation is rather striking. During the conversation, V keeps his superior stance at all times,

looking down on Evey in each of the panels. The angle of perception, however, shows him predominantly diminished in the background, while Evey is presented larger in the foreground. In addition, while she is mobile he remains absolutely rigid, as unmoving as the mask he wears. (Vanderbeke 214)

Evey is bald now, she no longer sports her shiny blonde hair, in eliminating that visually distinctive trait, the readers mark her transformation, the blonde hair belongs to the naïve child, and she is now matured. Evey's facial expressions body language and hand gesture track her going through the five stages of acceptance. At first, she is in denial that all she has been through is fake and that it has been V all along, she has not been caught by the Norsefire government, her life has never been in danger, it has been just another one of V's ploys. Evey stands dazedly with her eyes wide open, her mouth slightly rounded, her arms out and her palms wide open, finding it hard to believe, she clasps her hand in front her chest and looks down and away, cynically, she covers her face with hands, and huddles herself in a corner while attaching herself to the wall.

Then comes angriness, as she realizes what V has put her through, she gets angry, unable to accept the reality that V is striving to achieve, still swimming in her complacency. Evey stands in a bowed wide stance wringing her fists in front of her screaming at V in an antagonistic posture. She quickly moves to the third stage, bargaining, declaring that she has been happy with her life, and bargains herself into

delusion, that V's vision is nothing but a fantasy and that there is no other way to live life. Evey spurts with skeptical narrow eyes, shrank back, hunched shoulders, while shuffling her arms behind her body while facing V claiming her happiness and denying V's illusion. Then, unable to hear V's evidences, she flees while deafening herself with her own hands, as V tells her "You're in a prison, Evey ... You've been in a prison so long, you no longer believe there's a world outside." (Moore 170) V does not allow her to dwindle for long; V's words thrust Evey into the fourth stage of acceptance, depression. She cries for the life that she has lived, for the people she has lost and the horror she has faced. Unable to stand by herself, Evey's hugs herself to a pillar, nevertheless, Evey collapses on her knees suffering from shortness of breath. Getting cuddled by V, Evey parks on V's lap, looking up at him while crossing her arms and legs like a baby inside his mother's womb.

With V guiding her, he gets her to the final stage of acceptance by getting her to acknowledge what she has felt when she has faced death in prison. In that moment, Evey is free, and after her acceptance of what V has done, she embraces that freedom. Evey stands tall, lifts her head while wrapping her arms around herself, then she holds her arms up and pushes her chest out in a firm posture. The portrayal of Evey's transcendence is almost ethereal, she stands in the rain, naked, embracing life the way she should have done from the beginning. Evey's rebirth is very similar to V's, in their nakedness they are both reborn, and in that rebirth lies all the power. This scene manage to deliver a powerful

message about realizing one's self and developing identity through hardship and tribulation in both V's and Evey's rebirth and let the readers to decide whether to agree or disagree with V's method.

As for the choice of words, they are displayed in an intersecting manner. Wolk suggests, "Comics simultaneously feed the parts of the brain that make sense of written language and pictures." (23) V's words reflect his views on life and what he believes to be essential to live freely. Evey argues, "You say you want to set me free and you put me in a prison." V replies, "I didn't put you in a prison, Evey. I just showed you the bars." Evey objects, she claims that she has been happy, "I was happy! I was happy until you threw me out." (Moore 170) V claims that this happiness is the worst prison of all and asks whether her false happiness deserves more than her freedom. V says, "Happiness is a prison, Evey. Happiness is the most insidious prison of all." He criticizes the way Gordon lived saying, "Your lover lived in the penitentiary that we are all born into, and was forced to rake the dregs of that world for his living". (Moore 169) Gordon was a progressive, making the best out of a bad situation; V explains that Gordon has been only a "better kind of prisoner". (Moore 170)

Eventually, another "inmate" in the prison of society stabbed Gordon. V rejects the notion of doing whatever is possible to survive given his anarchic views, which is satiric, since V tortures Evey to achieve his goal. As he takes Evey by the hand and leads her to the elevator, she asks if

---

he will make her wear blindfolds again, his words “All the blindfolds are gone”, reflects how he sees Evey in a new light, he no longer sees her as a little naïve child, but as a mature fearless woman. (Moore 171) The blindfold is also a symbol of Evey’s mistaken view of her identity as her naivety blinded her from discovering her true identity.

Shortly after, V shows Evey the red roses that Valerie has talked about its disappearance after the Norsefire party took over and express her wish to see them again in her letter, and that V leaves every time he assassinates one of the officials of Larkhill Camp. V asks Evey if she would like him to give Harper a rose for her, to help her revenge the murder of Gordon, but Evey refuses and turns his offer down, she asks him to let the rose to grow saying, "let it grow". Evey’s rejection to play according to V’s rules emphasizes her sense of maturity, as she is free from all the taboos. Now, she can make her own decisions. Rather than unquestionably adopting V’s vicious ways, Evey decides to put Gordon’s death behind her, spare Harper, and continue her life. Call argues, “V accomplishes this through questionable methods, but in the end Evey comes to understand her experience as transformative and liberating.” (164) V informs Evey about his intension to give London red roses.

After reconciling with Evey, V continues his mission and donates bombs to several places in London including the eye, ear, and mouth’s bureaus causing malfunctioning in both surveillance and speaking broadcasting systems.

Consequent to V's actions, disarray spreads whether in the streets of London or in the Norsefire government itself. V explains to Evey that when governments are about to collapse, they constrict and send cracks through everything. Here again irony is utilized as Creedy (The Nose) hires Harper to recruit some extra hands, even if they are gangsters, to help the police, Creedy says, "I've been authorized to hire some extra muscle." He adds, "Welcome to the side of law and order." (Moore 198)

Also, Conrad (the Eye), who suppresses the people of London by close surveillance, shockingly, appears to be dominated by his wife, Mrs. Heyer, as he is displayed while rubbing her back in complete submissive attitude. It appears that Mrs. Heyer plans to make her husband the new Head after the crack of the current one instead of Creedy and his new gangster army. Harper seeks to recruit gangsters to help Creedy suppress the rioters. Creedy appreciates his efforts, and in preparing this axillary army, Creedy says, "A little auxiliary force could come in very handy." (Moore 203) In the meantime, Mrs. Heyer proposes Harper a better offer if he accepts to be her agent. She tells him that she can pay him more money to fight on Conrad's side, not Creedy's while pretending to be working for Creedy. She even promises him to make him the Head of the Finger if he cooperates with her. She says, "Harper, Do as I say and you'll soon be running the Finger." (Moore 204)

Troubled by the disturbances in London and anxious about V's plans, Finch decides to go to Larkhill facility

where he expresses his disgrace of the suppressive practices of Norsefire government. Finch shamefully justifies, "These must be the ovens, ovens for people. People ovens...No. No use: still can't make it seem real. If I'd know this was happening, would I still have joined the party? Probably. No better alternatives. We couldn't let the chaos after the war continue. Any society's better that that. We needed order." (Moore 211)

Finch drugs himself with hallucination pills, then he starts confessing that he has used to be a friend to those minorities whom the Norsefire government has eradicated; conceivably, by the help of Finch's services because of his belonging to this government. He regrets what he has done saying, "We treated you so badly, all the hateful things we printed, did and said...But please. Please don't despise us. We were stupide. We were young. We didn't know." (Moore 213) Then, Finch hallucinates about Dr. Surrige as well as Lilliman, and Prothero, his college officials who have worked for the Norsefire government at Larkhill camp and have been exterminated by V. Then, he implies that he and Dr. Surrige are not like Lilliman, and Prothero, as they could feel guilt.

Hallucinating about being imprisoned in room V, Finch experiences the distress of being deprived of his own self, his own identity, just as V and other prisoners have been. Finally, he even concludes that even if retaining his untainted identity may be a long unpaved path, no one can stop him from recovering his original self but him, the only

one who can control his life is himself, saying, "Who imprisoned me here? Who keeps me here? Who can release me? Who's controlling and constraining my life, except...me?...I'm free...Freeeeee!" (Moore 215) Thus, as Finch achieves the same freedom that V and Evey have had, Finch decides to follow what might have been V's next move after escaping the Larkhill camp as an attempt to anticipate what may be his goal. Finch has confronted reality. He is not only afraid to pay the same price, but also to admit that he is part of the system that has allowed such an atrocity to happen. (González 213)

After Finch's redemption at Larkhill camp, he starts wandering in the streets of London, urging himself to think like V and trying to anticipate what V's next move might have been after his escape from the Larkhill camp. Out of the blue, Finch comes across an abandoned station called 'Victory'. Once Finch sees it, he becomes sure that this station might have been V's lair. He begins to explore the station where he sees a train filled with the red roses that no longer exist except on the bodies' of V's preys, then Finch finds a figure with V's mask sitting on the ground but then he is shocked that the real V is behind him. V throws a knife carelessly into Finch's shoulder as Finch shoots him lethally in the chest. V says to Finch that he cannot kill him, he says, "Did you think to kill me? There's no flesh or blood within this cloak to kill. There's only an idea. Ideas are bulletproof. Farewell." (Moore 236) V walks away as Finch crawls his way out. While crawling he notices blood on the hallway that he swaggers that he kills V. "Blood, flesh and blood

---

after all...I killed you, you monster...I killed you!"(Moore 237)

Exulted by surpassing the menace as he thinks, Finch does not understand that he only kills the human wearing the mask, not the idea of V. Succumbed to his wounds, V collapses on the ground of the shadow gallery. Evey finds V who tells Evey his last teachings; the repressive system is now ruined and it is on the people of London to manage to rule themselves. Then he forbids Evey from seeing his face and asks her to give him "a Viking funeral". (Moore 245) Confused about what to do; thinking of unmasking V to see his human face, Evey figures out that, seeing V's human face can diminish V's idea as V is much more than a human; he is a symbol. Evey resolves, "Who V must be". (V, 1989, P. 250) By deciding not to take off V's mask, Evey accentuates the notion that V's identity should be seen as a symbol rather than as a human. Evey understands that there is no need to unmask V. Instead, she is now going to become V and adopt his plan to revolt against any suppressive system. Evey sits in front of a mirror, stretching her face into V's smile.





(Fig. (2) - Moore 244-51)

The choice of moment in these panels varies between moment to moment, action to action and subject to subject, with action to action being the most frequently used transition. The panels, first, in action to action transition, display the mortally wounded V, dragging himself towards Evey, and collapsing in front of her. Then subject to subject transition is used as Evey immediately rushes to his side, shocked to see the thought-to-be invincible man so vulnerable and hears V's last cryptic words. The panels then utilize action to action transition to further the plot and keep the pace brisk as Evey, grief stricken, sits on the staircase with V's corpse at her feet, an image that corresponds to how she has been after Gordon's death. She quickly recovers however, and begins to follow the trail of blood to its start, while remembering her previous moments with V throughout the way. Evey rambles through different parts in the shadow gallery till she reaches the end of the blood trail. She refuses to acknowledge that V is dead, and runs up the

stairs sure that she will see him alive and well and that she would not have to decipher V's cryptic will, but in vain, as she finds his body lying on the floor.

The moment to moment transition, that follows, decelerates the action and intensifies suspense, as it marks a pivotal point in Evey's developed identity, as she comes to realize that if she unmask V, she will diminish him to a normal human, and he will no longer be the symbol, but a man. To put emphasis on this, sporadic aspect to aspect transition intervenes to display a psychedelic atmosphere and gives the scene an unreal aura, as the unmasking of V does not really take place, for it is all in Evey's head. Evey first sees Adam Susan after she unmask V, then her lover Gordon, then her dead father, but none of the faces is extremely clear. It becomes clear only when Evey sees her own face of her previous self that the displayed face becomes extremely clear. It is that moment that Evey realizes the true reason behind everything V has done. V has been preparing her to be his successor.

Moving to the choice of frame, the panels display high and eye-level views. The use of high angle is sparse, with the shots showing Evey grieving over V or following Evey throughout the shadow gallery as she trails V's blood in an attempt to decode his message. This angle gives the readers wealth information about the multi-storey setting of the shadow gallery that resembles the multi-threaded thoughts that Evey has to process to decode V's message. Eye-level angle is utilized more, and it aids in placing the readers right

next to Evey as she processes her grief, and emerges completely anew. There, the readers witness the last phase of Evey's transformation, as she sheds the shell of the naive innocent girl to become a fearless woman, and now she realizes the fate that V has meant for her, but even still she has the option to choose, and with that freedom, she chooses to don the Guy Fawkes mask.

Besides, the panels utilize several distances throughout the scene, and the change from one view to another brings the readers' focus to specific aspects. Medium to close-up views are utilized in the panels that display V during his last moments. This allows the readers to closely see the vulnerability of V's human body as opposed to the sustainability of V's mask. Then long to medium to short views are used as Evey trails V's blood, as the readers can witness Evey's confusion as well as the unfamiliar setting of the shadow gallery. For example, the readers can see several Guy Fawkes' masks hanging in medium view, but then in the next panel the view changes to close-up as all focus is drawn to one mask. This change symbolizes that the importance of V lies in the mask, not in who wears it, and it foreshadows that the mask will be worn by several others in order to help the people rebuild what has been ruined in the anarchic phase. Close up view is also utilized in the panels displaying the faces Evey thinks she may find out if she unmasks V; the faces of Adam Susan, Gordon, her father, even her own face. Despite the closeness of the view, none of the faces is extremely clear except of Evey's. This helps the readers understand that it is Evey's turn to be a V. This

idea is accentuated in the last three panel as Evey came to stand in front of a mirror, the view changes from medium to close-up to extreme close-up, and in the last panel, the entire focus is on Evey's smile that turns to be the very smile on the Guy Fawkes mask. Evey's smile reflects the change that she has underwent, for she is now ready to carry V's mantle.

As for the choice of image, the displayed setting is very wealthy; as Evey walks in the multi-storey gallery, she pasts the room filled with televisions, she overhears Creedy's broadcast in which he assumes the death of V and orders the people of London to obey the rules as they used to before the appearance of V. Then, the readers focus on several Guy Fawkes' masks hanging, foreshadowing that many others should wear these masks. Then, the avant-garde background of the setting echoes that an exceptional decision should be made or all of V's effort and his death will be in vain. Concerning characters, the readers witness the death of one V, and the birth of another, highlighting how V is so much more than what is hidden under the mask, for the power does not lie in the man, but in the mask itself and what it represents. Consequently, facial expressions are utilized to track Evey's final transformation to V. As Evey imagines unmasking V, the readers go through several unclear faces. This shows what V's face could look like if it were revealed: it might be black, or it might be white. It might belong to an old man, or it could be the face of Evey's long-lost father. In a nutshell, V's face might belong to any of the people the dystopian system has marginalized.

Yet, lastly, the readers see Evey's clear face just as she was first introduced, innocent looking and terrified, the clarity of Evey's face reflects the clarity of her vision as she realizes that all this time, V was preparing her to end as the new V. There is a stark difference between who she was and who she is now, but the significance lies in old Evey is being just one of many. In the beginning, Evey was a marginalized orphan who was left with no option but to turn tricks in order to earn her livelihood, something that so many other girls and women must have done in order to survive in a bigot society that marginalized them. This goes with Vanderbeke's notification, "Only Evey's face, appearing like a mask itself with white make-up and rouge, is clearly distinguishable and, standing in the corner". (P.216) Evey realizes, "who V must be." (Moore 250) Little by little, the panels zoom in on Evey's face, more particularly her smile, the readers know that she has made her decision regarding becoming V's successor when she smiles like the smile on V's mask. Previous to that moment Evey had the choice to leave, and start a life for herself, instead she decides to carry on V's legacy and do her role in helping the people rebuild.

Thus, Vanderbeke clarifies, "Moving over to a mirror and, looking at herself, she smiles the smile of the Guy Fawkes mask. This point marks her acceptance of V's heritage and foreshadows her becoming anonymous and thus a generic symbol of revolution and anarchy." (216) It is to be noted that this is the third time the readers see a woman taking control, first with Mrs. Heyer, then

Rosemary, now Evey. In a bigot society, it is symbolic to see a woman rising against the oppression and regaining her own power by herself, which shows that even in the direst of circumstances, one can still manage to regain their sense of identity.

The choice of words in these panels varies between intersecting and interdependent. McCloud states that the literary core of comics lies in the "unique experience and depth of meaning which arises through the blend of word and image together". (891) V is given one last hoorah, as he gives his final instructions to Evey, while completely leaving everything up to her to decide. V first tells Evey, "This country is not saved ... do not think that ... but all its old beliefs have come to rubble and from rubble we may build." This highlights that although he is about to die, his work is not finished, for the people need a symbol to inspire them to rise from the rubble. His most cryptic message is when he tells Evey that she "must discover whose face lies behind the mask, but you must never know my face." (Moore 245) V's words at first sound counterproductive, but it is not until Evey sees her own face behind the mask that she understands what

V meant, and it is at that moment that she comes to respect V as a symbol more than the person. As V utters his final words, he repeatedly calls Evey 'Eve', a subtle change but it is an allusion to Eve, the first woman, which foreshadows that Evey will be the first woman to don the V costume. In the last page, picture-specific panels are

utilized; the scene is silent as images are all that is used to showcase Evey's transformation to V. Call illustrates, "The following page is entirely visual, with no text...Evey slowly makes her way to V's dressing table, gazes at herself in the mirror, and then smiles the Fawkes smile at herself. Evey is not simply in love with V, she is becoming V. This is possible (even easy) because V has always been something that anyone can be: just a Guy." (165)

V's rebellion against the Norsefire government continues in spite of the rumors of his death. That is why it is more likely to accept the suggestion that "V is not a vibrant, authentic individual shaping history, but an empty, impersonal force: an idea changing history." (Call 162) After V's death, Evey decides to become the new V; an anonymous symbol just like V with no preferences to any gender, race, or differences. Evey gets into V's clothes and appears publicly to the people of London and addresses them saying, "Good evening, London. I would introduce myself, but truth to tell, I don't have a name. You can call me 'V'." (Moore 258) The new V tells them, "Tomorrow, Downing Street will be destroyed, the head reduced to ruins, an end to what has gone on before. Tonight, you must choose what comes next. Lives of our own or a return to chains. Choose carefully. And so, adieu." (Moore 258) To prepare for the Viking funeral that the original V has asked for, Evey puts him in a glass casket in the train that is trapped with explosives to blow up Downing Street. Evey promises V to help the people reestablish but will not lead. Evey says, "The choice is theirs, as ever it must be. I will

not lead them, but I will help them build; help them create where I'll not help them kill. The age of killers is no more. They have no place within our better world." (Moore 260) After watching the explosion V grabs Dominic, a senior official now that all other officials have gone missing or dead, and introduces him to her home, the Shadow Gallery.

### **Conclusion:**

Thus, this paper has examined *V for Vendetta* as a remarkable postmodern piece of work that brilliantly manifested the theme of identity through both texts and images by employing McCloud's five choices: choice of moment, choice of frame, choice of image, choice of word, and choice of flow. Each choice has been investigated to show how *V for Vendetta* tactically makes use of each choice to demonstrate the theme of identity throughout its texts and images. *V for Vendetta* displays disappointment at the dictatorial policies adopted by the Norsefire government that tends to be oppressive and discriminative as such policies aim at spreading fear and deprive the citizen of London of their identity. Together, words and images foreshadow what might be the cost of these policies and warn about the consequence of submitting people's identity to them.

---

**Work cited**

Booker, M. Keith. Ed. *Encyclopedia of Comic Books and Graphic Novels*, Vol. 1, Greenwood: Oxford, 2010, Print.

Call, Lewis. "A is for Anarchy, V is for Vendetta: Images of Guy Fawkes and the Creation of Postmodern Anarchism" *Anarchist Studies* Vol. 16, Iss. 2, P. 154 – 172.2008, accessed 2/1/2020, <http://works.bepress.com/lcall/1/>

Chapman, James. *British Comics: A Cultural History*, Reaction Books, London, UK, 2011. Accessed: 12/1/2018, <https://www.scribd.com/document/352576433/British-Comics-a-Cultural-History#>

DiPaolo, Marc. *War, Politics And Superheroes: Ethics and Propaganda in Comics and Film*, Jefferson, North Carolina, and London, McFarland & Company, 2011, Print.

González, Margarita Carretero. "Sympathy for the devil: The hero is a terrorist in *V for Vendetta*", in *Promoting and Producing Evil*, N. Billias (Ed.) Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, P. 207-218, 2010, Print.

Kelley, Brian. "Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, and Comics: A Position Paper", in *SANE journal*: Vol. 1, No. 1, Article 10, Digital Commons: University of Nebraska - Lincoln, P. 1-25, 2010, accessed 20/4/2017, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/sane/vol1/iss1/10>

Lemert, C. Postmodernism is Not What You Think, Blackwell Publishers, UK. 1997, Print.

Little, Ben. "2000AD: Understanding the "British Invasion" of American Comics in Comics as a Nexus of Cultures: Essays on the Interplay of Media, Disciplines and International Perspectives, Mark Berninger, Jochen Ecke and Gideon Haberkorn (Eds.) London and Jefferson: McFarland Publishers, P. 140- 152, 2010, Print.

McCloud, Scott. Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comic, Manga and Graphic Novels. Harper, 2006, Print.

Moore, Alan, et al. V for Vendetta. DC Comics, 1989, Print.

Vanderbeke, Marie. and Dirk Vanderbeke, "Graphic Dystopia: Watchmen und V for Vendetta", Research gate, Jan. 2015, accessed 13/10/2017, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315657017>

Williams. Paul, James Lyons Eds. The Rise of the American Comics Artist: Creators and Contexts, University Press of Mississippi, 2010, Print.

Wiradharma, Nicholas. "Graphic Novel Analysis: V for Vendetta" , Comic Analysis, 15 October 2009. Accessed 10 /1/ 2017, <https://wiradhar.wikispaces.com/Comic+Analysis>

---

Wolk, Douglas. *Reading Comics: How Graphic Novels Work and What They Mean*. Cambridge, 1st ed. MA: Da Capo, 2007. Print.