V for Vendetta

Content and Sources for this Study Guide:
Wikipedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/V_for_Vendetta

V for Vendetta is a ten-issue comic book series written by Alan Moore and illustrated mostly by David Lloyd, set in a dystopian future United Kingdom imagined from the 1980s to about the 1990s. A mysterious masked revolutionary who calls himself "V" works to destroy the totalitarian government, profoundly affecting the people he encounters. Warner Bros. released a film adaptation of V for Vendetta in 2006.

Publication history

The first episodes of V for Vendetta originally appeared in black-and-white between 1982 and 1985, in Warrior, a British anthology comic published by Quality Comics. The strip became one of the most popular in that title; during the 26 issues of Warrior several covers featured V for Vendetta.

When the publishers cancelled Warrior in 1985 (with two completed issues unpublished due to the cancellation), several companies attempted to convince Moore and Lloyd to let them publish and complete the story. In 1988 DC Comics published a ten-issue series that reprinted the Warrior stories in color, then continued the series to completion. The first new material appeared in issue #7, which included the unpublished episodes that would have appeared in Warrior #27 and #28. Tony Weare drew one chapter ("Vincent") and contributed additional art to two others ("Valerie" and "The Vacation"); Steve Whitaker and Siobhan Dodds worked as colourists on the entire series.

The series, including Moore's "Behind the Painted Smile" essay and two "interludes" outside the central continuity, then appeared in collected form as a trade paperback, published in the US by DC's Vertigo imprint (ISBN 0-930289-52-8) and in the UK by Titan Books (ISBN 1-85286-291-2).

Background

David Lloyd's paintings for V for Vendetta in Warrior originally appeared in black-and-white. The DC Comics version published the artwork "colourised" in pastels. Lloyd has stated that he had always intended the artwork to appear in colour, and that the initial publication in black and white occurred for financial reasons because colour would have cost too much (although Warrior publisher Dez Skinn expressed surprise at this information, as he had commissioned the strip in black and white and never intended Warrior to feature any interior colour, irrespective of expense).

In writing V for Vendetta, Moore drew upon an idea for a strip titled The Doll, which he had submitted in 1975 at the age of 22 to DC Thomson. In "Behind the Painted Smile"[1] Moore revealed that the idea was rejected as DC Thomson balked at the idea of a "transsexual terrorist". Years later, Warrior editor Dez Skinn allegedly invited Moore to create a dark mystery strip with artist David Lloyd.[2] He actually asked David Lloyd to recreate something similar to their popular Marvel UK Night-Raven strip, a story with an enigmatic masked vigilante set in the United States in the 1930s.

Moore and Lloyd conceived the series as a dark adventure-strip influenced by British comic characters of the 1960s, as well as by Night Raven,[3] a Marvel UK strip which Lloyd had previously worked on with writer Steve Parkhouse. Editor Dez Skinn came up with the name "Vendetta" over lunch with his work colleague Graham Marsh — but quickly rejected it as sounding too Italian. Then V for Vendetta emerged, putting the emphasis on "V" rather than "Vendetta". David Lloyd developed the idea of dressing V as Guy Fawkes after previous designs followed the conventional superhero look.

During the preparation of the story Moore made a list of
what he wanted to bring into the plot, which he reproduced in "Behind the Painted Smile":


The political climate of Britain in the early 1980s also influenced the work,[4] with Moore positing that Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government would "obviously lose the 1983 elections", and that an incoming Michael Foot-led Labour government, committed to complete nuclear disarmament, would allow the United Kingdom to escape relatively unscathed after a limited nuclear war. However, Moore felt that fascists would quickly subvert a post-holocaust Britain.[1] Moore's scenario remains untested.

Naiveté can also be detected in my supposition that it would take something as melodramatic as a near-miss nuclear conflict to nudge Britain towards fascism... The simple fact that much of the historical background of the story proceeds from a predicted Conservative defeat in the 1983 General Election should tell you how reliable we were in our roles as Cassandras.[5]

Plot

On November 5, 1997 in London a mysterious cloaked figure wearing a Guy Fawkes mask, and calling himself "V", rescues a young woman, Evey Hammond, from a gang of secret police officers (known as Fingermen) who intend to rape and kill her. After dispatching most of the Fingermen, V heads to a rooftop with Evey and detonates a bomb at Parliament. V takes Evey to his secret underground lair, which he calls "The Shadow Gallery". Evey tells V her life story, describing the nuclear war of the late 1980s that, while it did not directly involve the UK, triggered a global social-economic catastrophe, indirectly resulting in economic collapse and borderline starvation. This eventually led to the fascist coup d'état in Great Britain, under the promise of restoring order. In order to smooth over their transition to power, the fascists scapegoated various "undesirable" groups - homosexuals, foreign immigrants, and left-wing liberals - ultimately killing millions of them in concentration camps. Evey's own father was rounded up as a political prisoner because he had once belonged to a left-wing student group, and she never saw him again.

The task of investigating V's bombing falls to Eric Finch, the head of The Nose — the regular police force — and an experienced investigator who serves the government out of dedication to his job rather than from political conviction. Through him, readers meet other figures in the Party, including the Leader, Adam Susan, a recluse who is obsessed with the government's computer system, Fate; Dominic Stone, Finch's partner; Derek Almond, head of The Finger — the secret police force; Conrad Heyer, head of The Eye — the visual surveillance branch; Brian Etheridge, head of The Ear — the audio surveillance branch; and Roger Dascombe, in charge of The Mouth – the branch in charge of broadcasting propaganda.

After destroying the Houses of Parliament, V confronts three other Party figures to accuse them of, and execute them for, past atrocities: Lewis Prothero, the propaganda broadcaster who serves as the Voice of Fate; Bishop Anthony Lilliman, a paedophile priest who represents the Party in the clergy; and Delia Surridge, an apolitical doctor who once had a relationship with Finch. V drives Prothero insane after incinerating his prized doll collection before his eyes; he kills Lilliman by forcing him to consume a cyanide-laced communion wafer; and Dr. Surridge dies from a lethal injection (however, because Surridge had expressed remorse for her previous actions, she experiences a painless death). By the time V kills Surridge, Finch has discovered that all of V's victims worked at a concentration camp near the village of Larkhill, and alerts Derek Almond to V's plans. Almond surprises V attempting to escape from Surridge's home. Unfortunately for Almond, he had forgotten to reload his gun after having cleaned it earlier that same night, and V kills him.

Finch begins to read a diary kept by Dr. Surridge discovered at her home. It reveals all of the victims' previous histories with V during his time as an inmate at the Larkhill camp. V was an involuntary victim of a medical experiment run by Dr. Surridge in which he was given hormonal injections with a drug called Batch 5. Eventually V, known to the camp's staff as the "Man from Room Five", began tending a garden with camp commander Prothero's approval, using related chemicals to later break out of the camp while attacking camp guards with homemade...
mustard gas and napalm. V, the only prisoner to have survived the death camp, chose to eliminate its surviving officers to prevent the government from discovering his true identity. Finch notes that while V made sure Surridge’s diary was easy to find, he had also ripped out pages that may have contained information about his identity.

Four months later, V breaks into Jordan Tower, the home of the Mouth, to broadcast a speech that calls on the people to take charge of their own lives. He escapes by forcing Roger Dascombe into one of his Fawkes costumes; the police then gun Dascombe down. Finch, in going over the crime scene, is introduced to Peter Creedy, a petty criminal replacing Almond as head of the Finger. Creedy blithely dismisses V, whom Finch has come to respect, and makes a crude remark about Dr. Surridge, provoking Finch to strike him. Following the incident, the Leader sends Finch on a forced vacation.

Evey has developed a strong attachment to V, but has begun to challenge his methods. After a confrontation in the Shadow Gallery, she finds herself abandoned on a street, unable to find V. She is taken in by Gordon, a petty criminal with whom she becomes romantically involved, and they cross paths unknowingly with Derek Almond’s widow, Rose; after the deaths of her husband and Dascombe (with whom she had been forced into a relationship for financial reasons), Rose is forced to work as a burlesque dancer, and consequently grows to hate the Party. Creedy begins organizing a private militia, hoping to use V’s destabilization of the Party to mount a coup against the Leader.

When the Scottish gangster, Alistair Harper, murders Gordon, Evey attempts to kill him, but is abducted and accused of attempting to murder Creedy as he was meeting with Harper. In her cell, between multiple bouts of interrogation and torture, Evey finds a letter from an inmate named Valerie, an actress who was imprisoned for being a lesbian. Evey’s interrogator finally gives her a choice of collaboration or death; inspired by Valerie’s courage and quiet defiance, she refuses to give in, and is told that she is free. Evey learns that her imprisonment was a hoax constructed by V designed to put her through an ordeal similar to the one that shaped him. He reveals that Valerie was another Larkhill prisoner, who died in the cell next to his; the letter that Evey read is the same one that Valerie had passed on to V. Evey’s anger finally gives way to acceptance of her identity.

The following November, exactly one year after the Parliament bombing, V destroys the Post Office Tower and Jordan Tower, killing Etheridge and effectively shutting down the Eye, the Ear and the Mouth. The subsequent lack of government surveillance causes a wave of violence and hedonism that is violently suppressed by Creedy and Harper’s street gangs. Meanwhile, V notes to Evey that he has not yet achieved the land of Do-as-You-Please, a functional anarchistic society, and considers the current situation an interim period of mere chaos in the Land of Take-What-You-Want. Dominic realizes that V has had access to the Fate computer since the very beginning, explaining his foresight; this news accelerates Susan’s descent into insanity.

Finch travels to the abandoned site of Larkhill, where he takes LSD. His hallucinations show him his past life, where he was the lover of a black woman who was sent to the concentration camps for her race. His hallucinations also have him act as a prisoner of Larkhill who is soon freed, like V, giving him an intuitive understanding of him. Returning to London he deduces that V’s lair is inside the abandoned Victoria Station. V confronts Finch as the latter enters the station, and lets Finch shoot him. The mortally wounded V returns to the Shadow Gallery and dies in Evey’s arms. Evey considers unmasking V, but decides not to; instead, she assumes his identity, donning one of his spare costumes.

Meanwhile, Creedy pressures the Leader to appear in public, in an attempt to usurp control of the government. As the Leader’s car drives past during a parade, Rose Almond assassinates him. Creedy tries to take his place, but Harper, bribed by Conrad Heyer’s wife Helen, kills him. V sends a surveillance tape to Heyer of Helen and Harper having sex. He responds by beating Harper to death with a wrench, but not before Harper wounds him with a razor. His wife finds him but refuses to get medical help, leaving him to bleed to death while placing a closed-circuit camcorder in front of Heyer; allowing him to witness his own exsanguinations on a nearby television. This leaves the key Party officials all dead; only Finch survives, who soon leaves after he comes to terms with his own dissatisfaction with the Party.

Evey appears to a crowd as V, announcing the destruction of Downing Street the following day and telling the crowd they must “...choose what comes next. Lives of your own, or a return to chains”, whereupon a general insurrection begins. Dominic, struck on the head by a stone, loses consciousness as he runs for safety, seeing Evey disguised as V before he passes out. Evey destroys 10 Downing Street[7] by giving V a Viking funeral with an explosive-laden Underground train containing his body, sent to detonate beneath the desired location. Dominic awakens in the Shadow
Gallery, as Eve dressed in her mentor's Guy Fawkes costume, introduces herself as V, apparently to train Dominic as her successor. As night falls, Finch observes the chaos raging in the city and encounters Helen Heyer, who has taken the company of local homeless people for survival after her car was turned over and her supplies stolen. When they recognize each other, Helen embraces Finch, saying they could raise a small army and restore order. Finch silently pushes Helen away and she angrily responds with a torrent of homophobic slurs. He leaves her and the tramps to climb down an embankment onto an abandoned motorway and sees a sign reading "Hatfield and The North". The final panel shows Finch walking down the deserted motorway, all the streetlamps dark.

Major Characters

**V**

V is a masked anarchist who seeks to systematically kill the leaders of Norsefire, a fascist dictatorship ruling a dystopian United Kingdom. He is well-versed in the arts of explosives, subterfuge, and computer hacking, and has a vast literary, cultural and philosophical intellect. V is the only survivor of an experiment in which four dozen prisoners were given injections of a compound called Batch 5. The compound caused vast cellular anomalies that eventually killed all of the subjects except V, who developed advanced strength, reflexes, endurance and pain tolerance. Throughout the novel, V almost always wears his trademark Guy Fawkes mask, a shoulder-length wig of straight dark-brown hair and an outfit consisting of black gloves, tunic, trousers and boots. When not wearing the mask, his face is not shown. When outside the Shadow Gallery, he completes this ensemble with a circa-17th century conical hat and floor-length cloak. His weapons of choice include daggers, explosives and tear gas.

The book suggests that V took his name from the Roman numeral "V", the number of the room he was held in during the experiment.

At the end of the book, V lets Chief Inspector Eric Finch shoot him, and dies in Evey's arms. Evey then assumes V's identity and gives the original V a Viking funeral by placing him inside a bomb-laden train whose eventual destination is Downing Street.

**Evey Hammond**

Evey Hammond was a young woman whom V saves from the Fingermen. She comes under V's wing, learns of his past and of his current battle against the government, and eventually becomes his successor.

Cast (film adaptation)

**Hugo Weaving** as V:

Originally James Purefoy was cast as V, but left six weeks into filming due to difficulties wearing the mask for the entire film.[3] He was replaced by Hugo Weaving, who had previously worked with Joel Silver and the Wachowski brothers on The Matrix Trilogy as Agent Smith. Only a few, dialogue-free scenes featuring Purefoy appear in the completed film. Weaving had in fact been the Wachowskis' first choice for the role, but initially turned it down to appear in the Australian film Eucalyptus; the cancellation of that project and the departure of Purefoy one month into V for Vendetta's production allowed Weaving to accept the role.

**Natalie Portman** as Evey Hammond:

Director James McTeigue first met Portman on the set of Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones, where he worked with her as assistant director. In preparing for the role, Portman worked with dialectologist Barbara Berkery in order to perform with an English accent. She also studied films such as The Weather Underground and read the autobiography of Menachem Begin.[4] Portman received top billing for the film. Portman's role in the film has parallels to her role as Mathilda Lando in the film Léon.[5] According to Portman: "the relationship between V and Evey has a complication [like] the relationship in that film." Portman also had her head shaved on screen during a scene where her character is tortured.[6]
Adam Susan

Adam Susan, also known as The Leader, is the leader of the Norsefire Party and its functions, although his power is largely ceremonial. Susan is in love with the Fate (a computer system) and prefers its companionship to that of his fellow human beings. Susan also expresses a solipsist belief that he and God (referring to the Fate computer) are the only truly "real" beings in existence. He is an adherent of fascism and racist notions of "purity", and genuinely believes that civil liberties are dangerous and unnecessary. He appears to truly care for his people, however, and it is implied that his embrace of fascism was a response to his own loneliness. Before the War, he was a Chief Constable. In the end of the novel, he is assassinated by Rose Almond, the widow of one of his former lieutenants.

Eric Finch

Eric Finch is the Chief of New Scotland Yard and Minister of Investigations, which has become The Nose. Finch is a pragmatist who sides with the government because he would rather serve in a world of order than one of chaos. He is nevertheless honorable and decent, and trusted by the Leader because he is reliable and without ambition. He eventually achieves his own anagnorisis and self-knowledge, expressing sorrow over his complicity with Norsefire's atrocities. He is at one to as Edward Finch (an error on the part of Helen Heyer).

Peter Creedy:

A coarse, petty man who replaces Derek Almond as Security Minister of the Finger after the latter's death. He aims to replace the weakening Susan as Leader, but as part of Mrs. Heyer's plot, Alistair Harper's thugs kill him (Creedy had hired the thugs to bolster the weakening Finger, but Helen Heyer offered them more).

Dominic Stone:

Inspector Finch's assistant. Dominic is the one who figures out the connection between V and the former Larkhill camp staff and V's hacking into the Fate computer system. At the end, Evey rescues Dominic from a mob.

John Hurt as High Chancellor Adam Sutler:

A former Conservative MP and Under-Secretary for Defence, Chancellor Sutler was the founder of Norsefire and is the de facto dictator of Britain. Hurt played a contrary role in another dystopian film: Winston Smith, a victim of the state in the film adaptation of Nineteen Eighty-Four.[8][9]

Stephen Rea as Eric Finch:

Finch is the lead inspector in the V investigation, who, during his investigation, uncovers an unspeakable government crime. Rea is no stranger to politics and terrorism, as he was once married to Dolours Price, a former member of the Provisional IRA, imprisoned for bombing the Old Bailey. When asked whether the politics attracted him to the film, Rea replied "Well, I don't think it would be very interesting if it was just comic-book stuff. The politics of it are what gives it its dimension and momentum, and of course I was interested in the politics. Why wouldn't I be?"[7]

Tim Pigott-Smith as Peter Creedy:

Creedy is both Norsefire's party leader and the head of Britain's Secret Police, the Finger, and also the main antagonist of the film. While Sutler is the Chancellor, the source of the government's power over the people lies with Creedy. He is also revealed to be the mastermind of the bio-attack that gave Norsefire the chance to take over Britain. He comes under fire when the Chancellor threatens him after he fails to stop V. In the film's climax, Creedy kills Sutler before meeting his own end when V strangles him.[4]

Rupert Graves as Detective Sergeant Dominic Stone:

Dominic is Inspector Finch's lieutenant in the V investigation.
Lewis Prothero:
The former Commander of Larkhill, the concentration camp that V once held. He later becomes The Voice of Fate, the government radio broadcaster who daily transmits "information" to the public. V stops a train carrying Prothero and kidnaps him. He is driven insane by a combination of an overdose of Batch 5 drugs and the shock of seeing his prized doll collection burned in a mock recreation of Camp Larkhill in V's headquarters. He remains incapacitated for the rest of the story.

Roger Allam as Lewis Prothero:
Lewis Prothero, "The Voice of London", is a mouthpiece for the Norsefire government. He was the former Commander of the Larkhill facility. He presented a show on the BTN (in Steve Moore's novelization of the film, he is also an egomaniac and apparently addicted to illegally-obtained prescription drugs). V kills him with a drug overdose. Some critics and commentators have viewed him as a parody of American right-wing pundits such as Bill O'Reilly, Morton Downey, Jr. and Rush Limbaugh.[9][12]

Bishop Anthony Lilliman:
The voice of the Party in the Church. Lilliman is a corrupt priest who molests the young girls in his various parishes. Like Prothero, he worked at Larkhill before being given a higher employment by the state. Lilliman was a priest who was hired to give spiritual support to the prisoners being given Batch 5 drugs. He is killed after he almost rapes Evey Hammond (who is dressed up as a young girl), when V forces him to take communion with a cyanide-laced wafer.

John Standing as Bishop Anthony James Lilliman:
Lilliman is a corrupt bishop at Westminster Abbey, installed into this position by Sutler. Lilliman was a Reverend at the Larkhill centre. A pedophile, he uses his position to rape young girls, crimes covered up by Norsefire. He was warned by Evey Hammond when she was undercover as a prostitute, then disposed of by V in the same manner as Prothero. In regards to his role, Standing remarked "I thoroughly enjoyed playing Lilliman... because he's slightly comic and utterly atrocious. Lovely to do."

Valerie Page:
A critically acclaimed actress who was imprisoned at Larkhill when the government found out she was a lesbian. Her tragic fate at the hands of the regime inspired V to fight against Norsefire.

Natasha Wightman as Valerie Page:
Valerie, a lesbian, is one of the "social undesirables" imprisoned by the Norsefire government. Valerie was played by Imogen Poots in flashbacks to her childhood. Her symbolic role as a victim of the state was received positively by many LGBT critics. Film critic Michael Jensen praised Valerie's scenes "not just because it is beautifully acted and well-written, but because it is so utterly unexpected [in a Hollywood film]."[11]

Delia Surridge:
Larkhill camp doctor whom V kills by lethal injection of an unspecified drug. Surridge (the only one of V's former tormentors who feels remorse for her actions) apologizes to him in her final moments of life. Finch also mentions that he has feelings for her, and he feels maddened at her death and determined to end V's life.

Sinéad Cusack as Dr. Delia Surridge:
The former head physician at the Larkhill detention centre under her real name, Diana Stanton, she changed her name and became a coroner in London. V states that the torture and death at Larkhill was only possible because of her research. Surridge had initially worked at Larkhill for idealistic reasons, and, unlike V's other victims, feels remorse for the crimes she committed there. V kills her by giving her a painless lethal injection in her sleep.

Gordon:
A petty criminal specializing in bootlegging. He harbours and later sleeps with Evey Hammond. He is murdered by Alistair Harper, a ruthless gangster who is trying to expand Scotland's organized crime syndicate into London. He has no given family name in the graphic novel.

*Stephen Fry as Gordon Deitrich (new character):
Talk show host Gordon Deitrich is a closeted homosexual who, due to the restrictions of the regime, has "lost his appetite" over the years. When asked in an interview what he liked about the role, Fry replied "Being beaten up! I hadn't been beaten up in a movie before and I was very excited by the idea of being clubbed to death."[10]
Other Characters in the Graphic Novel

**Derek Almond:** A high-ranking official of the Norsefire government. He ran the government's secret police force, known as The Finger. Almond was warned by Finch that Surridge would be the last of V's targets and had run to her house to prevent him but then was killed by V. Almond is replaced by Peter Creedy. While Almond does not figure heavily in the story, his death sets in motion one of the novel's major story arcs; that of his widow, Rose, who is left penniless and traumatized by the loss of her husband, who was cold and abusive toward her but whom she nevertheless loved. In her grief and desperation, she blames her plight on Norsefire's leader, Adam Susan, and assassinates him at the novel's climax.

**Rosemary Almond:** The abused wife of Derek Almond. When her husband is murdered, Rose becomes depressed and must turn to Roger Dascombe (whom she strongly dislikes) for company and support. She is forced to become a showgirl as a means of supporting herself after Dascombe's death at the hands of V. After V shuts down the surveillance systems, she uses the opportunity to buy a gun and assassinate Adam Susan.

**Helen Heyer:** The ruthless, scheming wife of Conrad Heyer. She uses sex and her superior intellect to keep her husband (for whom she feels nothing but contempt) in line, and to further her own goal of ultimately controlling the country after he becomes Leader. At the same time, she sleeps with Harper and turns him against Creedy. Ultimately, her master plan collapses and she is last seen offering her body in exchange for protection and food to a semi-drunk gang after being rejected by Finch (who she hoped would join her in taking over what was left of the Party after her husband, Peter Creedy and Alistair Harper are all killed) and after anarchy has spilled into London.

**Conrad Heyer:** In charge of "The Eye" — the agency that controls the country's CCTV system. His wife Helen dominates him, and she intends for him to become leader, leaving her as the power behind the throne. In the end, V sends Conrad a videotape of Helen being unfaithful and he snaps, killing her lover Alistair Harper but sustaining a fatal wound from Harper's straight-edge razor in the process. When Helen learns what he has done, she is enraged at the destruction of her plans and leaves him to bleed to death, setting up a video camera connected to their TV so that he can watch himself die.

**Roger Dascombe:** The technical supervisor for the Party's media division and the Propaganda Minister of The Mouth. In the first scene with him, he is presented as being openly effeminate. After Derek Almond's death, Dascombe sets his sights on his widow, Rosemary, who eventually turns to him for support. During V's attack on Jordan Tower, he is set up as a dummy V and killed by the police while the real V makes his escape.

**Alistair Harper:** The Scottish organized crime boss who kills Evey's lover Gordon. Initially Creedy hires him and his men to temporarily bolster the police force after V destroys the government's surveillance equipment, but Helen Heyer recruits him to her side to ensure Creedy's downfall by offering to place him in charge of the Finger after Conrad comes to power. He temporarily becomes Helen's lover. After Creedy's takeover, Harper fulfills his end of the bargain with Helen and kills Creedy with a lethal slash from his straight razor. Conrad beats Harper to death with a wrench as he fatally slices his neck.

**Themes and motifs**

The series was Moore's first use of the densely detailed narrative and multiple plot lines that would feature heavily in Watchmen. Panel backgrounds are often crammed with clues and red herrings; literary allusions and wordplay are prominent in the chapter titles and in V's speech (which almost always takes the form of iambic pentameter, a poetic meter reliant on five pairs of syllables, the second syllable of each pair being more stressed than the first; its most famous usage has been in the many works of William Shakespeare).

V reads Evey to sleep with The Magic Faraway Tree. This series provides the source of "The Land of Do-As-You-Please" and "The Land of Take-What-You-Want" alluded to throughout the series. Another cultural reference rings out — mainly in the theatrical version: "Remember, remember, the Fifth of November: the gunpowder treason and plot. I know of no reason why the gunpowder treason should ever be forgot". These lines allude directly to the story of Guy Fawkes and his participation in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

**Anarchism versus fascism**

The two conflicting political viewpoints of anarchism and fascism permeate the story.[8] The Norsefire regime shares every facet of fascist ideology: it is highly xenophobic, rules the nation through both fear and force, and worships strong leadership (i.e. Führerprinzip). As in most fascist regimes, there are several different types of state organizations which
engage in power struggles with each other yet obey the same leader. V, meanwhile, ultimately strives for a "free" society ordered by its own consent.

Identity
V himself remains something of an enigma whose history is only hinted at. The bulk of the story is told from the viewpoints of other characters: V's admirer and apprentice Evey, a 16-year-old factory worker; Eric Finch, a world-weary and pragmatic policeman who is hunting V; and several contenders for power within the fascist party. V's destructive acts are morally ambiguous, and a central theme of the series is the rationalisation of atrocities in the name of a higher goal, whether it is stability or freedom. The character is a mixture of an actual advocate of anarchism and the traditional stereotype of the anarchist as a terrorist. Moore stated in an interview:

“The central question is, is this guy right? Or is he mad? What do you, the reader, think about this? Which struck me as a properly anarchist solution. I didn't want to tell people what to think, I just wanted to tell people to think and consider some of these admittedly extreme little elements, which nevertheless do recur fairly regularly throughout human history.”[9]

Moore has never clarified V's precise background, beyond stating "that V isn't Evey's father, Whistler's mother, or Charley's aunt"; he does point out that V's identity is never revealed in the book. The ambiguity of the V character is a running theme through the work, which leaves readers to determine for themselves whether V is sane or psychotic, hero or villain. Before donning the Guy Fawkes mask herself, Evey comes to the conclusion that V's identity is unimportant compared to the role he plays, making his identity itself the idea he embodies.

Film Adaptation
The first filming of an adaptation of V for Vendetta for the screen involved one of the scenes in the documentary feature film The Mindscape of Alan Moore, shot in early 2002. The dramatization contains no dialogue by the main character, but uses the Voice of Fate as an introduction.

On 17 March 2006 Warner Brothers released a feature-film adaptation of V for Vendetta, directed by James McTeigue (first assistant director on The Matrix films) from a screenplay by the Wachowski brothers. Natalie Portman stars as Evey Hammond and Hugo Weaving as V, together with Stephen Rea, John Hurt, Rupert Graves and Stephen Fry. Hurt, who played the renamed High Chancellor Adam Sutler in the film V for Vendetta, also played Winston Smith in the 1984 film adaptation of George Orwell's novel, Nineteen Eighty-Four. Originally slated for a 4 November 2005 release, a day before the Guy Fawkes Night and the 400th anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, it was postponed until March 17, 2006, possibly due to the 7 July 2005 London bombings, although producers denied this was the reason.[10]

Alan Moore distanced himself from the film, as he has with every screen adaptation of his works to date.[update] He ended cooperation with his publisher, DC Comics, after its corporate parent, Warner Bros., failed to retract statements about Moore's supposed endorsement of the movie.[11] After reading the script, Moore remarked:

"[The movie] has been "turned into a Bush-era parable by people too timid to set a political satire in their own country.... It's a thwarted and frustrated and largely impotent American liberal fantasy of someone with American liberal values standing up against a state run by neoconservatives — which is not what the comic V for Vendetta was about. It was about fascism, it was about anarchy, it was about England."[12]"

He later adds that if the Wachowskis had wanted to protest about what was going on in the United States, then they should have used a political narrative that directly addressed the issues of the USA, similar to what Moore had done before with Britain. The film changes the original message by arguably having changed "V" into a freedom fighter instead of an anarchist. An interview with producer Joel Silver suggests that the change may not have been conscious; he identifies the V of the comics as a clear-cut "superhero... a masked avenger who pretty much saves the world," a simplification that goes against Moore's own statements about V's role in the story.[13]

Co-author and illustrator David Lloyd, by contrast, embraced the adaptation.[14] In an interview with Newsarama he states:

“It's a terrific film. The most extraordinary thing about it for me was seeing scenes that I'd worked on and crafted for maximum effect in the book translated to film with the same degree of care and effect. The "transformation" scene between Natalie Portman and Hugo Weaving is just great. If you happen to be one of those people who admires the original so much that changes to it will automatically turn you off, then you may dislike the film—but if you enjoyed the original and can accept an adaptation that is different to its source material but equally as powerful, then you'll be as impressed as I was with it.”[15]"

Steve Moore (no relation to Alan Moore) wrote a novelization of the film's screenplay, published in 2006.
Cultural impact

Protesters wearing Guy Fawkes masks at a protest against Scientology in London in 2008

Anonymous, an Internet-based group, has adopted the Guy Fawkes mask as their symbol (in reference to an Internet meme) notably worn by members during Project Chanology's protests against the Church of Scientology. Alan Moore had this to say about the use of the Guy Fawkes motif adopted from his comic *V for Vendetta*, in an interview with Entertainment Weekly:

"I was also quite heartened the other day when watching the news to see that there were demonstrations outside the Scientology headquarters over here, and that they suddenly flashed to a clip showing all these demonstrators wearing *V for Vendetta* Guy Fawkes masks. That pleased me. That gave me a warm little glow.[16]"

According to *Time*, the protesters' adoption of the mask has led to it becoming the top-selling mask on Amazon.com, selling hundreds of thousands a year.[17]

On 23 May 2009, protesters dressed up as V and set off a fake barrel of gunpowder outside Parliament while protesting over the issue of British MPs' expenses.[18]

During the Occupy Wall Street and other ongoing Occupy protests, the mask appears internationally[19] being used as a symbol of popular revolution. Artist David Lloyd is quoted saying: "The Guy Fawkes mask has now become a common brand and a convenient placard to use in protest against tyranny – and I'm happy with people using it, it seems quite unique, an icon of popular culture being used this way."[20]

Collected editions

The entire V story has appeared collected in paperback (ISBN 0-930289-52-8) and hardback (ISBN 1-4012-0792-8) form. In August 2009 DC published a slipcased Absolute Edition (ISBN 1-4012-2361-3); this includes newly-coloured "silent art" pages (full-page panels containing no dialogue) from the series' original run, which have not appeared in any previous collected edition.[21]

References

7. Moore, Alan (w), Lloyd, David (p). "V for Vendetta" v10.; 28/6 (May, 1989), DC Comics

The complete film script of V for Vendetta is available from the Internet Movie Script Database:
http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/V-for-Vendetta.html