

The Depiction of Trauma in Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta* and *Watchmen*

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Abstract

This thesis will explore the depiction of trauma in Alan Moore's graphic novels *V for Vendetta* and *Watchmen*. It aims to examine how something as unrepresentable as trauma can be portrayed using a balance of art and words in these two narratives. Writer Alan Moore and illustrators David Lloyd and Dave Gibbons have created alternative worlds with recognizable history and realistic characters who endure traumatic experiences that are presented using iconic language.

I hope that my readers will gain a greater appreciation for this type of literature after understanding the potential it has in telling stories of importance and sensitivity surrounding trauma. It offers an alternative way of reading that challenges ordinary ways of thinking and tests our interpretation skills. Alan Moore offers a different way of perceiving history and considering not only our past but our future.

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Introduction

The contemporary graphic novel has a tendency to address topics of a more sensitive nature in contrast to the typical superhero comics of the 1960s. Some of these more recent graphic novel characters have developed a testimonial voice and a propensity to open up to readers emotionally through the use of iconical language. Several critics deal with what Romero-Jódar refers to as a growing subgenre called the “trauma graphic novel” which he suggests emerged from an autobiographical style of comics in the 1970s (Romero- Jódar 2). The increasing demand for graphic novels that fall into this subgenre category could be because of the realization of their potential for addressing real world issues, histories and topics of a more sensitive nature during this period where trauma has been labelled as “the aesthetic mood of post-millennial fiction” (Tew cited in Romero- Jódar 2). Romero- Jódar, Rebecca Scherr and Hilary Chute explore how something as complex as trauma can be made representable with a precise balance of words, images, frames and gutters. Writers such as Alan Moore, Art Spiegelman, Joe Sacco and Will Eisner are but a few of many writers who have used the graphic novel as a means of exploring how individual and collective suffering can be presented in a visual form. Stories of trauma are considerably told in this unique form of literature that can offer what Graham Dawson refers to as a “safe listening space”, a place “where the language of trauma may be spoken, attended to, reflected on, and absorbed; and where a different kind of memory may emerge” (Dawson 67). This thesis is interested in how trauma is depicted in the graphic novel, specifically Alan Moore’s *Watchmen* (1986, 1987) and *V for Vendetta* (1988, 1989) whose publications occurred not long after PTSD became a diagnosis.

Not all critics consider or address *V for Vendetta* and *Watchmen* as “trauma graphic novels”. In their publications, literary critic Jamie H. Hughes focuses on the ideologies of the characters in *Watchmen* (Hughes 547) whereas Michael J. Prince sees this graphic novel as a narrative that addresses the loss of individuality to controlling and powerful organizations (Prince 817). Maggie Gray addresses only the political side of *V for Vendetta* (Gray 2010) and Karin Kukkonen only describes *V for Vendetta* as a “dystopian storyworld of a fascist Britain” (Kukkonen 19). There is no discussion in these publications pertaining to the trauma embedded

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in these visual narratives. They are complex stories that can be examined from numerous angles. In this thesis, these narratives will be addressed as either “graphic novels” or by the subgenre term “trauma graphic novels” for the purpose of this paper that predominantly examines how trauma is illustrated. Both comics and graphic novels use sequential images and iconical language to tell their stories. This means that comics theory still applies to the graphic novel and will be useful in this thesis. Comics theorist Scott McCloud defines “sequential images” as “Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (McCloud 20). What separates these two visual forms are that graphic novels exercise the passing of time and shows character development and transformation whereas in comics, character identity remains unchanged (Romero-Jódar 4).

These two works have also been categorized as “historiographic metafiction”. According to Linda Hutcheon this type of writing best describes postmodern literature because it addresses historical discourses, while maintaining a self-awareness of being fiction. Both *Watchmen* and *V for Vendetta* are “historical in [their] echoes of the texts and contexts of the past” and offer “a sense of the presence of the past” (Hutcheon 3-4). The realism elements present in the stories increases relatability for its readers and reminds them of how events have shaped culture and collective memories. Graphic novel specialist Romero- Jódar sees *Watchmen* and *V for Vendetta* as alternative histories of our contemporary world (Romero-Jódar 4). These alternative histories also include characters who suffer from PTSD, as people do in the real world.

After the American Psychological Association recognized Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a health condition in 1980 (Luckhurst 1), a greater openness and acceptance of trauma followed; thereby bringing an awareness of trauma into mainstream literature. A reexamination of history became important for the comprehending of events and allowing witnesses and victims to provide testimonies in order to begin their healing process. In greater scaled traumatic events, there is a demand from survivors to have their stories socially recognized. This relaying of history began with spoken testimony, but it has come to take on and develop through a variety of forms and genres, including the graphic novel. Creative works that demonstrate trauma are

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inspired by these historical events and witnessing. Reference to real world devastations and history exist as backdrops of both narratives I address here including WWII and the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, the Cold War and a Thatcher run England. Trauma fiction directs attention to history and also comments upon societal issues. Deborah Horvitz explains that ‘Narrative representations of trauma...expose the need for social transformation; they target for disruption such bureaucratic institutions as the legal and medical systems or... capitalism and consumerism’ (Horvitz in Luckhurst 89). Not only do Moore’s narratives illustrate trauma, but they critique and shed light on societal structures.

These graphic novels are known for their intricate plots and developed characters who suffer from a variety of trauma symptoms within their politically disastrous, conspiratorial, alternative worlds. I will be applying comics theory to demonstrate *how* character trauma is portrayed with the use of images and words, emphasizing the importance of the collaboration between artist and writer and the participation of readers required in understanding their decisions. This high level of reader participation makes this genre unique. Even the blank spaces known as the “gutters” in between the frames play a role in the reader’s participation and understanding of trauma. The gutters and what exists within the frames deserve equal attention. Rebecca Scherr explains the process of moving from frame to gutter which, “highlights the relationship between the visible (what is inside the frame, including the shape of the frame itself) and the invisible (what happens in the gutter) that is quite specific to the comics form” (Scherr 8). She is right in that the frames themselves are often overlooked because of their visibility, but deserve greater inspection because they have the potential to reveal what Will Eisner refers to as “emotional climate” and the “atmosphere of the page as a whole” (Eisner cited in Scherr 117) which contributes to the presentation of trauma. The gutters are important in the interpretation process of the reader which allows them to connect what is occurring and “activate the story” (ibid). McCloud refers to what happens in the gutters as “closure” which he describes as the phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole” (McCloud 63). It is also what marks the measure of time in comics. Hillary Chute describes this space as “a space of movement, often a gesture to experience interval between frames of presence” (Chute 36). A

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reader is brought back to the present time within the gutters, where contemplation occurs. Chute also describes the gutter as a place of erasure which Kentridge claims, “begs the question of what used to be there?” As well as, “what could *never* be there?” (Kentridge cited in Chute 36). He labels comics as a “recursive form” which “calls attention to its own additive nature...to its accumulation of evidence--- and also to what it subtracts... in the spaces in between” (ibid). Readers participate in closure to make sense of what occurred or did not occur in the gutters and therefore, in the traumatic experiences characters endure.

V for Vendetta and *Watchmen* can be labelled as what Romero-Jódar refers to as “stream of consciousness” graphic novels. According to Robert Humphrey stream of consciousness describes “...novels which have as their essential subject matter the consciousness of one or more characters; that is, the depicted consciousness serves as a screen on which the material in these novels is presented” (Humphrey cited in Romero-Jódar 22). The inner workings of the character’s minds can be witnessed by readers throughout the narratives. Humphrey labels “stream of consciousness literature as psychological literature” (ibid). Despite Theirry Groensteen’s description of it as “the literary technique that tries to replicate the flow of thought” (Groensteen *Comics and Narration* 131), I believe it to accomplish more, especially in the trauma graphic novel subgenre. I wish to demonstrate how these fictional works display and mimic the traumatized psyche with emphasis on the imagistic elements of traumatic memories, specifically Roger Luckhurst’s “intrusive image”. This image often enters the psyche and begins the process of stream of consciousness. It is the “recurrent image, the unbidden flashback that abolishes time and reimmerses you in the visual field of the inaugurating instant” (Luckhurst 147). Examining more than a linking of thoughts, readers are transported into the inner minds of characters. They are able to sympathize with and understand a character’s past, witnessing what it is that haunts them.

Chute believes that the graphic novel can serve as a documentary form and that war has pushed a greater attention to this type of storytelling (Chute 2). War brings on a flood of psychological distress and various traumas that can haunt individuals and collectives for years, if not for the rest of people’s lives. In this paper I will be examining how experiences such as war

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and other distressing experiences have impacted characters using both trauma and comics theory equally. Trauma is apparent in character background, but comics theory will provide understanding as to *how* it is revealed and *how* it can be interpreted. Romero-Jódar focuses largely on the presence of political trauma in *Watchmen* when examining individual characters and most writers have only addressed the main characters from these stories. There are other trauma elements and minor characters that also deserve attention. Like there are different people in the real world, there are a variety of characters with different experiences worth discussing in these two graphic novels. As trauma cannot be measured, one character's trauma cannot be labelled as more traumatic than the next person's. Minor characters like Rosemary from *V for Vendetta* and *Watchmen*'s Dr. Malcolm Long play a great role in the trauma paradigm of the narratives. I wish to shed light on the importance of minor characters like them.

These graphic novels demonstrate the power images have over the traumatized mind. Chute explains her interest in comics is based on its "conceptions of the unrepresentable and unimaginable." These she says, are "commonplace in discourse about trauma" (Chute 17). They have the potential of "captur[ing] [and] textualiz[ing] the context of bearing witness to trauma" (ibid 36). Stream of consciousness thus allows readers to participate as Dori Laub's "first level of witnessing", the witness to oneself (Laub 61). The participation required of graphic novel readers enables them to witness their own reactions and feelings within the gutters where closure and contemplation occurs. Characters and readers alike are witnesses to the testimonies of others within the narrative. Considering Moore's works are stream of consciousness graphic novels and therefore, psychological literature, I will be psychoanalyzing characters based on their varying traumas and symptoms although, it is important to keep in mind that these characters are fictitious. In studying their experiences, behaviors and symptoms from a trauma theory point of view, my goal is to elucidate the trauma graphic novel's accuracy in the representing and exploring of the true traumatized psyche. What the frames display and what is *chosen* to be omitted is crucial in what the creators wish for their audience to take away from the reading; every creative decision is with purpose. Precaution is also taken during these decisions to ensure

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that the safe listening space remains so that readers can witness without the concern of becoming traumatized themselves.

Luckhurst describes Caruth's view of trauma as a "crisis of representation, of history and truth, and of narrative time" (Luckhurst 5). Graphic novels such as these address the complexities of these things in their structures which mimics the instability of the traumatized psyche. Even their realism elements are versions of places or history, like a traumatic memory is a version of the event itself; there is no real representation. These trauma graphic novels succeed in recreating alternative versions of history, relatable cultural memories and most importantly here, symptoms of trauma best represented through their structures. In addition to stream of consciousness I will be discussing other representations of trauma which exist within these structures including what Romero-Jódar calls "icons of suffering". These are images that function similarly to the intrusive image in that they spark traumatic memories. They most often appear outside of the mind as physical reminders of trauma. These images are repetitive, resembling flashbacks, "...evoking trauma that overwhelms the character's psyche, trapping him or her in the compulsive repetition of the traumatic event or situation..." (Romero- Jódar 61). Caruth argues that "[T]o be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* cited in Romero- Jódar 21). These inescapable images contribute to the way the structure of the graphic novel can be representative of trauma, as the structure itself is filled with these "icons of suffering". Readers can recognize these images as painful memories of character's pasts from earlier in the story. At times "icons of suffering" can be subtle and it is up to the reader to see them within the background of a frame. They can also call attention to greater scaled traumatic memories which can be collectively recognized. For example, on the streets of *Watchmen's* New York, graffiti known as the "Hiroshima lovers" reminds both characters and readers of the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Gibbons, Moore 205).

In addition to "icons of suffering", the trauma graphic novel can mimic symptoms of trauma by splitting the time-line. This technique simulates the symptom of dissociation. Characters' stories overlap and jump from one to another creating non-linearity. According to

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Patricia Moran, “the splitting of the narrative mirrors the dissociative thinking and patterns of depersonalization that are typical of trauma survivors” (Moran in Romero-Jódar 157). Both graphic novels I address in this thesis include a range of characters whose story lines are revisited in non-successive order.

Narrowing down to a more specific detail within the frame that impacts the way trauma is presented is colour choice. Though often overlooked, colour choices within the frames are vital for the way in which trauma is represented and interpreted by readers. The use of the black panel is often used to represent an affliction or a painful event. It has become common in the new millennium of graphic novels to use black panels for representing un-representable traumatic events. A completely blacked out panel “prevent[s] the traumatizing experience from being represented” (Romero- Jódar 59).

As previously mentioned, the graphic novel has much to show or not show, which is also in its way, showing something. This aligns with Caruth’s view of trauma as a “paradoxical experience” where seeing a site of memory or piece of history not available in conscious memory can be seen by not seeing it (Luckhurst 4). This is literature attempting to “tell us of a reality that is not otherwise available” (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 3). Caruth explains why Freud would use literature to explain trauma, “it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing” (ibid). Graphic novels have the ability of showing both the known and unknown or in other words, the repressed. This unknown content exists within the consciousness of a traumatized individual who has defensively placed it out of reach. I am interested in this process and where the reader participates in understanding how the unknown or unrepresentable is made present in the graphic novel form. Words are at times incapable of describing a feeling or experience and so the medium can rely on images and colours. If what is happening is too visually harmful for its audience or impossible to create, words may be all that is necessary to paint a picture in the reader’s mind, which is how Caruth’s unavailable reality can be shown. Alan Moore is particularly good at utilizing a juxtaposition of words and art to spark specific reactions from readers, demanding them to make certain connections or conclusions. Graphic novels can display

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what the mind will not allow. By not physically seeing something, readers paradoxically do see something or arrive at an understanding therefore, acknowledging the artist or writer's choice of not illustrating what they wish the reader to see. Because of this unspoken understanding, the medium requires cognitive participation from its readers.

After gaining a greater understanding of trauma and the sensitivity surrounding the way it is discussed, I am convinced that the graphic novel is an ideal method for sharing stories of trauma and incorporating realism elements that remind readers of historical events and their impact on both collectives and individuals. These two graphic novels implement a new way of interpreting history while simultaneously providing entertainment and enjoyment with its fictitious elements. Using trauma and comics theory, this thesis will show how *Watchmen* and *V for Vendetta* have been inspired by history and involve realistic characters who exhibit life like symptoms of trauma and pain. Their experiences drive the plot and provide understanding as to why they do what they do. Trauma can be comprehended by readers through the structures of both graphic novels and by character behavior and trauma symptoms shown through both art and words.

Trauma fiction has become an important element to contemporary culture. My hopes are to make the possibilities of the trauma graphic novel clear by showing the impact that words and sequential images have together in addressing world issues, individual and collective trauma and history, while providing a unique reader experience. To demonstrate this most effectively I have divided this thesis into two chapters, one dedicated to each graphic novel. Both chapters are broken up into sections that address various characters and relevant trauma theories. Before each section I have provided a brief description of the section's content including trauma topics to be discussed. The initial chapter will cover *V for Vendetta* and will begin by discussing the significance of visual language and the presentation of the graphic novel's specific place and time which resembles a controlling Orwellian type society. Correlations with real history, specifically Thatcherism and the use of surveillance will be discussed.

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In the second section of this chapter, the trauma topics to be covered include PTSD, secondary trauma and hypervigilance as a result of media and surveillance. In the third section, the importance of testimony and witnessing as a means of working through trauma and recovery will be discussed. In trauma there is always a victim, but the fourth section will be examining perpetrator trauma experienced by Delia Surridge. The following section will be used to examine the losses of two women including Evey Hammond who has lost everyone she loves, and Rosemary Almond, a victim of both domestic abuse and later on, political trauma. They both mourn the people they have lost which impacts their decision making in similar ways. Finally, the last section of this chapter will address the most prominent yet ambiguous character in the story, V; who or, rather what he is will be examined. A brief discussion concerning freedom following a traumatic experience will follow. To conclude the analysis on the narrative with its intertwining topics of history and trauma that give its characters life, I ask my readers to consider what V and his creators wish for their readers to take from the story.

Similarly to how the chapter on *V for Vendetta* will begin, the second chapter will start with a discussion about the time and setting of *Watchmen* which takes place in an alternative New York City. Real world analogue is most apparent in the politics of this city and war history which readers can learn about by observing artistic details within the frames, such as newspaper headlines. This is an alternative America that won the Vietnam war and is currently suffering under the pressures of the Cold War. Adrian Veidt will be discussed as a prominent figure in this city. His presence is constant through Veidt Enterprises' products and media placement within the frames.

The following section will address Rorschach and his traumatic past which is most revealed in chapter six, "The Abyss Gazes Also". Rorschach suffers from a number of PTSD symptoms. Succeeding Rorschach, the Comedian otherwise known as Edward Blake, will be examined as both a political trauma victim as well as a sexual perpetrator. The fourth section will investigate the character of Jon Osterman, also known as Dr. Manhattan. His character's unique grasp on reality can be compared to traumatic symptoms in relation to time. The final section will examine the final chapter of *Watchmen*, "A Stronger Loving World" where I will examine

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the impact of the mass punctual trauma which takes place in New York City. Like *V for Vendetta*, *Watchmen* employs the typical trauma graphic novel tendencies such as non-linearity, “icons of suffering” and the revealing of character stream of consciousness which allows a closer relation and understanding between readers and characters.

With a grasp on the trauma graphic novel’s tendencies and its capability of recreating alternative worlds and histories which resemble our own in many ways, this thesis also aims to provide a comprehensive perspective of how the subgenre can produce representations of what cannot be represented, in this case, narratives that tell sensitive stories of trauma based on or inspired by real life. I wish for my readers to gain a greater appreciation for what the graphic novel form can accomplish through the collaboration of trauma and comics theory.

CHAPTER I: V FOR VENDETTA

1.1 An Alternative London in 1997, Surveillance, Thatcherism and a New Political Party

The first page of *V for Vendetta* is a direct allusion to Orwell’s superstate, “Oceania” in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. As can be observed in Figure 1, the first panel introduces “the voice of fate” which addresses all of London from the “Jordan Tower”, a tall, grey and overbearing building. The voice announces the time which is nine-o’clock and the date, November fifth, 1997. The jagged edges of the voice bubbles indicate that the speech is being broadcasted electronically through a device (Piekos, Blambot). The following panel displays a large group of people who seem to be leaving a factory. It can be assumed that they have been working all day and are leaving at this late hour. A camera looks *down* on them, labelled with the sign “FOR YOUR PROTECTION”. The frame of the next panel is zoomed in on the camera lens which invokes an eerie feeling of being watched. Following this, it becomes apparent that not only is this a place of heavy electronic surveillance, but there are also police officers guarding the streets. In this same panel, the voice of fate advises its people to avoid certain “quarantine zones”

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for “health and safety” reasons (1: Prologue: 9: 1-4)¹. A great sense of control over citizen lives can be recognized from these first panels.

Orwellian in nature, this alternative London exists in a future England monitored 24 hours a day. Characters in Moore’s *V for Vendetta* and Orwell’s novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, often appear to be on edge, awaiting danger. There are many parallels between V and Orwell’s protagonist Winston who both take a stand against their totalitarian governments with the aid of their female accomplices Evey and Julia. The specific methods used for inducing fear in the citizen in these two narratives are only possible with technology. The voice of fate works similarly to Orwell’s telescreens, as it informs its residents of dangers and provides recommended precautions. David Altheide describes this type of propagandistic fear as “socially constructed, packaged and presented through the mass media by politicians and decision makers to protect us by offering more control over our lives and culture...” (Altheide cited in Mohanan 4). In response to this, Torin Monahan adds that this fear and insecurity leads to “...spawning paranoia...motivating hypervigilance and self-regulation” (Mohanan 4). This alternative London of 1997 is a state of control and what Monahan would refer to as a “security culture” in which methods of surveillance are used to create social inequality (ibid). The greater the inequality, the greater the distance there is between rulers and those being ruled.

The reader is introduced to the first victim of the graphic novel, Evey Hammond. She is shown preparing herself for her first attempt at prostitution, which suggests that what the radio is saying simultaneously in these panels about the improvements in food growth and rationing is untrue. The last panel on this page displays V’s back walking towards a dressing table where his wig and mask await him. His room is covered with extratextual references revealing possible sources of inspiration and motivation for V; Book titles in this panel include Thomas Moore’s *Utopia*, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Karl Marx’s *Capital* and Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. Among his books, movie posters cover the walls. Gangster film *White Heat* is of the largest which can provide foreshadowing of V bringing down a corrupt and violent

¹ Graphic novel references for *V for Vendetta* will be cited with the book number first (1, 2 or 3), chapter number or “Prologue”, the page number and lastly the panel or panels.

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government just as the agent in the film brought down the dangerous gang leader and his members. The poster alongside this is for the film *Son of Frankenstein* which could suggest the ostracization of “the other”, someone different, like V. Kukkonen suggests that the hovering black silhouette of the ferocious open-mouthed creature in the room behind V represents the “aggressiveness and readiness to strike” (Kukkonen 22). This page illustrates how much content can be revealed in a small space. Readers can already anticipate that characters and events will consolidate because the voice of fate is constant throughout the page, regardless that the panels jump from one place or person to the next; the voice connects them.



Figure 1: Lloyd, Moore (1982). *V for Vendetta*. First Page. Source: mattdebanham.com. Date Accessed: 25/09/19.

<http://www.mattdebanham.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/tfaw_vendetta1.jpg>

The broadcasted voice and cameras mentioned belong to the totalitarian government “Norsefire” which is composed of different institutions named after varying body parts. “The Head” is where the Prime Minister can be found. “The Eyes” represent video surveillance, “The Ear” is a location with active listening radios where conversations are monitored, “The Nose” is where research is conducted, “The Mouth” is in charge of reporting and the secret police force are known as “Fingermen” which could suggest that they use their hands to do what they wish, as laws do not seem to apply to them. The body parts invite the idea that the government in its entirety equates to a human body which stands tall and intimidatingly over the pitiful, untrustworthy society. This large body in its essence is the enemy that V is attempting to gain revenge. The body’s systems are complex. According to V himself, “Authoritarian societies are like formation skating. Intricate, mechanically precise and above all precarious” (3: 2: 197: 1). The more parts a system has, the more complex and difficult it is for the individual to make an impact or change.

This corrupt government and police force abuse their power. The evil potential of the Fingermen is revealed when Evey Hammond is caught soliciting herself to an undercover agent whose colleague appears shortly. He informs her “...we get to decide what happens to you. That’s our prerogative” (1: 1: 11: 7). He repeats that it is their “prerogative” to “...do any we want and then we’ll kill you” (1: 1: 11: 8). Moore and Lloyd make effective use of visual rhetoric, specifically juxtaposition which is used to comment upon what is currently being said or the action that is taking place. Movies and comics are often compared but according to Moore, if this was always the case, “comics at best would be unmoving movies” (The Mindscape of Alan Moore, 2003). He wishes to “focus only on those things that comics can achieve... [a] tremendous amount of information could be included visually in every panel... the juxtaposition of what the character was saying and what the reader was looking at” (ibid). For example, while a bunch of grown men hold Evey to a brick wall as can be observed in Figure 2, there appears to be the party’s slogan posted which reappears a number of times later on. It states, “STRENGTH THROUGH PURITY PURITY THROUGH STRENGTH” (1: 1: 11: 7). It is clear that the party

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uses physical strength and violence as a means to achieve their goals, and the irony of their lack of purity strikes the reader.



Figure 2: Lloyd, Moore (1982). *V for Vendetta*. Irony of lack of purity, (1: 1: 11: 7). Source: <<http://libguides.collegeofsanmateo.edu/engl100105-sherret/images>>

Another example of meaning being created by visual and textual juxtaposition in this scene occurs when Evey approaches the Finger. Big Ben can be seen in the distance behind her as well as the South Bank Lion that has stood on the East side of the Westminster Bridge since 1837 although, in this panel its head has been removed, signifying the fall of a once proud and powerful London. The caption reads, “There was power here once. Power that decided the destiny of millions” (1: 1: 10: 6). Lloyd explains this intentional decision, “It was in a future where London was kind of decayed and decadent and partly ruined. I decided to drop the head of the lion” (Mindscape of Alan Moore, 2003). It could be possible that the lion head in V’s room symbolically belongs to the South Bank Lion, supporting the notion that there has been a shift in power.

Alan Moore wrote the narrative while Margaret Thatcher was entering her third term in office. He described a “creeping fascism” (Millidge 84) that was on the rise during this time. The creators wanted “to see how much political paranoia [they] could get into a comic strip” (ibid). In an introduction from the original DC comics release of this graphic novel in 1988, Moore shares what the current Conservative leadership was capable of and what sort of things were occurring around him during this time in the UK:

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...the tabloid press are circulating the idea of concentration camps for persons with AIDS. The new riot police wear black visors, as do their horses, and their vans have rotating cameras mounted on top. The government has expressed a desire to eradicate homosexuality, even as an abstract concept, and one can only speculate as to which minority will be the next legislated against (Moore, 1988).

These right-winged ideas are enforced and achieved in the narrative. Margaret Thatcher was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979-1990. During these years, the use of public surveillance systems increased as a means of monitoring citizens and ensuring no protesting would take place. One of the first events to be monitored by surveillance cameras happened to be Guy Fawkes Day in 1969 in Trafalgar Square. The following years brought forth improved camera systems and additional monitoring equipment such as recorders, switchers and controllers (Ferenbok and Mann 20-21). To convince readers that this was a fascist police state, Moore decided they would "...put security cameras on every street corner. That'll scare people" (Millidge 86).

Romero- Jódar refers to this graphic novel as Moore's "...most straightforward response" to Thatcherism (Romero- Jódar 148). "Thatcherism as a term arose post-war during a time when it suddenly became important to restore British national identity. With this came racist attitudes which Thatcher was not subtle about as a political leader. She was famously quoted as saying she fears being "swamped by people with a different culture" (Thatcher 1978). In the graphic novel, the voice of fate informs citizens "...that it is the duty of every man in this country to seize the initiative and make Britain great again" (1: 1: 2: 3). "Make Britain great again" originates from one of Thatcher's speeches in a 1950 general election address where she promised citizens that it is her party's "earnest desire to make Great Britain great again" (Thatcher 1950). Another common phrase used by Norsefire Party members when leaving one another is "England Prevails", similar in its patriotic nature.

V uses a seed metaphor when discussing the growth of his roses, alluding to political leaders as potential seeds and the society as the gardeners, "...we as gardeners, must beware...for some seeds are the seeds of ruin...and the most iridescent blooms are often the

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most dangerous” (3: 3: 220: 7-8). He is implying that looks can be misleading and people must not be deceived. It is the public who decides who shall lead them; they themselves have been responsible for the corrupt rulers of the past. Part of V’s quest is to make the citizens of London understand this. He addresses them personally on the television:

We’ve had a string of embezzlers, frauds, liars and lunatics making a string of catastrophic decisions...but who elects them? It was you! You who had appointed these people! You who gave them the power to make your decisions for you! While I’ll admit that anyone can make a mistake once, to go on to make the same lethal errors century after century seems nothing to me short of deliberate (2: 4: 116-17: 6-9).

Portraits of Stalin and Hitler can be seen in the background of the first panel in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Lloyd, Moore (1982). *V for Vendetta*. Fascist Rulers and Citizens to Blame (2: 4: 116: 6-7). Source: “Review: V for Vendetta”. Accessed:25/09/19, < <https://loudpoet.com/2006/03/27/review-v-for-vendetta/>>

The above visual juxtaposition of the display of leaders behind V and his words, is a direct reference to real world history, demanding reflection from readers. In an interview with BBC 4’s Comics Britannia Series, Alan Moore explains his inspiration for writing a narrative about real world fascist threats while maintaining fictional aspects:

I was attending a lot of...racism marches with the anti-Nazi week. I knew a bit about the threat of fascism... So, this struck me as potentially a very interesting backdrop for this future world that I was going to be talking about because as with most of the future world in science fiction, you’re not talking about the future, you’re talking about the present...you are using the future as a way of giving a bit of room to move, a bit of a fantasy element. It makes it into something once removed from the thing you’re actually talking about so people can enjoy it on a fantasy level, while hopefully perhaps some of the deeper points you’re making are sinking in” (Comics Britannia 2007).

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This “fantasy level” Moore has created allows readers to be entertained while being indirectly informed of current world issues, politics and true past world events. Some of this alternative history from the narrative can be learned through character testimony. Evey Hammond opens up to V early on, revealing her personal past and some history about this other version of London that does not sound unfamiliar. Moore’s placement of real-life events in Evey’s story are recognized, such as the economic circumstances of recession, and political tensions like the Cold War. Evey recalls her father telling her about how the Labor Party got into power which was shortly after a big recession in the eighties. In 1981, the UK faced a recession which caused an enormous increase of unemployment. Only a year later, the economy in the United States was nearly as bad as the Great Depression (Sablik 2013). Evey recalls that Poland and Russia were at war and President Kennedy threatened to use an atomic bomb if it would not stop. As a seven-year-old girl, she feared Britain being affected by the bombing (1: 3: 27: 4). The Cold War exists in the backdrop of this narrative as the point in history when everything went wrong for Britain. The rest of Europe and Africa had been destroyed; Britain remained although all the crops and vegetation had been ruined, leaving people hungry. In an interview, Moore explains how the totalitarian government became possible. “World War III breaks out [...], after a couple of years of riots, chaos, and hunger, dysentery, plague...the Right Wing groups—who are the only ones with any organization—get together and take over (Leach 8).

This government constructed of right-wing groups would be fascist and corrupt. When there is fear in a mass, leaders tend to achieve greater control because they are looked to for help. In the graphic novel, after Europe had been destroyed, and the people of Britain were left hungry and scared of all of the newly formed gangs who attempted to take control, the new fascist government “Norsefire” came in and took the reins. From what Evey can remember, “It was all the fascist groups, the right-wingers. They all got together with some of the big corporations... Everyone was cheering” (1: 3: 28: 3). There is a warning here concerning aggressively right-winged capitalist societies where money speaks in the process of change. In this panel men can be seen in matching army-like attire parading in a group down the street with flags marked “N”. This united formation is intimidating and shows the public their dedication and strength in

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numbers. All of this may find its real world analogue in Germany's defeat in WW1 which led to economic depression, growing unemployment and intense political issues that brought on a civil war ending the Weimar Republic and opening the door for a new leader, Adolf Hitler, and the development of the fascist Nazi political party (Encyclopedia Britannica). Moore's alternative world is depicted like *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but the political reactions following the war resemble those of Nazi Germany. Norsefire's ideologies are similar to those of the Nazi's and close to the 'National Front' which is Britain's fascist far-right political party. When dangerous leaders gain control, they make the state of things appear better until they can put forth the actions they have in their hidden agendas. According to Evey, when Norsefire gained power:

they soon got things under control. But then they started taking people away...all the black people and the Pakistanis...white people too. All the radicals and the men who you know, liked other men. The homosexuals. I don't know what they did with them all (1: 3: 28: 4).

The concentration camp where many of these individuals were taken is called "Larkhill Resettlement Camp" where a concoction of drugs and torment led to V becoming who he is in the present time of the story. An ideological resemblance between Hitler and the Norsefire leader Adam Susan can be recognized. His followers greet him as the Nazis greeted their leader with a Nazi salute. Men salute Adam Susan as he exits his limo (1: 5: 37: 7).

1.2 Testimony and Witness

To illustrate the totalitarian circumstances of this alternative London, Moore selects a young woman Evey Hammond, to tell her story on the opening pages. Evey's testimony of trauma to V begins with the secondary trauma she and her family were subjected to during the war. Following this, testimonial voices from the Holocaust will be compared with the testimony provided by a Larkhill camp inmate Valerie, to demonstrate the likeness of their experiences and the importance of having a witness other than oneself in the struggle to survive.

Evey entrusts V with the story of her past. As the listener, V becomes a secondary witness to her experiences. She shares that during the war the radio would be on in her family home and the broadcasted news made her father "scared to death" (1: 3: 27: 3). Individuals not

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directly impacted by traumatic events, but merely witnesses to them through the media, as Evey's family had been, are vulnerable to experiencing different levels of second hand trauma and other types of psychological distress (Luckhurst 30). Watching anything fear-inducing activates a fear circuit in the brain which can produce flashbacks, both of which are key elements in developing PTSD (PNAS 2013). With PTSD and acute distress order, a heightened awareness for threat occurs within the individual, which is referred to as vigilance, a symptom of hypervigilance (Stewart 145). Evey's family, like many others in Britain during the war, could have been subjected to hypervigilance as a result of or, as a precautionary symptom of PTSD from the spreading of fear through mass media. Each day they feared that Britain would be the next target for destruction.

Luckhurst describes trauma as being “worryingly transmissible: it leaks between mental and physical symptoms” (Luckhurst 1). Evey's parents' pain is likely transferred to Evey as she was a secondary witness to their struggles. Symptoms of second hand trauma or secondary trauma closely resemble those of PTSD. In children specifically, it is common for them to experience the feeling of a loss of safety, anxiousness and withdrawal (ADAA). Lloyd has drawn Evey as a child, suffering from these symptoms. She desperately holds on to a stuffed bear while her parents urgently discuss in the corner of the room. In the next panel, reader's eyes are directed to a stuffed elephant which stands erect as Evey tells V that she had worried about “the lions and elephants being dead” (1: 3: 27: 3-4). The elephant is another instance of visual rhetoric playing on Evey's concern for them in the “Africa... not there anymore” (1: 3: 27: 4). Seeing Evey as a fearful child creates an emotional climate in which the reader sympathizes as a tertiary witness; readers witness Evey's testimony from the outside. In an analysis of Joe Sacco's work, Scherr refers to frames like these as “testimonial narratives” where readers are “...active participants in the gathering and hearing of testimony; [their] engagement with the material is corporeal, physical, intimate” (Scherr 6).

In one panel she pulls out a photograph of her and her parents (1: 1: 26: 7). This image reappears in “This Vicious Cabaret”, the prelude to the second book which indicates it is an “icon of suffering” for Evey. She told him that from between 1991 to 1993 she experienced the

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death of her mother, Norsefire gaining control, her dad being taken to never be seen again and being sent to work in a factory with other children. As these are Evey's personal first hand experiences, she is what Dori Laub refers to as a first level witness, a witness to oneself. V as the listener in this situation, acts as the second level witness. Laub explains that the secondary witness participates in the "reexperiencing of the event" (Laub 62). There is no proof as to how exactly V "reexperiences" events, but readers soon discover that he was a primary victim in the war as a Larkhill Resettlement Camp Prisoner. His sufferings during this period enable him to sympathize with Evey's plights. The discussion process assists her as the victim to escape the "entrapment" of the haunting memories (Dawson 66). Based on clinical experiences with trauma and memory in the context of the Irish Troubles, Dawson refers to Dori Laub's emphasis on storytelling from his work with Holocaust survivors. He says to escape entrapment, and "'reclaim both his life and his past', he or she must become involved in a social process of storytelling; that is, 'a process of constructing a narrative, reconstructing a history and, essentially, of re-externalizing the event'" (Laub cited in Dawson 66). Laub suggests that the trauma of victims live not as memories but exist in a "psychic space" presenting itself daily because there was no resolution or adequate testimony given in attempts to externalize the trauma (Dawson 66). Evey needs her narrative to be recognized and for someone to "share the burden of pain" (Leydesdorff cited in Dawson 67). A large focus in the narrative involves Evey's process of escaping entrapment and "renegotiat[ing] [her] identity" (Dawson 66) with the help of V.

After having told her story, V suggests that she look into the mirror and tells her, "We can wipe it *all away*. All the *pain*, all the *cruelty*, all the *bereavement*. We can *start again*...There you see?" Readers see Evey's reflection and react to the emotional rhetoric accomplished by a concentration on Evey's face and eyes (1: 3: 29: 2-3). In creating such an emotional climate, "the expression of feelings is uninhibited" (Groensteen, *Comics and Narration* 59). Groensteen suggests this inhibition of feelings is triggered by the eyes which are "mirrors of the soul" and the reader's invitation to "scrutinize" the face (ibid). Even the way her hair is drawn around her eyes "connotes[...] youth itself, wild and free—rebellious, romantic, and seething with powerful

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emotions” (ibid). In observing herself in the mirror, she could be in the act of the “renegot[ing] [of her] identity” (Dawson 66). Readers may note that each of the italicized words in V’s speech bubble are associated with trauma and recovery, meaning Moore is emphasizing the trauma in Evey’s life and V’s understanding of trauma for having selected those words.

There is a touching moment that follows Evey’s physical self-observation where V holds her as she cries. The reflection of their embrace can be seen in the mirror by readers. If the mirror was where Evey experienced re-identification with herself, perhaps it also resembles some level of transformation that occurred within V, as he now shares Evey’s burden of pain. The image of them together both outside and within the reflection of the mirror could mark the moment that they in a way, become linked by this shared experience of storytelling. In this frame, the narrator confirms that providing testimony and receiving comfort was a relief for Evey, “...And Evey Hammond sobs like the child she is. Sobs because at long last, her nightmare is over...” (1: 3: 29: 4).

Another woman whom V cares for is one that readers never meet in the current time of the story. Valerie is a character only known through the recollections of V and the written life testimony she had left behind in her prison cell at Larkhill. Her testimony differs from Evey’s as it was hand written on five, tiny, toilet paper pieces. In a quest to free Evey from herself and her fears, V imprisons her in a mock prison and implants Valerie’s written testimony in her cell for her to find and read. He had found and read this same testimony while imprisoned at Larkhill himself. Shoshana Felman and Laub explain that “a “life testimony” is not simply a testimony to a private life, but a point of conflation between text and life, a textual testimony that can penetrate us like actual life” (Felman, Laub 4). Valerie’s story brings strength and comfort to Evey while in her cell, as it did V. The combination of text and life creates something extraordinary that is made real when read, impacting the reader like a living and breathing force.

Laub discusses how there is an imperative for trauma victims to share. One woman who provided Laub her testimony of the Holocaust told him, “We wanted to survive so as to live one day after Hitler, in order to tell our story.” Laub agrees and explains that he believes the opposite

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to be just as true, "...they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive." By telling, survivors come to know and better understand what has happened to them (Laub 63). Perhaps knowing that someone would read her story made Valerie more determined to stay alive. It was important for her to hold onto her integrity which is according to her testimony, "all we have left in this place...it is the very last inch of us..." (2: 11: 156: 6). It was a possible comfort knowing that someone would one day read her testimony and that it would not vanish never to be known by anyone.

Another one of the Holocaust victims whom Dori Laub converses with in the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies includes a man who was sent away by his parents as a boy of four years old. This decision saved his life, as all of the children in the Krakow ghetto were being gathered for extermination. All his mother gave to him was a passport photo of herself. This story is relevant because this photograph meant to this boy what Valerie's letter meant to both V and Evey. The photo and letter both represent hope and most importantly a witness through all that they endured. The boy withstood difficult experiences but held onto that photo of his mother.

By talking and praying to the photo, the boy activated it to become his first witness. Laub claims that this is what helped him survive on the streets. He describes it as, a "process whereby survival takes place through the creative act of establishing and maintaining an internal witness, who substitutes for the lack of witnessing in real life" (Laub 71). Treating this photograph as a real person by communicating with it provided him with a witness. This made him feel less alone and helped him later in life to recreate a narrative of his experiences. Believing someone had been with him and was experiencing what he was experiencing alongside him, assisted him in the process of recognizing who he was and who he became, because he could imagine what they were witnessing and how they saw him. When Evey is being tortured in V's mock prison she thinks, "I know that there's a woman who wrote me a letter on the toilet paper. I know she's alone. I know that she loves me" (2: 10: 155: 5). Evey never doubted that Valerie existed. The

life testimony came alive and allowed Evey to endure just like that boy on the streets of Krakow did.

1.3 Perpetrator Trauma

Shifting from the trauma experienced by a victim to the trauma experienced by a perpetrator, this section will examine Delia Surridge who displays unbearable guilt from her time spent working at Larkhill Resettlement camp.

According to Saira Mohammed, people are hesitant to focus on the psychic suffering of the perpetrator; it could strike readers as a “perverse topic” (Mohammed 8). Whether they should receive any sympathy is an ongoing discussion. Some argue that their suffering is deserved. However, Mohammed’s article claims that it is important to acknowledge the trauma perpetrators face to better understand the “big picture” and grasp how nations can heal themselves and “transition ...from a period of violence to a time of peace” (Mohammed 9). Researcher Bernhard Giesen and illustrator Nora Krug also regard perpetrator trauma as necessary for dealing with a nation’s past (Giesen 2016; *The Agenda* with Steve Paiken, 2019). Every war has its perpetrators who later admit to having been wrong and who experience guilt. Krug, like Giesen, emphasizes the importance of not trying to forget about this but to use it to understand history, ensure mistakes are not repeated and move forward.

V for Vendetta accurately portrays perpetrator trauma through the character Delia Surridge. Her role enlightens readers of how things could be from the side of the “bad guys”. Delia committed inhumane crimes while working at Larkhill which readers learn from her written diary, another personal testimony which reveals stream of consciousness. Her main task at Larkhill involved drug experimentation on patients which she was aware could be fatal. Four dozen people received a shot of “batch 5”; most suffered painful symptoms and death. V was one of the patients who survived. According to Claudia Welz, perpetrators tend to experience trauma more belatedly which proved true for Delia who did not show remorse for her actions until Larkhill was burned down (Welz 2). Caruth explains how the truth of this trauma type has a “delayed appearance” (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 4). When Delia awoke to find V standing

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over her in her room she was overwhelmed with relief. “You’ve come to kill me... Oh thank god... Thank god” (1: 9: 70: 8-9). She admits her shock in her ability to have committed all of those terrible acts and tells V that those things have “been with [her] for so long (1: 9: 73: 3).

Delia explains the Milgram Shock Experiment to V. The purpose of this story could be to share her thoughts on how weak mankind can be in the position of receiving orders from an authoritative figure, in attempts of understanding herself and how Larkhill could have even been possible. The inspiration of the experiment was based on the desire to understand if the accomplices to the Holocaust were particularly obedient to authorities and the specific factors involved in giving one orders and ensuring obedience. The creator of the experiment Stanley Milgram reached two conclusions about humans in social situations from the experiment results which can be applicable when discussing perpetrator decisions. The first state is called “the autonomous state” which places responsibility in the hands of an individual to make personal decisions and direct their own actions, taking responsibility. The second state includes those who brush off the responsibilities and consequences of their actions to those who command them, therefore not taking the blame (McLeod S.A.). It is likely that Delia belonged to the autonomous state while at Larkhill conducting her experiments because she was eager and even “very excited about it” (1: 10: 80: 4). She made her own decisions and had only one person, Commander Prothero, monitoring the process from afar. When he threatened to stop the experimentation, she was distressed as she had more to learn. This autonomous state is why Delia could feel responsible and therefore, guilty for all she had done to V and his fellow inmates. Head down and eyes closed in remorse, she tells V that she and the other perpetrators “...deserve to be culled. We deserve it...” (1: 10: 73: 7).

Social psychologist Herbert C. Kelman has written that “the inhibitions against murdering fellow human beings are generally so strong that the victims must be deprived of their human status if systematic killing is to proceed in a smooth and orderly fashion” (Kelman 75). Shortly after Delia’s arrival to Larkhill, she had written in her diary that her patients were a “poor bunch” whose habits [are] filthy”. She also noted that they were “so weak and pathetic you find yourself hating them...they make me want to be sick, physically. They’re hardly human” (1: 11:

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80: 3,5). Associating animalistic qualities to a group of humans creates an “otherness” which gives the illusion that the victims are incapable of experiencing feelings the same way that perpetrators can. Objective attitudes concerning victims are inserted which comes with emotional detachment (Kelman 78). According to Kelman, all concentration and death camps throughout history “pre-suppose a degree of dehumanization” (ibid 76). Prisoners had to be seen as less than human, otherwise the acts condoned against them would be impossible to commit. Perpetrators cut any ties with the victims which could remind them that they are similar to them. In order for Delia to practice her experiments on prisoners, she had to convince herself that they were subhuman creatures that could not feel or experience things the way she could. Readers come full circle in Delia’s diary, where in the last entry she describes V coming out of the burning prison; these panels can be examined in Figure 4. She describes him as looking at her like she was the animal, something less than human. “He looked at me...as if I were an insect. Oh God. As if I were something mounted on a slide” (1: 11: 83: 8,9). This is a significant moment when she possibly realized that she and her co-workers were the animals throughout the history of Larkhill. When V emerges from the flames, resurrecting like a phoenix, he is no longer an animal in Delia’s eyes nor is he quite human, but superhuman with an extraordinary build and posture. Some may perceive this as her recognizing herself as subhuman. This threatening image of him impacts Delia and the bishop who in the panel are crouched in a weakened position watching him emanate from a fire that should have killed him (1: 11: 83: 7).

Readers understand the extent to which she feels guilt when she is happy to die at the hands of an individual she hurt. V shows his forgiving nature when he tells Delia that he had killed her “ten minutes ago. While [she was] asleep”, showing her a needle and explaining there would be no pain (1: 10: 75: 3-5). All she asks of V is to see to his face again. When he slips off his mask facing away from readers, she responds, “It’s beautiful” (10: 75: 8). The rose V had given her to hold while in bed loosens in her grip, a sign she has passed away. She can finally rest after meeting the face that has existed in her repeated flashbacks for four years from the night V emerged out of his flaming cell.

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Delia's character is life-like because of her flaws. Moore has created the opportunity to see the antihero as a human who makes mistakes and feels remorse. He provides insight on the importance of these perpetrator roles and creates understanding as to who they really are:

...I wanted to present some of the fascists as being ordinary and in some instances even likeable human beings... Nazis weren't from outer space, they weren't from the depths of hell. They were butchers and street sweepers and school teachers and ordinary people from ordinary walks of life, they weren't monsters but they just went along with fascism when fascism was just the order of the day" (Comics Britannia 2007).



Figure 4: Moore, Lloyd (1982). *V for Vendetta*, (1: 11: 83: 7-9). V emerging from the flames. "V for Vendetta #3", Date Accessed: 26/09/19. <<http://vlcomic.com/read/comic-v-for-vendetta-eng/3>>.

1.4 Pain, Loss, Mourning and Domestic Violence

Shifting back from perpetrator to victim, this section will focus on two victimized women. Evey and Rosemary both fall victim to loss and grief which they experience similarly. Though unrelated, both Evey's lover Gordon and Rosemary's husband are murdered. Iconic language expresses the PTSD that they each experience after their own personal losses. This section will observe these separate experiences.

Evey's Flashbacks

In order to repay V for his kindness to her, Evey agrees to help him seek vengeance on a pedophile priest although, she did not know that the plans would result in the priest's murder. "V

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I didn't know you were going to kill him! ... Killing's wrong" (Book 1: 9: 1-2). Deciding that Evey was not ready to further assist him as an accomplice, he chooses to leave her blindfolded on a street. Sometime after this, Evey began living with a man named Gordon Deitrich who was one day murdered in his home while Evey was upstairs. The following moments displayed in Figure 5 on the following page are intense as readers anticipate how Evey will react when she comes downstairs to find her lover murdered. She does not go to him but chooses to sit on the stairs close by, holding her knees to her chest in comfort. This experience induces a flashback of her dead mother's arm hanging off of the bed. This exact memory has been shown before in chapter three when Evey was telling V about her mother's death. These repeated images are examples of "icons of suffering". The next panel shows her staring at the reader as if into a camera; her eyes seem pain-filled. The following flashback panel is a memory of her father being taken away by the party. The death of Gordon has awoken these relative intrusive images that enter her psyche one after the other. The stream of consciousness method allows readers to witness these flashback memories that are occurring within Evey's mind.

In the next panel again, there is a greater zoom in on her austere expression. Scherr describes faces in zooming panels like masks, "...the zooming functions as a form of questioning in seeking and probing the face from a different angle, seeks a kind of truth behind the face" (Scherr 124). It is dependent upon the readers themselves to determine the truths behind Evey's face in particular. One may conclude in this scene for example, that her truth is that the world is an unfair and relentless place where bad things seem to happen to good people. Readers could read her lack of expression as giving up. This lack of emotion and the repeated panels of Evey's unmoving stance suggests that she has reached the point of numbing herself, a state of mind in which Luckhurst discusses as a means of survival by a "psychic closing-off" (Luckhurst 63). In the final facial zoom in Figure 5, readers are absorbed by the seriousness of Evey's eyes that exist as the focal point in the frame. Evey's displayed stream of consciousness shows the individuals lost to her one by one. The final flashback Evey has on this page is of V leaving her blindfolded on the street months before.

On the following page, Evey releases a single tear. The final panel on this page and of the chapter, shows a revolver in a drawer she has opened (2: 7: 138: 9). The title of chapter eight on the adjacent page is called “Vengeance” with the image of Evey holding the gun, informing readers of a new possible turn and attitude she will take in her life after losing yet again someone else whom she cared for.



Figure 5: Moore, Lloyd (1982). *V for Vendetta*, (Book 2: 7: 137: 6-9). Flashback experience and zoom effect on a numb Evey Hammond. “V for Vendetta #5”, vlcomics.com, Date Accessed: 26/09/19. < <http://vlcomic.com/read/comic-v-for-vendetta-eng/5#smaller>>

The above scene is an ideal sample of how stream of consciousness functions in the graphic novel. Through visual language, readers see the images that haunt characters. Caruth defines trauma as “the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 91). Evey has flashbacks of the last time seeing each of the individuals she cared for and lost, which were traumatic moments in her life.

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The flashbacks indicate that those past experiences occurred too suddenly to digest at the time of their occurrence and therefore, Evey relives them through these images that reappear in familiar situations. Anne Whitehead's explanation of flashbacks fits Evey's situation. She claims that "the event is not experienced as it occurs, but is fully evident only in connection with another place and in another time" (Whitehead, cited in Romero- Jódar 21). Recognizing these flashbacks from earlier in the narrative, the readers witness Evey's experience of PTSD alongside her in real time, as readers are in control of the pace of the story. Images can be haunting. As Caruth has said, "[T]o be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* cited in Romero- Jódar 21). Evey is possessed by the images of her loved ones leaving or being taken away.

Evey's flashbacks are manifestations of PTSD but also a sign that she continues to mourn the loss of her mother and father. According to Freud, "Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as father-land, liberty, an ideal, and so on (Freud 104). With this in mind, it is possible that in addition to the mourning of her parents and Gordon, Evey is mourning for a time and place before Norsefire gained power. Both Evey and Valerie have reminisced and mourned a past that was destroyed when the regime took over. Prior to the war, their world was a freer and more accepting place where they once knew happiness. Loss of life, forces changes and "grief involves grave departures from the normal attitude to life" (ibid 105). This also involves decisions that would typically be seen as irrational to the person making them. After the loss of Gordon, Evey takes his gun out into the streets and decides to aim it at Harper, Gordon's murderer. V unbeknownst to her, stops her before she can shoot him. Hilary Abrahams reports that anger is a natural stage in the grieving process for some, especially in women who have lost partners who were responsible for providing them with their home and lifestyles (Abrahams 47). Rosemary and Evey's partners were both responsible for their financial security and home.

Evey's Nightmare

Before Evey can commit murder, she is pulled violently to the ground by V. While unconscious, the stream of consciousness method reveals Evey's nightmare that connects all of her past

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traumas and entangles them into a web of horror. Readers can recognize fragments of Evey's traumatic memories from earlier in the story.

According to sleep experts, approximately half of individuals who suffer from PTSD experience "replicative nightmares" which is the replaying of the exact traumatic experiences during sleep (National Sleep Foundation 2019). Dr. Carr claims that dreams do not occur precisely the way they happened in real life, but are "symbolically or indirectly" related to true events, and are experienced by 20-25 percent of PTSD patients (Carr 2016). Carr's explanation accurately describes Evey's nightmare. The decoding of the symbolic details of this nightmare could be discussed endlessly. Moore and Lloyd have successfully captured the complicated, traumatized mind during the state of unconsciousness.

A pitch-black panel indicates Evey's unconsciousness. In this case, the blackout is also marking the start of her traumatic nightmare. On the preceding page, Evey begins to narrate her unconscious nightmarish experiences. Evey is dressed like the young girl she was pretending to be for the Bishop earlier on, preparing herself in front of V's dressing mirror. She meets her father who takes her upstairs. According to Dr. Carr, "These intrusive trauma memories can be remarkably vivid, overwhelmingly emotional, and are experienced as if they were happening right then and there" (Carr 2016). During this nightmare she recognizes where she is but it does not feel right. She "feel[s] sad, but [doesn't] know why" (2: 9:144: 1). From this moment, her father transforms into Gordon who wants to show her the "the sky from the window. He says it's yellow and black" (2: 9: 144: 2). Evey had described the sky as yellow and black after the bombing during the war previously in her testimony to V. The panel takes readers into the Bishop's luxurious room where she was almost raped. Gordon then transforms into the Bishop who also then transforms into her father's image. Evey's mother then catches them in bed together. Evey holds both of her hands to her chest with her mouth open in shock; she feels guilty and apologizes. In the next page, Evey finds herself amongst a group of people, two of them can be recognized as Delia Surridge and Harper. A masked Mr. Punch appears and takes a baseball bat, knocking off the head of one of the individuals which comes clean off. "Why doesn't somebody stop him? Everybody's just laughing!" she cried with a terrified face. It is

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possible Evey feels a guilty link to their deaths through V; V had been wearing the Mr. Punch mask earlier when he brought Prothero to Larkhill. In the following and last panel of the page she runs in hopes to find her mother and father but she is sure the masked figure will follow her (2: 9: 145: 1-8). The masked figure transforms into V who chases her up a tall spiraling staircase. She thinks she has escaped him until he appears behind her in an elevator where he takes her down again. Another black panel concludes the nightmare.

The seemingly randomness of the panel sequence makes sense because it is mimicking a true traumatic nightmare; dreams rarely make complete sense, but they do make connections with reality. The panel sequence used in this scene is a combination of what McCloud calls subject-to-subject and the “non-sequitur” (McCloud 71). In some cases, the panels jump from different subjects but remain within the same scene or idea. This combination of sequence types makes sense only because readers are aware this is a nightmare and therefore, they can acknowledge the whole sum of these panels and bestow them with what McCloud calls a “single-overriding identity” (ibid 73). Alone, each panel’s meaning is confusing, but together, they represent the absurdity of a nightmare.

Rosemary: domestic violence, loss and revenge

Another one of Moore’s female characters that readers are made to sympathize with is Rosemary. From when she is first introduced to her final appearance in the narrative, she endures only hardship. Women who suffer from domestic abuse suffer from a more complex trauma which can have severe consequences because of its long-term nature; it does not arise from a single incident (Abrahams 24). The first indication of Rosemary’s husband’s abusive nature comes when she comments on the way a woman named Helen treats her husband. To this Rosemary’s husband replies to her, “Listen, when you’re half as lively and sophisticated as Helen Heyer, perhaps you can afford to talk about her. Until then I should just shut up if I were you”. With her head down, she follows after her husband to the car when he repeats, “Just shut up. That’s all” (1: 6: 46: 4-5). The next time the married couple is seen, Mr. Almond reveals his violent tendencies. When Rosemary enters the room to discuss their relationship, he is busy

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cleaning his gun with a bottle of liquor beside him on the table. The image alone tells us that alcohol also feeds his temperament and that he is preparing for violence. He responds by hitting her in the face which the artist has chosen not to show, protecting readers from Rosemary's traumatized facial reaction. Mr. Almond's face is shown tight with anger, his teeth are bared (1: 9: 65: 6). No words are needed here to explain the violence. Abrahams parallels this trauma type with a hostage scenario. Both hostages and domestically abused women undergo unpredictable events which can leave them never feeling completely safe, physically or mentally. Alongside these feelings of insecurity, victims are secluded from any help or contact. The majority of women in this situation experience PTSD (Abrahams 24). The build-up of these traumatic incidents over time will have harmful ramifications and the effects of it can be described as taking little by little of someone away. It is insidious in nature and therefore, is known in the medical field as "insidious trauma" (Schreiner 2016).

Later in this chapter, Mr. Almond threatens Rosemary by putting a gun up to her face. Finger on the trigger, he says "bang" and warns her, "I didn't load it...Not tonight" (1: 9: 71: 8). Abrahams addresses the complex issues associated with women making the decision to leave an abusive marriage. Some reasons for remaining could involve "the relationship itself where feelings may be confused, ambiguous and painful" (Abrahams 17). Other reasons she adds, could surround the basic practicalities in leaving, "the losses that will be sustained in the process, access to material resources, support, loneliness, having to manage alone, the need of her children and the fear of retribution" (ibid 17). Regardless of the psychological and physical abuse Rosemary has withstood, she always chooses to stay. Her reasons for doing so involve a combination of Abraham's reasons. At her husband's funeral, Rosemary's thoughts are directed towards her dead husband, "You've gone Derek. I never liked you. I was afraid of you. I loved you" (2: 2: 101: 1). Her feelings concerning her husband are confused and though he was dangerous and abusive, she feels less safe without him, "Everything's been taken away... All the security and the warmth and the shelter..." (2: 2: 102: 3). Women who did not decide to leave the relationship on their own terms like in Rosemary's case, will have:

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...further significant and long-term emotional and material-losses to face, which may play a crucial role in any decision-making process. This will include the relationship itself, where there may be feelings of shame and guilt, of love as well as fear and the loss of someone who has been the dominant figure in her life and played a major role in shaping her existence” (Amrahams 25).

Feeling “completely and utterly alone” shortly after her husband’s funeral, Rosemary looks at a photo of her and her husband smiling together (2: 2: 103: 5-6). This photograph appears to be an “icon of suffering” because it had already appeared in the prologue of the second book and will reappear in a future scene. The photo does not seem to comfort her but reminds her of her loss and pain. While examining the photo she says, “You were my lifeline”, (2: 2: 12) indicating that her “lifeline” has been cut. An understood symptom of trauma is the seeing of a recurrent image (Luckhurst 147); Rosemary experiences this. She says, “...the same pictures play over and over...and I’m in the back row, watching them...” (1: 2: 103: 2). This statement seems to indicate the inescapability of these imagistic memories.

In the third book, Rosemary is shown working at the Kit Kat Keller as an erotic dancer. She had received no financial support from the government after her husband’s death and her lack of job experience left her little career choice. With her bottom exposed, she wonders, “...who has done this to me?” (3: 2: 205: 2). There is an indication of sympathy from the writer and artist towards this woman who represents many women in the real world who suffer and feel helpless under patriarchal structures. Rosemary’s situation reflects the situation of readers who feel trapped in an abusive relationship or have lost someone who they believed defined their existence. Mourning the loss of their beloveds, Evey and Rosemary plan a violent course of action, although only Rosemary’s plan succeeds. Moore’s female characters take control of their situation. He is not suggesting that his female readers resort to violence after experiencing loss, but perhaps they too may need to take a form of action requiring bravery, something a bit out of character to make the necessary changes for life improvement. Their story lines and character development run in parallel as they started out as women, in Evey’s case a young girl, who both felt lost and were suffering under different circumstances. After they physically bump into one

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another outside of the Kit Kat Keller at the start of chapter eight, their journey in attaining personal freedom begins. Like Abrahams had said, loss can impact one's decision-making process. In Figure 6, Rosemary can be seen preparing herself to go through with the biggest decision of her life.



Figure 6: Lloyd, Moore (1982). *V for Vendetta*, (3:5: 227). "V for Vendetta #6", vlcomic.com, Date Accessed: 26/09/19. <<http://vlcomic.com/read/comic-v-for-vendetta-eng/6>>.

The above panels show Rosemary preparing herself to shoot the nation's leader Adam Susan whom she holds responsible for the loss of her husband and her current financial and life situation. The panels are wordless made up of only black shadows, outlines, and shadings of a faded rose pastel colour which sets a solemn mood. Readers gather that her movements are slow.

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Her facial expression, her hunched posture and the movement of these panels indicates she is sad and in pain. McCloud refers to these panel transitions as “aspect-to-aspect” which “bypasses time...and sets a wandering eye on the different aspects of a place, idea or mood” (McCloud 72). The colour choices in combination with this choice of panel transition successfully induces the heavy and painful mood in which Rosemary herself is experiencing. She is performing the seemingly normal process of getting dressed, but there is stress on the details of her preparation through these transitions. Panels have been dedicated for readers to examine her going through the motions of gradually getting dressed. Readers watch her unbuttoning a pajama top then zipping up her dress. These actions enforce a feeling of exaggeration and almost an unwillingness from Rosemary to continue what she is doing. Each individual panel, if examined alone, would suggest a different meaning but together in sequence, readers are made aware of the meaning as a whole which involves a woman who is in pain, preparing herself for something that she feels must be done, regardless of how difficult.

The first panel displays Rosemary glancing back at the gun beneath her pillow which she had alluded to in her earlier dancing scene, “Can’t sleep for the gun beneath my pillow” (3: 2: 205: 6). On the bedside table there is that “icon of suffering”, the photograph of Rosemary and her husband, which could be considered the most profound marker of trauma on the page, as it symbolizes the repeating painful trauma of loss that Rosemary has been experiencing. Despite this, Scherr explains that the frames on a page can hold a greater power over readers than a single image. She quotes Groensteen who believes the frames are “always an invitation to stop and scrutinize... they can supply a reading protocol, or even an interpretation of the panel...” (Groensteen, *The System of Comics* cited in Scherr 117). Considering there are zero words on this page, the frames do have aesthetic purpose, but they force a certain “...interpretation through their containment” (Scherr 118). The artist therefore challenges readers to understand the psyche of Rosemary based only on what he has revealed within the frames. The one “icon of suffering” is but a clue to what is going on among all of the other images readers must interpret in the seven panels. After her changing of clothes she takes a reflective look at herself in the mirror with her hand on her chest as if it will be the last time she will see herself as so before she does what she

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needs to. The mirror in this narrative seems to represent an important moment of self-reflection and transition for Rosemary and Evey. The final panel shows her shadow exiting the door. The picture frame and the gun are gone, suggesting she has taken them with her. Having taken the weapon and the “icon of suffering” suggests she is on her way to do something drastic that will change her life forever or perhaps be the last thing she ever does (3: 6: 227: 1-7).

Rosemary as a victim of political trauma

After the war, some people chose to follow the new party if it meant an easier and better quality of life. Rosemary’s husband Mr. Almond chose to work for the Fingermen and therefore, do the biddings of the party. Following his death, Rosemary awakened to find that the very government in which her husband died to protect turned their back on her, not appreciating his sacrifice. As a victim of political trauma, “the violence exerted against [Rosemary] is exclusively psychological and directly aimed at the destruction of [her] assumptions about the system ruling social organization (Romero- Jódar 154). Learning that a political structure or a “ruling social organization” one believes in is dysfunctional can lead to what Robert K. Merton would describe as “a state of anomie, or lack of moral standards that can subsequently give way to extreme episodes of violence and/or suicide” (Merton cited in Romero- Jódar 154). Rosemary falls into this category of victims by deciding to murder Adam Susan, the man she held responsible. She shares, “...our lives were wasted on your visions, and they were all we had...I can’t bear what you’ve done to us” (3: 7: 234: 3). Rosemary speaks on behalf of her and her husband but also London as a collective, “Because history’s moving my legs and nothing can stop me... Your kind led us to hell... Everyone’s thinking “She must be important” and I’m not, But I will be...” (3: 7: 234: 4-6). After feeling betrayed, she understands that others must feel the same. Romero-Jódar has said that “The traumas that affect collectives always have social, political, cultural, and individual components” which overlap (Romero- Jódar 153). The narrative uses Rosemary to show how an individual’s life can be shattered by a larger trauma that had infected society. Her way of fighting back is by bringing down the face of the party that was responsible for so much pain.

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Rosemary also feels guilt in her and her husband's political choices. "Mrs. Rava next door loaned us food all through the war years. When they dragged her and her children off in separate vans we didn't intervene" (3: 3: 205: 3). Until she felt betrayed, she and her husband had not attempted to use their position to help those in trouble. The moment she realized she would have to find a means of survival on her own, she entered into a type of dissociation and psychological imbalance. This new state of mind transformed Rosemary into someone who wants to change history rather than suffer under it. She becomes willing to do what she believes it takes to make things right, even if that means resorting to violence. Rosemary succeeds in killing Adam Susan.

1.5 V

The importance of the mask and quest for freedom

Rosemary and the other characters I have addressed are life-like in their responses to trauma. On the other hand, the main character V is someone that seems to be from another world or at least another time. In an interview, Alan Moore explains V's presence in the comic as something from a previous time period:

The juxtaposition excited me—a creature of a past in the future. That eventually grew into V, who is an anachronism. He's into old film, all the old culture that's been eradicated. He quotes Shakespeare and Goethe. He is a lavish creature who does not fit into these bleak backgrounds" (Lawley 32).

The "ambience" of this alternative London, which Moore claims to be the "*real* star of the book" could only be shaken up by someone who does not belong in this world, someone who has arrived from some other time and place with a certain profound knowledge (ibid 32). V claims to have no name, but labels himself after the roman numeral for the number five, the room number he was placed in during hormone testing at Larkhill. The trauma V endured at the resettlement camp undoubtedly left him with what Luckhurst refers to as "psychic scaring and mental wounds" (Luckhurst 3). These wounds have become a part of him, shaping him to be the character he is. If he had not been a prisoner there, he would not have a quest of vengeance to fulfill or the desire to educate and inform citizens of what can happen when evil comes to power.

As to what V would look like, Moore admits that it was a struggle but, “It was David Lloyd’s idea... and it was a brilliant idea to actually make him look like Guy Fawkes” (Comics Britannia 2007). This idea was perfectly suited for Moore’s plans in bringing something from the past to present, “... connecting to this whole British Mythology...” Moore adds, “There was something so British and so striking about that iconic image...” (ibid). The mask also suggests that in addition to V’s vendetta to the perpetrators involved at Larkhill, he is also finishing what Guy Fawkes failed to do. Lloyd said:

We wanted to make him almost the quintessential romantic anarchist hero. I’d noticed that in British comics, in general, we seem to have a much greater sympathy for villains [...] in our folklore there are a lot of characters like Robin Hood or Guy Fawkes fighting against authority. We thought we might try and boil tall of them into the character of *V for Vendetta* (Millidge 84).

Other than speaking in rhymes and quoting Shakespeare and other artists, V is a mysterious character because his face is never revealed. In the comics world, V’s face is that of iconic form. The Guy Fawkes mask is less detailed than any other character’s face in the graphic novel and therefore, quite far from a realistic human face. McCloud discusses how people accept the most abstract face as a cartoon. It is so far from reality, but is still understood to be a face. He goes as far to say that the more cartoony it is, the more it can be responded to (McCloud 28-31). Because a mask like V’s or Rorschach’s from *Watchmen* has little detail, individuals tend to see themselves in these characters and therefore have a greater empathy towards them. When a face is full of detail, people automatically give it its own persona or identity making it more difficult to relate. McCloud describes cartoons as a “vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled... an empty shell that we inhabit which enables us to travel into another realm. We don’t just observe the cartoon, we become it!” (ibid 36).

When Evey has the opportunity to remove V’s mask she imagines seeing Gordon’s and then her father’s face underneath (3: 9: 249: 8, 250: 3). She hesitates removing it because she desires to keep the idea of V and his beliefs alive. His mask to her, represents all that he has taught her. To remove his mask and reveal a face of detail for Evey and readers to see, would be to destroy the blank slate created in the simplicity of his iconic face that beheld a concept.

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Readers would no longer see themselves in him (McCloud 37). Walking towards V's dead body, Evey contemplates taking off his mask,

If I take off that mask, something will go away forever, be diminished because whoever you are isn't as big as the idea of you... it doesn't move. It doesn't look much like a person anymore. Something has gone from it... And at last I know. I know who V must be" (3: 9: 250: 4-8).

When Evey does remove the mask, a recognizable face is exposed. It is Evey and she looks just as she did from the first chapter in a mirror reflection. Her hair is long again and she is wearing the same expression. The person that V must be therefore, is anyone who wishes to believe in what he stands for; it could be anyone. A shadowy slow motion Evey is shown in snapshots, aspect-to-aspect transition, approaching V's dressing table. These panels create anticipation. She takes the mask on for herself therefore, becoming the new V. The final panel on this page is the widest only showing the long thin smile of the Guy Fawkes mask. Readers are once again able to see themselves within this iconic smile (3: 9: 251: 1-8).

V as in Villain?

Most read *V for Vendetta* with clear sympathies for V as the good guy and freedom fighter although, some like Richard Reynolds argue that V demonstrates qualities to be of the typical Golden Age supervillain (Gray 11). When Evey asks V who he is, he tells her that he is the "Boogeyman. The Villain...The black sheep of the family" (1: 1: 13: 9). Reynolds calls characters like V, "the agent of change" whereas superheroes are "passive" responding only to threats (Gray 11). V contrasts to typical superheroes by fighting against the government and therefore against status quo (ibid). V's anarchist approaches resemble Guy Fawkes's but also revolutionary terrorist Sergei Nechayev, whose plan was to "make a list of those who are condemned to death, and expedite their sentences according to the order of their relative iniquities" (ibid 13). V also assassinates his victims from a list, killing each of them differently and marking them with a rose. Despite Reynold's beliefs, others such as Noah Mailloux argue that V is not the villain as his "purpose of using forceful engagement against his enemies is

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justifiable” because these enemies use violence themselves which require V’s chosen methods of retaliation (Mailloux 3).

V’s destruction of The Ear’s office tower is a direct reference and visual allusion to the Angry Brigade bomb target on the 33rd floor of the London Post Office Tower in October of 1971. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) attempted several bombing campaigns for political movement and at one time tried to directly assassinate Thatcher in the Brighton Bombing of 1981 (Gray 13). Ethical questions concerning murder and violence were brought forth to both Lloyd and Moore, but they have never directly provided answers or reasoning for their decisions in seemingly condoning murder to make things right. They have creatively made it possible to display ‘a situation in which killing, cruelty and destruction become almost defensible’ (ibid). Moore thought, “...that one of the most interesting things about the strip itself was that morally there was nothing but gray. We were asking readers to consider some interesting questions” (Millidge 87). They had succeeded in this.

What makes V’s murders arguably “defensible” is that his targets are individuals who have supported, participated in and have executed plans which involved torture and murder. V’s decision to “free” Evey in the manner that he did is concerning. She experiences denial and pain in discovering her torture and imprisonment was a setup. When she asks V why he did this to her he answers, “Because I love you. Because I want to set you free” (2: 12-13: 167: 6,7). Can the torture he subjected Evey to be excused for his greater cause? V informs her that she was “already in a prison” and she has been in one her entire life (2: 13: 168: 7). Freedom and human integrity are invaluable to him. Evey’s strength had been tested in her life, having lost everyone she cared for. She had one more step to go to be set completely free, and according to V, that was having her self-integrity tested.

There are a number of character experiences that suggest trauma is a stepping-stone to attaining complete freedom. Other than Evey, Rosemary’s traumatic experiences also “free” her, allowing her to take on the important role of putting an end to the fascist dictator. Investigator Eric Finch attempts to understand V and “To think the way *he* thinks” by taking LSD and

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visiting Larkhill (3: 3: 210: 2). He begins to hallucinate and finds himself suddenly attired with an Auschwitz prison-like uniform. He witnesses traumatic scenes including chopped up bodies hanging on fences and the “people ovens”. This scene also reminds readers of what occurred at Auschwitz and other concentration camps. Seeing the “resettlement camp” from V’s perspective and contemplating his own life, he comes to the realization that he is the only one who has been responsible for the “controlling and constraining [of his] life” (3: 215: 4). Sitting in a cell like V had, he imagines the wall blows up. Coming out, he understands he is now free. “I’m free”, he says. “FREEEEEE!” (3: 4: 215: 7,8). Like V had told Evey, it is as if Finch had been a prisoner his whole life. Finch kills V, but wishes to have nothing to do with the aftermaths and the final panel in the entire comic shows him wandering down the highway away from it all.

One could argue that V is not an advocate for continual violence and wants a world where it does not exist. After the “destroyers make a canvas of clean rubble” he says, it is time for the creators to make a peaceful world, “Away with our explosives then!” (3: 5: 222: 1-2). He has taken the role of cleaning the slate and paving the way for good things where destroyers “have no place within our better world” (ibid). The story has unveiled a world where circumstances have deteriorated into a place where immorality and cruelty are routine. These circumstances are not so unlike places and times in real world history during wars and dictatorships. The narrative has shown a side of trauma that could exist as a means of self-awakening and attaining freedom. Moore’s world is one full of fear and danger, and to eliminate the fear of the danger means to be free. Considering this, the creators could be suggesting that in the world V aims to create, trauma will cease to exist because there will be no danger and therefore, nothing to fear; freedom will be innate. Like the traumatized, fragmented mind, *V for Vendetta* has numerous layers which demand reflection and consideration from readers to contemplate who they wish to be and what sort of world they wish to live in.

CHAPTER II: WATCHMEN

2.1 An Alternative America

Shifting over to *Watchmen*, it is important to recall attention to Linda Hutcheon's observation of postmodern literature which again, offers "a sense of the presence of the past" and the history present in the text is like an "echo" because of its familiarity (Hutcheon 3-4). Susana Onega has a similar view of how history is present in *Watchmen*. Instead of an echo, she describes the historical elements in the narrative as having a déjà vu effect. It rewrites history which has a "realism-undermining effect of déjà vu that enhances the functionality of [the] created world" (Onega cited in Romero-Jodar 146). Readers gain more from the reading of *Watchmen* because they understand where the realism elements have been derived and or inspired from. This initial section will address why the *Watchmen* characters themselves are more relatable to readers than the typical superhero. Following this, the realism elements presented visually throughout the graphic novel will be addressed. They are most apparent in visual advertisements and media. Lastly, the "smartest man in America" Adrian Veidt, will be observed as a caution of the dangers of capitalism and as a symbol of absolute wealth and power which is ultimately used to kill three million people and destroy most of New York City in hopes to save the world from itself. A discussion of this punctual traumatic event, its consequences and relation to the real world can be found in the final section of this chapter.

The 1980s new conservative government in England as mentioned in the *V for Vendetta* chapter, was installing political changes that Moore and Gibbons address in this graphic novel, *Watchmen*. Criminal offences in England jumped during this political era as police involvement on the streets had declined (Romero- Jódar 148). According to Peter Riddell, "the level of offences, particularly of violence, was substantially higher than a decade earlier and remained one of the public's main worries" (Riddell cited in Romer 149). Riddell adds there was a "spread of the Neighborhood Watch scheme from two in 1982 to over 60,000 by the end of 1988, covering 750,000 people" (ibid). According to Romero- Jódar, the actual *Watchmen* heroes were

thus inspired by real English citizens who felt the need to protect their neighborhoods (Romero-Jódar 149). Some English readers can sympathize with the *Watchmen* characters who choose to take on this responsibility.

In addition to this determination to protect their city, the *Watchmen* characters in exception to Dr. Manhattan, are relatable to readers because they do not possess any superhuman powers in contrast to typical comics' superheroes. According to Moore, rather than make another comic where the character wins all of the fights and comes out a hero, they "invented six characters, each of whom has a radically different view of the world" (Berlatsky 45). Jamie A. Hughes says that the typical Golden Age superheroes were appealing because "they are archetypal visions of "the good guy" (Hughes 546). Their creators have "positioned them outside of the realm of ideology" (ibid). According to Hughes, the *Watchmen* on the other hand, are "nothing but individuals caught up in an ideology" (ibid 548-49). Even V has superhuman strength and fighting abilities, but the *Watchmen* have no supernatural abilities; they only have their beliefs and even personal and selfish reasons for being a part of the *Watchmen* group. Each reader can therefore sympathize with one character more than the next because of their differences. Although readers meet each character in the narrative, the only active *Watchmen* member left in the current time of the story in 1985, is Rorschach. Prior to the Keene Act that outlawed superhero activity in 1977, the entire vigilante group of costumed fighters were free to practice their safeguarding of the streets of New York the way they wished.

In response to the Thatcher decade and the more aggressive capitalist thinking associated with it, the creators use Adrien Veidt, formerly known as Ozymandias as commentary on the destructiveness of absolute power and wealth, even though his intentions were good. The first panel on the page that introduces Veidt can be observed in Figure 7. It displays a purple tower much taller than any building around it. Written at the top is, "VEIDT" (I: 25: 1).² It has a similar effect as the Jordan Tower from *V for Vendetta*, representing a higher authority from an advantageous position. The Jordan tower can be examined in Figure 8 and compared to the Veidt

² For all direct *Watchmen* citations, the roman numeral for the chapter will be used followed by the page number of that chapter and then the panel number or numbers.

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tower. Time is critical in both tower panels which indicates the importance of planning, discipline and specifically in *Watchmen*, the act of counting down. There is a clock face on the Veidt tower. In the Jordan Tower panel, the time is broadcasted from the building informing citizens it is “nine o-clock”. The zoom in on the Jordan Tower is greater, but the following panel allows readers to see a mass of unrecognizable people below taking instructions from the tower’s broadcasting system (Book 1: Prologue: 1-2); they look small compared to their surroundings. The dark, gloomy weather in both panels expresses an ominous mood.

The Veidt tower is purple and in the following panels, Veidt himself can be seen in a purple room wearing a purple suit. In typical superhero comics, purple can signify scientific arrogance, “growing out of control” and “creativity” (Mclachlan 2016) both of which could be used to describe Veidt’s plans. At this point, his ulterior motives are unknown, but the artist’s colour choice could be seen as a warning of the dangerous brilliance at hand. Older supervillains such as Molecule Man from 1963 and Modok from 1967 also wore purple and were both intelligent and powerful. This suggests that even though according to Moore, “in some readings of *Watchmen*, [it] could be possible to construe Adrien Veidt as the hero”, (Mautner 45) Veidt’s motives can be seen as villainous, even by his creators who allowed this association with the colour purple. Purple also indicates Veidt’s wealth and therefore, distinguishes him financially from others. It is a colour that has been associated with the elite and royal from BC times, as the dye was once invaluable (LiveScience 2011). The complexity of Veidt challenges readers; his secretive behavior and his ultimate goal of saving humanity in exchange for thousands of lives demands readers to make ethical considerations. Like in *V for Vendetta*, the readers of *Watchmen* are confronted with these complex characters, some of which Moore “politically disagree[s] with” (Mautner 45). The spectrum of the ideologies that exist in *Watchmen* makes this alternative world much closer to the real world.

Also like the real world, these two graphic novel worlds are filled with propaganda. In *V for Vendetta*, the party’s influence is inescapable, existing even in citizen homes. *Watchmen*’s New York is covered in advertisements and various forms of media including newspapers which deliver American and world news. These visuals provide readers with an understanding of

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current politics and common citizen concerns and stressors; they add a depth of reality to the story because they are showing a familiar and relatable history. *Nova Express*, a title of a left-wing magazine spotted in *Watchmen* a number of times could be compared to *Rolling Stone* magazine and makes reference to William S. Burrough's book *Nova Express*, 1964 (Baetens and Frey 142). This magazine is critical of the costumed heroes. Baetens and Frey suggest that the image brought to mind with "Nova Express" is a "rapidly approaching nova, some sort of massive explosion" (ibid).



Figure 7: Gibbons, Moore, *Watchmen* (1986), (I: 25: 1). "Veidt Tower". Fandom, Watchmen Wiki, https://watchmen.fandom.com/wiki/Veidt_Enterprises. Date Accessed: 03/15/20.



Figure 8: Lloyd, Moore (1982) *V for Vendetta*. "Jordan Tower" (Book 1: Prologue: 1-2). Source: "V for Vendetta Chapter 1", 08/21/14. Date Accessed: 03/15/20. <https://imgur.com/gallery/3IV6s/comment/272228499>.

An excerpt from Rorschach's journal says "...the future is bearing down like an express train" (II: 26: 7) which is juxtaposed over a memory of the Comedian burning the map of America earlier in the chapter (II: 11: 4). This image word combination could suggest that a "nova

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express” is on the way which will “burn and destroy” (Baetens and Frey 142) and ultimately ruin America. The political antagonist of the *Nova Express* is the *New Frontiersman* which is a conservative newspaper that speaks in favour of the costumed heroes, deeming them as protectors of America. There is a sample of the magazine at the end of chapter VIII which refers to the *Nova Express* editor Douglas Roth as a “Marxist-brat rock-star...cocaine-advocating editor” (VIII: 30). Figure 9 displays an indiscreet political cartoon from the *New Frontiersman* with explicit racial stereotypes titled “As we see it...” (VIII: 31). Readers can recognize the antagonism between the two magazines throughout the graphic novel which resembles the stereotypical right versus left sided political thinking in America. Baetens and Frey comment on Moore’s intention to implement a “layer of political commentary in his work”, admitting he was after all not politically “subtle” (Baetens and Frey 84). According to them, reports have been made that publisher DC called Moore and congratulated him that “the Tower Commission inquiry on the Iran-Contra even coincidentally used the original classical reference to the “Watchmen” (ibid). Instead of directly referencing Raegan he uses the “safer” ex- President Richard Nixon (ibid).

Examples of historically informative visuals in the graphic novel include a newspaper vending machine which shows the front cover reading (though cut off), “Russia Protes[ts] US. Adv[ancements] in Afgh[anistan], (I: 10: 1) addressing the Cold War proxy war. A few pages later, it is revealed that President Richard M. Nixon was reelected from a poster that reads “Four More Years” on the street with his image (I: 24: 7). On Veidt’s desk, the newspaper cover reads “NUCLEAR DOOMSDAY CLOCK STANDS AT FIVE TO TWELVE...” (I: 26: 3). This is media spreading fear and installing hypervigilance. The same thing occurred in Evey’s home when she was a child, “the news came over the radio”... “about Poland and the Russians... Kennedy...us[ing] the bomb if they didn’t get out” (1: 3: 27: 2). The people of New York await disaster similarly to how Evey and the rest of London had when she was a child.

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unite all nations which will promote a sense of safety amongst people. This advertising works because it plays on the current individual's state of anxiety and longing for safety during this fearful period where people are awaiting doomsday. He indirectly informs people that he is going to bring a sense of safety back.

Veidt sells superhero action figures of himself as well as "The Veidt Method", a self-improvement book advertised on the back of the *Tales of the Black Freighter*. Through this guided manual, Veidt is training his readers to be the entrepreneurial individuals he wishes to see in his vision of utopia. Early in the first chapter, Rorschach walks under an ad for a candy produced by Veidt Enterprises, "mmmeltdowns" (I: 13: 1). The poster is only labelled with the name of the candy and what looks to be a drawing of a mushroom cloud explosion. The juxtaposition of Rorschach and the image could suggest that there is soon to be a disaster that is too large and too difficult to understand or foresee, going literally over Rorschach's head. Considering who is behind the plans would also be challenging for Rorschach to conceive. Later in chapter seven there is a commercial for these "MMMMMM-MMeltdowns..." which are "Fruity fallout [candy with] a delicious molten center. They'll blow you all the way to China..." (VII: 15: 5). In an interview Moore explains that, "Watchmen grew out of the political shadowy landscape of the 1980s, when the Cold War was at probably its hottest in twenty or thirty years, and when nuclear destruction suddenly seemed a very real possibility" (Millidge 126). The haunting image of the mushroom cloud is a reminder to citizens in the world of *Watchmen* of the horrific event of Hiroshima and the possibility of something like that happening in America.

2.2 Walter Kovacs to Rorschach

One of the most traumatized characters who has had difficulty growing up and living in this society is Walter Kovacs, otherwise known as Rorschach. All character storylines jump from one to another, but as a victim of dissociation with two distinct versions of himself, Rorschach represents the idea that non-linearity as a tendency of the graphic novel can imitate patterns of dissociation, as the narrative changes perspectives like Rorschach changes personalities. Rorschach can be seen unmasked walking in the streets holding a sign warning, "THE END IS

NIGH” (I: 1: 3). The other version is of course his violent vigilante self, hidden behind his Rorschach mask. Chute suggests that the graphic novel is in a way “refus[ing] linearity and regularity in its narrative movement” and therefore, it is as if the comic itself is experiencing trauma symptoms alongside its characters with an “awareness of its own properties” (Chute 70). These she says, “constantly marks attention to the acts of speculating and perception both within and outside of the frame” (ibid). Even when Rorschach is not present within the frame, the comic continues to address his dissociation by having jumped to another time-line.

Other traumatic symptoms are revealed through his stream of consciousness visually visible for readers in a display of flashbacks of his past when faced with what Whitehead mentioned as finding oneself in a predicament in “connection with another place and another time”, reliving the traumatic experience (Romero- Jódar 21). Moore explains that each character was given their own issue in the novel with their own method, “With Rorschach there was a psychoanalytic approach (Berlatsky 51). This section will cover his time spent with psychoanalyst Dr. Malcolm Long in chapter six, “The Abyss Gazes Also” in which the doctor manages to extract personal history from Rorschach. Rorschach’s trauma is also transferred to the doctor whose second-hand trauma experience will be examined. The following trauma topics associated with Rorschach’s past will be discussed: flashbacks and memories, child abuse, dissociation, acting out, reenactment, identity order and shock.

Flashbacks and Memories

According to Moore, “Rorschach has a view which is very black but essentially moral” (Mautner 45). The creators have effectively provided evidence as to why this is so through Rorschach’s time spent with Dr. Malcolm Long. When the doctor presents an inkblot test to Rorschach, Rorschach experiences flashbacks. The first card makes him see a bloody German Shepherd face, presented like a still photograph (VI: 1: 7). The image of the dead dog’s face and the inkblot card that induced the memory are repeated throughout the chapter, making both of these “icons of suffering”. Caruth and van der Kolk agree that “trauma creates a wound” where a full representation of that wound is not possible because of the inability of the victim to

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transcribe what happened. Instead, it was transcribed in “an iconic language that does not lend itself to words” (Alford 11). The “icon of suffering” of the bloodied dog face, is the way Rorschach has transcribed the experience associated with that dog. The graphic novel is capable of displaying this iconic language which proves its ability to show rather than tell traumatic stories that cannot be told in any other way.

The specific blot card that induced the imagistic memory of the dog also becomes a site of trauma for the psychoanalyst because he had been a witness to Rorschach’s traumatic story associated with that image. Rorschach’s trauma is thus transferred to Dr. Malcolm Long. As mentioned in the V chapter, Luckhurst describes trauma as “worryingly transmissible: it leaks between mental and physical symptoms [...] between patients and doctors via the mysterious processes of transference” (Luckhurst 3). Dr. Malcolm Long shows signs later in the chapter of what Luckhurst refers to as “secondary victimhood” (ibid) because of his position as witness to Rorschach’s testimony.

The next inkblot card presented to Rorschach could resemble two people in symmetry facing one another. The following panel takes readers immediately to a memory of Rorschach’s; the inkblots transform into two people who seem to be having intercourse. Because there was nothing more than a gutter between the inkblot card and this memory, it is clear that the card instantly brought on this intrusive sexual image. Chute’s description of the gutter as a measure of time (Chute 36) would support that there was no time spent for Rorschach to be immersed in what Luckhurst describes as “the visual field of the inaugurating instant” (Luckhurst 147). Not only does this intrusive image haunt Rorschach, but the noises the two people make also remain as a scar in his memory. In this first frame that invites readers into Rorschach’s stream of consciousness, the two individuals are making noises as they have sex which also appear instantly in the memory (VI: 3: 2). Following this panel, the zoom effect decreases allowing readers to see the entire scene including Kovacs as a child who readers soon understand is walking in on his mother and a stranger, at which point he becomes frightened. The man having realized there was a child present, angrily throws a five dollar bill on the floor and leaves. “Here’s five bucks! It’s more’n you’re worth” (VI: 4: 1). The following scene can be observed in

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Figure 10. Walter's mother turns to her son in fury and hits him across the face, hard enough that his head turns violently and spit or blood comes out of his mouth. Moore and Gibbons successfully demonstrate a violence that jars readers (VI: 4: 6). Walter's painful screams are continuous. The word or in this case scream bubbles continue from one panel to the next and then from one bubble to the next, all connected, making the torture seem long lasting. The final panel leaves the level of violence to the imagination of the reader in which closure is necessary in determining the injustice of the child abuse Walter endures. Walter and his mother are silhouettes; their shapes suggest Walter is being strangled. The "subject-to-subject" panel transition which remains within the same scene and idea, requires reader involvement to make the movement meaningful (McCloud 71).

There are a number of instances where Rorschach sees men and women holding one another throughout the plot. Their embrace either bothers him or he notices them while he is experiencing some sort of grief. After the displayed traumatic experience with his mother is shared with readers, it is understood why the image of embrace upsets Rorschach. The visual of two interlocking people therefore represent an "icon of suffering" for him as they reappear throughout the narrative reminding him and readers of his traumatic experience as a child. Earlier while walking outside, he looks up to a window and sees a man and a woman embracing (I: 24: 4). In this frame Rorschach is feeling alone in his determination to find the Comedian's killer. He writes in his journal, "nobody cares...nobody cares but me" (I: 24: 4). Another time he sees a silhouette figure of a "man and woman possibly indulging in sexual foreplay". Rorschach "Didn't like it." "Makes doorway look haunted" (V: 11: 5); this "icon of suffering" can be examined in Figure 11.

In the narrative, some of these figures are actually a graffiti tag which can be seen all over the city. The tag is known as the "Hiroshima lovers" in reference to *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, a French film consisting of mini flashbacks with a non-linear story-line (Inside Criterion 2018); a narrative style similar to *Watchmen*. The story addresses a conversation between two lovers



Figure 10: Moore, Gibbons. *Watchmen* (1986), (6:182). “Walter Kovacs and His Mother”. Peace, Love, and Comics. 15/03/17. <https://peaceloveandcomics.com/2017/03/15/watchmen-character-analysis/>. Date Accessed: 12/03/19.

about memories and the importance of remembering. It makes sense that this “icon of suffering” exists to remind both characters and readers of the Hiroshima bombing. It also reminds characters of their own fears concerning “doomsday”. The graffiti lovers are meant to be sharing a last embrace before death. In Figure 12, Dr. Malcolm Long expresses discomfort when he sees the graffiti on the way home from work, “It reminded [him] of the people disintegrated at Hiroshima, leaving only their indelible shadows” (VI: 16: 6). His description of them being “indelible” suggests that the memory of this collective trauma will never be forgotten. In the following chapter, Dan Dreiberger has a dream of him and Laurie embracing in the same manner before a bomb explodes, as can be observed in Figure 13. After the explosion, their skeletons continue embracing (VII: 16: 7, 15-16). The three different versions of the Hiroshima “icons of suffering” can be observed and compared below.

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Figure 11: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986), (V: 11: 5). "Rorschach's Haunted Doorway". *Watchmen: A Tale of Care and Understanding*. 06/12/17. <https://www.tor.com/2017/12/06/watchmen-a-tale-of-care-and-understanding/>. Date Accessed: 19/03/20.

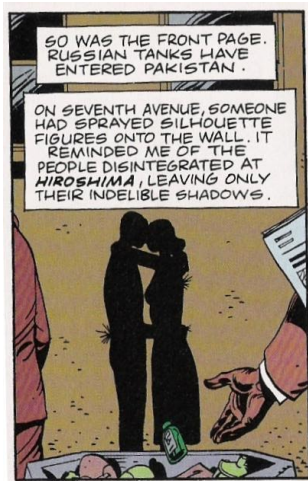


Figure 12: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986), (VI: 16:6 6). "Indelible Shadows". *Watchmen Final*, George Aquino, 27/02/15. <https://flyingyoda3.wordpress.com/>. Date Accessed: 19/03/20.



Figure 13: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986), (V: 11: 16:13-16). "Driberg's Dream". *Watchmen*, Chapter Seven, "A Brother to Dragons", 26/02/18. <https://www.the-solute.com/watchmen-chapter-seven-a-brother-to-dragons-a-drunk-napoleon-zoez-crosstalk/>. Date Accessed: 19:03:20.

When Rorschach's flashback of his mother has concluded, his eyebrows are drawn in and his face is pinched in anger. Although, the display is over instantly as the following panel shows him holding the image away with an unfazed expression. His change of manner is quick and drastic and therefore, could be considered as McCloud's action-to-action panel transition, Rorschach still being the single subject who has shown "distinct...progression" (McCloud 70). The effect of this panel transition proves Rorschach's ability to practice dissociation which requires a 'splitting' of the personality as a psychic defense against traumatic memories (Luckhurst 41).

When asked what he sees on the blot card, Rorschach lies and tells the pleased psychoanalyst that he sees a butterfly. The doctor responds, "I really think there's hope Walter, Don't you?" The following panel shows the close-up, silent, withdrawn expression on Rorschach's face which he had on most of the session (VI: 5: 3-4). These close up "mask-effect" panels are not so unlike those of Evey when Gordon had died. Again, Scherr observes facial zooming panels like these as a method of "probing the face" (Scherr 124). Both instances show these different characters experiencing psychic abandonment and closing off. The "mask-effect" panels can be examined in Figures 14 and 15.



Figure 14



Figure 15

Figure 14: Lloyd, Moore (1982). *V for Vendetta*. (2: 7: 137: 4). "Evey when Gordon dies". Fandom, DC Database, Evey Hammond. [https://dc.fandom.com/wiki/Evey_Hammond_\(V_for_Vendetta\)](https://dc.fandom.com/wiki/Evey_Hammond_(V_for_Vendetta)). Date Accessed: 19/03/20.

Figure 15: Gibbons, Moore (1986). *Watchmen* (VI: 5: 4). "Rorschach Psychic Defense". tv tropes. Characters- Watchmen Rorschach. <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Characters/WatchmenRorschach>. Date Accessed: 19/03/20.

The violent flashback of his mother begins and ends with the blotted card, similarly to how Evey's nightmare began and ended with an entirely blacked out panel. Groensteen refers to these repeat panels as "braiding". "The repetition raises the memory of the first occurrence", but though aesthetically identical, the repeated image is different from the initial image because of the "...sole fact of the citation effect that is attached" (Grice 36). The first image appears as an intrusion which brings up memories associated with it. The repeat image suggests an invisible link to its first appearance, reminding characters and readers of the intrusive image that was responsible for the train of thought in-between. The identical yet distinct images could be seen as brackets containing the stream of consciousness within and therefore, separating the character's inner psyche experience from what is occurring outside of the individual.

After being taunted by his fellow prisoners on the way back to his cell, Rorschach is reminded of a childhood memory of being bullied by some bigger kids. This scene shows clear indications of Walter "acting out" which is behavior externalization based on previous traumatic experiences. Individuals who "act out" can also have antisocial behavior which applies to Walter who even in his adulthood is seen as an outcast (Hosier 2015). When nearby adults break up the fight, they comment on Walter's behavior calling him "an animal...a mad dog." They say, "Blame the parents" (VI: 7: 7). The animal remarks could provide reason as to why he makes animalistic comments about people in the current time of the story. On the first page of the comic, Rorschach refers to "vermin" who are people involved in sex and murder (I: 2: 2-3). When he leaves a bar after questioning customers, he notes in his diary that they are "human cockroaches" (I: 16: 9). He categorizes them with people like his mother, and what kind of people they were seen as when he lived with her. He even describes New York as a living being in which he also categorizes as non-human, "This city is an animal, fierce and complicated. To understand it I read its droppings, its sense, the movement of its parasites...I watched the trashcan, and New York opened its heart to me" (V: 11: 8-9). Rorschach blames the city itself for the production of its people, who according to him are ranked lower than animals, even lower than an animal's droppings; they are "parasites". By no longer associating himself with his birth

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name “Walter”, he has separated himself from those “vermin” and “parasites”, people like his mother. Looking back, it is likely Rorschach agreed with those adults in that some of the blame should be placed on his mother. In an interview, Moore blames Rorschach’s mother for his displayed energies which “must surely be displaced sexual energy.” He says, “In writing him, it was plainly obvious that he never had any relations with anyone at all, and furthermore viewed the entire subject with violent distaste, presumably because of his experience with his mother” (Conversations 51).

Morals: black and white

Rorschach sees humanity in terms of black and white. There are those who are evil and those who are good. One reason that Rorschach had chosen his mask is because of the clear distinction between black and white which was never “mixing. No grey” (VI: 10: 3). From the copy of *Absolute Watchmen*, the creators share that black and white changing liquids signify “the ambiguity of life” for Rorschach (Gibbons, Moore *Absolute Watchmen*). Although, it seems that in Rorschach’s world there is only good and evil and “Truth and lies” (Hughes 552). According to an analysis of morality in *Watchmen*, Rorschach has made it his life ambition to “extinguish [evil] from the world at any cost” (Wu 4). “However, Rorschach is not without morals. He has an idea of right and wrong; it’s just not the same idea of right and wrong as everybody else” (ibid). Rorschach’s integrity is unbreakable. When The Owl tries convincing Rorschach to compromise and not go inform people about what Veidt had done, Rorschach responds “No. Not even in the face of Armageddon. Never compromise” (XII: 20: 8-9). From the graphic novel’s beginning to end, Rorschach’s system of beliefs remains intact.

Rorschach makes Dr. Long consider his own morals when he tells him there are worse prisoners than he in the prison, and suggests that he only wishes to work with him because he is famous. “Won’t get your name in the journals... You don’t want to make me well. Just want to know what makes me sick” (VI: 11: 5). “From the desk of: Dr. Malcolm” at the end of the chapter, readers can see that Rorschach was correct. The doctor had noted that he should “keep notes with an eye to possible future publication” (VI: 32). Perhaps in Rorschach’s eyes,

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individuals like Dr. Long exist in those grey areas he dislikes, pretending and believing themselves to be on the side of the virtuous. Even the police officers who are supposed to be citizen role models practice police brutality which is seen during Rorschach's arrest. This scene can be observed in Figure 16. One cop shouts, "Get him, he's done!" (V: 28: 2). Helpless on the ground, a cop kicks him in the face. "You like that, you goddamned queer?" one of them asks. They make fun of his shoes, his smell and call him an "ugly little zero". Readers are struck by the removal of his "face", his dirty socks full of holes, and his old hat which was left behind in a puddle (V: 28: 7-9). Dr. Long reports that "The police have beaten on him pretty badly...the cops don't like him; the underworld doesn't like him; Nobody likes him" (VI: 2: 4-5). Readers should note the use of the colour red in the first panel which exhibits "high energy emotions like anger" (The Graphic Novel 2015).

As morally ambiguous as the character of Rorschach is, readers tend to sympathize with his plights especially in this scene where his resistance to his arrest seems more like self-defense (Van Ness 135). After his arrest, readers carry this sympathetic view with them into chapter six where reasons to feel sorry for him add up; the state of his childhood and early experiences are revealed (ibid).



Figure 16: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986), (5: 28). "My Face, Give it Back!" A Reflection on *Watchmen*: The Power of Colour, 11/28/2015. <http://graphicnovel.umwblogs.org/2015/09/28/a-reflection-on-watchmen-the-power-of-color/>. Date Accessed: 12/03/19.

Reenactment

Studies have shown that children who were physically or sexually abused may later take part in behavioral reenactments of the trauma whether as the victim or the victimizer without comprehending it to be connected to previous life experiences (van der Kolk 1989). They tend to partake in “repetitive compulsion” which is the act of intentionally exposing themselves to similar situations. Freud assumed that this was an attempt to gain control, but studies have shown its ineffectiveness; victims suffer worse from repetition (ibid). Research indicates that abused male children are more likely to become abusers, whereas girls are more likely to fall victim again (ibid). Regardless of Rorschach’s confidence in his right doing, his crime fighting methods can be unnecessarily violent. He tells Dr. Long that on a search for a man he “...began hurting people. Put fourteen in hospital needlessly” (VI: 18: 3). He is an abuser in his own way. Dr. Long observes that Rorschach’s reasons for his choices are “there to justify his behavior to himself” (VI: 11: 8). His life choices could suggest his impulse to expose himself to dangerous situations. By being violent, he is undergoing behavioral reenactment by directing his aggressions towards someone else. The questions concerning the truth of what makes Rorschach exactly who he is, makes his character complex and intriguing.

Identity

Leaving home led to drastic changes in Walter’s life. Deciding to cover the face associated with his childhood and mother, his masked face became his true face and identity. In Figure 16, his mask is removed by authorities and the anger and pain in his face is horrifying as he screams, “No! My face! Give it back!” (V: 28: 7). Because trauma can disrupt memory it can also disrupt identity (Luckhurst 1). Luckhurst’s third set of symptoms of disrupted memory are applicable to Rorschach which include “ ‘increased arousal’ and loss of temper control” (ibid). Some trauma theorists may categorize him as having Dissociative Identity Disorder which can be described as the following:

Each personality state may be experienced as if it has a distinct personal history, self-image, and identity, including a separate name... Particular identities may emerge in specific circumstances [...] Alternative

identities [...] may deny knowledge of one another, be critical of one another, or appear in open conflict...” (American Psychiatric Association 2000 cited in Luckhurst).

Rorschach tells Dr. Long, “You keep calling me Walter... I don’t like you” (VI: 9: 4). He then refers to Rorschach as though he is someone apart from his-self, “I’ll tell you about Rorschach” (VI: 9: 7). Because he does not wear the mask every hour of each day and goes out in public without it, he is choosing to abandon “his face” and take on another role and identity. Not until his arrest did anyone know what the real Walter looked like under his Rorschach mask. Unknowingly to the reader until this point, he was visible on the first page of the comic walking unmasked through the Comedian’s blood. Participation of the reader is required to make this recognition.

Shock in Social Structures

As spectators of Rorschach’s past, readers learn about him by connecting fragments of memories and images. He told the doctor that years passed until he “made a face that [he] could bear to look at in the mirror” (VI: 10: 9). He used a dress that was ordered by a woman named Kitty Genovese whom he discovered was murdered outside of her building. Rorschach explains that there were “Almost forty neighbors [that] heard screams. Nobody did anything. Nobody called cops. Some even watched. Do you understand? ... Some of them even watched” (6: 10: 7-8).

The death of Kitty Genovese is a real-world reference. Her death opened a floodway for psychological inspection into the Bystander effect or what was then commonly called the “Genovese syndrome”, as there were reportedly 38 witnesses who chose not to take any action when Kitty was stabbed twice and then raped outside of her building (Sloat 2019). This is an example of how Moore can subtly incorporate history which can be overlooked by readers. Rorschach’s confusion and shock concerning this event makes sense because what happened cannot ever be reasoned or explained. Luckhurst explains that for Caruth, there is a “crisis of representation, of history and truth” surrounding traumatic events (Luckhurst 5). Moore and Gibbons have combined psychoanalysis and literature which are “particularly privileged forms

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of writing that can attend to these perplexing paradoxes of trauma” (ibid). In this short scene when Rorschach tells Kitty’s story, her image is never revealed, nor is there any violence portrayed; only the bystanders can be seen looking out from their windows (VI: 10: 7-8) as shown in Figure 17.

The angle of this image (Figure 17) in Rorschach’s memory can indicate that he imagines being Kitty herself, looking up at her spectators while dying. While telling Kitty’s story to Dr. Long, stream of consciousness reveals to readers what he remembers of it. He was not a primary witness, but he had formulated a memory of the bystanders from what he had read in the newspaper (VI: 10: 6). At no point in Rorschach’s violent story about Kitty, is there a violent frame. Not showing what one would typically assume were the most horrific parts, actually tells how horrific the memory is. Luckhurst describes, “what is most traumatic is that which does not appear in the conscious memory” (Luckhurst 4). Caruth explains that, “the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it” (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* cited in Luckhurst 4). The images in his mind that come up while he tells this story do not involve the violent parts. Either his consciousness represses images associated with the violence that occurred or to him the most traumatic part of this story are the witnesses he envisions watching from the balconies and windows like he imagines in Figure 17.



Figure 17: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986) (6: 10: 7). “Bystanders”. “Ashamed for Humanity”: The True Story of Kitty Genovese. <http://www.angelfire.com/comics/mooreportal/kitty.html>. Date Accessed: 12/03/19.

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This incident mentally shocked Walter; a type of traumatic shock induced from the disbelief in the possible extent of the bystander effect. According to Romero-Jódar's description of political trauma, it is possible that Rorschach could have placed the blame of what happened on the way society is structured after experiencing that level of shock. Romero-Jódar explains that, "political trauma implies the absolute disbelief of political discourses, because the traumatized individual perceives social structures as immoral, hypocritical and dysfunctional" (Romero-Jódar 158). Walter's situation as a child did not receive attention until too late; life had already caused him much pain. The neighbor bystanders behaved similarly to the dysfunctional society that ignored Rorschach and his mother for years. The government had also become less existent, leaving problems on the streets for citizens to take care of. This "watching" and not doing has a domino effect and could be considered a learned behavior. Needing to hold someone responsible for everything, Rorschach chose to direct his hate towards the people of New York.

Rorschach's traumatic shock could be compared to the trauma Rosemary endured following her husband's death. She had felt that the nation turned its back on them by ignoring the sacrifices they made and the circumstances she was left in once Mr. Almond was no longer useful to the government. Rorschach had also come to a similar realization when he learned that people could ignore the suffering of Kitty and how children like himself were left to endure what they did alone. The systems they were meant to trust let them down. Rosemary and Rorschach, who is "ashamed for humanity" (VI: 10: 8), took matters into their own hands and chose violent courses of action. Rosemary murdered the nation's leader for both revenge and to rid society of corruption. Rorschach pursued the career of a vigilante, ridding the number of criminals however possible. According to Brent Fishbaugh, Rorschach also joined crime fighting "out of guilt—guilt over what his entire race has become, guilt spawned not just from the events [that] surround Kitty Genovese's death, but from his own misbegotten upbringing" (Fishbaugh cited in Hughes 552). The past traumas of these characters provide explanation for their choices in the current time of the narratives. Evey and V's traumas also motivate them in their work towards ridding London of its evil doers. V and Rorschach are also inspired by a story that moves them towards action. V tells the story of Valerie and brings a rose on his quests as a homage to her.

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Rorschach tells Dr. Long the story of Kitty which kick started his vigilante career. His mask is made from the dress she had ordered, so he also carries a piece of her while crime fighting.

The most important characteristic of Rorschach in connection with what is a crucial message in *V for Vendetta*, is Rorschach's integrity. He chooses death instead of obeying to keep the secret of what Veidt had done. When Valerie is locked away at Larkhill, she explains in her written testimony, "It was my integrity that was so important...it is the very last inch of us...within that inch we are free...(2: 11: 156: 6-7). She writes that she "...shall die here. Every inch of me shall perish...except one" (2: 11: 159: 6-7). Even after her death, Valerie still has her integrity because she had never given that up. Rorschach also died with his integrity intact. When Rorschach understood the cause of death of millions of people at the end of the story, he believed "People must be told" because "Evil must be punished" (XII: 23: 5). Rorschach understands Dr. Manhattan cannot let him do that. He shouts at Dr. Manhattan to kill him because nothing will stop him from doing what he believes is right. "Well? What are you waiting for? Do it...DO IT!" (XII: 2-4). Dr. Manhattan obeys, disintegrating Rorschach. Nothing of Rorschach is left except "an inch", his integrity. These characters are not physically or politically powerful but Alan Moore describes Rorschach as being powerful because of his integrity (Mautner 46).

Final Transformation

Although Rorschach had been exposed to a number of traumatic experiences, none were the catalyst for the complete transformation from Walter to Rorschach. He did not become the latter until he dealt with a crime closer to his heart. While tracking down a kidnapper he shares, "thought of little child abused, frightened. Didn't like it. Personal reasons" (VI: 18: 2). When he realized two German Shepherds were gnawing at the dead girl's leg bone, something snapped within him. The traumatic realization of what the fate of this girl had become is shown with Rorschach looking out of the window at the dogs. He is coloured in blood red which marks an incomprehensible, shocking and painful understanding. Striking a butcher knife down on the dogs, "Kovacs...closed his eyes...[but] it was Rorschach who opened them again" (VI: 21: 6-7).

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When the murderer arrives, Rorschach ties him up and lights the building on fire. Rorschach is seen exiting with the flames roaring behind him similarly to how V left his cell bursting in flames. Both characters leave the burning buildings transformed. Their exits can be observed in Figures 18 and 19. V had induced a concoction of experimental drugs which transformed his physical capabilities and Rorschach's transformation was a result of being traumatized by knowing the violence that was done to the child. Their transformations are most similar in that they both became determined to gain revenge for the harm done to others. They would become vigilantes in order to take down perpetrators and avenge those innocent lives lost. This includes the little girl and Kitty in Rorschach's case, and Valerie in V's case. Rorschach and V have no issues with murdering the perpetrators of society if it means making a better world.



Figure 18:

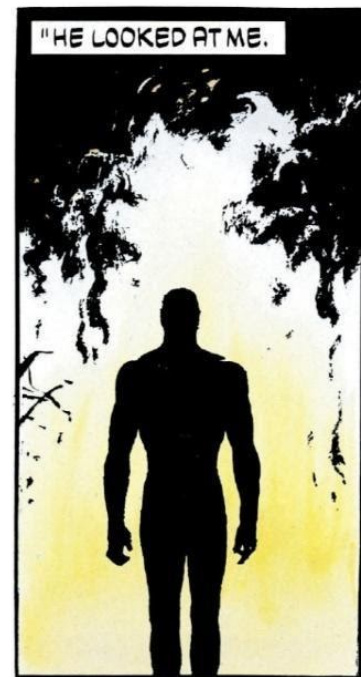


Figure 19:

Figure 18: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986), (6: 25: 7). "Walter into Rorschach". Superbervose, *The Watchmen Bestiary 17- The Superhuman Crew*. 08/16/2015. <https://superverbose.com/2015/08/16/the-annotated-annotated-watchmen-17-the-superhuman-crew/>. Date Accessed: 12/03/19.

Figure 19: Moore, Lloyd (1982). *V for Vendetta*, (11: 83: 8). V emerging from the flames. "V for Vendetta #3", Date Accessed: 26/09/19.

<<http://vlcomic.com/read/comic-v-for-vendetta-eng/3>>.

2.3 Dr. Malcolm Long and Second Hand Trauma

As Rorschach's psychoanalyst, Dr. Long is exposed to personal testimonies of trauma which in turn traumatize him. This is known as secondary or second hand trauma in the field of trauma studies which has PTSD like symptoms (Figley 585). In a single chapter, this character undergoes severe transformation. At their first session, he is patient and encouraged with Rorschach's inkblot test answers, "Good. That's very good" (VI: 2: 7). The night after the initial meeting with Rorschach, Dr. Long is seen at home with his wife who lovingly takes him from his home office to enjoy a "beautiful night". She tells him, "...Let's see if we can make it last forever" (VI: 8: 8-9). The word "forever" is bolded and juxtaposed over a file labelled "Kovacs" on the doctor's desk, suggesting that Rorschach could cause a possible obstruction between the doctor and his wife's "forever". A pen lies beside it spilling ink, which could be interpreted as the foreshadowing of a mess.

Dr. Long is not seen smiling again during the rest of his meetings with Rorschach and instead, often displays a look of disgust or horror in response to everything his patient has to say. At the meetings following the first, there is a green and purple bottle labelled "GO PAIN" always an arm's reach from the doctor; a pain reliever produced by Veidt Enterprises. Individuals resort to drugs and alcohol to alleviate PTSD, but this only increases the problem (Figley 359). Though differing behavioral health professionals undergo specific training to protect themselves from being affected by their patients, "no group is immune" (ibid 585). Specifically behavioral health providers that work directly with traumatized individuals "are[...]expected to be able to elicit emotions and contain their feelings. Therefore, they may be at higher risk than other medical providers for secondary trauma (ibid). Dr. Long can be seen opening the bottle and taking a handful of pills a number of times throughout the rest of the chapter. One bottle turns into three at their third appointment (VI: 14: 1) and on the final page of the chapter there is a close up on the bottle where the label can be read, "CAUTION DO NOT EXCEED STATED DOSE" (VI: 28: 3). Considering this is the only time the panel has zoomed in on the label, and there are three pills laying messily on the desk, it can be assumed that the doctor has been traumatically affected

enough to the point of exceeding the stated dose. It took only a single meeting with Rorschach for Dr. Long to begin experiencing secondary trauma.

The following scenes display only conflict between him and his wife due to his dedication to Rorschach's case and his inability to stop thinking about it. By the end of the chapter, Dr. Long's involvement in Rorschach's case alters his perceptions of life. He has adopted a darker, nihilistic view. While looking at the first blotted card he had shown Rorschach, he sees a "dead cat" (VI: 28: 5). This specific card is the most reappearing "icon of suffering" which haunts both Rorschach and the doctor. Dr. Long is sitting on his bed in the final scene, holding it and considering the meaning of existence. He had gone from believing "No problem is beyond the grasp of a good psychoanalyst" (VI: 1:6) and thinking Rorschach's initial response to the blot card was "surprisingly bright and positive and healthy" when he claimed to have seen "A pretty butterfly" (VI: 1: 8-9), to seeing the dead cat and believing that the horror in reality is that, "We are all alone. There is nothing else." The following panel is completely pitch black (VI: 28: 7-8) as can be observed in Figure 20, which could serve as a representation of inner turmoil, mental collapse or a state of mental shock (Romero- Jódar 88). This is stream of consciousness "adapted to the visual medium, to truthfully depict [...] troubled minds..." (ibid 66). Not even the doctor himself could create a representation of his trauma.



Figure 20: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986), (VI: 28:7-8). "Dr. Long's transformative view". *Watchmen Retrospective Part 6: The Abyss Gazes Also*. 05/13/17. https://aminoapps.com/c/comics/page/blog/watchmen-retrospective-part-6-the-abyss-gazes-also/1Xi6_uXBg1Dlplkj6RK71xkXV8EZW7. Date Accessed: 12/04/19.

2.4 The Comedian (Eddie Blake)

Prior to his arrest and his time spent with Dr. Long, Rorschach was determined to find out what happened to his fellow crime fighter the Comedian, otherwise known as Eddie Blake whose blood fills the first panels of the graphic novel. His crime fighting name and the smiley face button he wears is but a symbol of irony. In response to Dr. Manhattan telling him he “sound[s] bitter and has “strange attitudes to life and war”, Blake responds with, “Once you figure out what a joke everything is, being the Comedian’s the only thing that makes sense.... I never said it was a good joke! I’m just playing along with the gag” (II: 13: 3-4). The Comedian’s pessimistic mindset comes from what he has experienced and witnessed. He tells the crime stoppers group “What’s going on in this world, you got no idea. Believe me...(II:10: 7). His later understanding of “what’s going on in this world” gets him murdered. Blake’s state of mind before his death will be explored in this section. Trauma topics to follow will include his involvement as a perpetrator in two sexually violent acts with victims Sally Juspeczyk and a woman in Vietnam.

Death and Political Trauma

In the introductory panels of the comic, the Comedian’s yellow blood stained smiley button lies next to a sewer. In the following pages, investigators discuss what could have happened to him while looking through his apartment. Their dialogue is juxtaposed over panels revealing the true events of the Comedian’s murder, coloured entirely in red except for the yellow button on his shirt. Juxtaposition here challenges expectations from the reader to understand what the detectives believe occurred versus the truth of the events. The panel sequence also provides an idea of the state of mind the Comedian was in at the time of his death which is important in later understanding his trauma. The intruder is not revealed, but the Comedian can be seen sitting without pants, a glass in his hand and a liquor bottle beside him on the floor next to a porno magazine, indicating his carefree state. The first time he is hit in the face by his intruder, one of the investigators says, “He had muscles like a weightlifter...he would have put up some kind’a fight, I’m certain! (I: 2: 3-5). This panel can be seen in Figure 21. Regardless of the obvious detail put into his muscular build and strength, he does not defend

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himself or put up any sort of fight even though he is well equipped to do so. The words and images in Blake's death scene have what McCloud calls an "inter-dependent" combination. Without the dialogue from the detectives, the images would not be interpreted the same. They go hand in hand in conveying the message readers are challenged to receive (McCloud 155).



Figure 21: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986), (1: 2: 5). "Comedian Gives Up". Scans_Daily, *Watchmen* #1. 01/06/2018. <https://scans-daily.dreamwidth.org/7419226.html>. Date Accessed: 12/05/19.

The detectives rule out the murder as non-motivational, not wanting to "raise too much dust over this one" (I: 4: 3). Rorschach takes it upon himself to find out what happened which is where the story begins. In time it is understood that the Comedian had not put up a fight because he had given up. He had been in a state of shock after learning Veidt's plans. Being unable to bear the burden of the truth alone, he visits his arch nemesis, Moloch. Appearing at Moloch's bedside one night he tells him, "Oh God, I can't believe it. I can't believe anybody would do that...I can't...I can't believe..." He is barely able to finish a sentence (II: 23: 1-3). The panels alternate from an orange hue when Blake seems to try and make sense of things rationally, "I mean, I thought I knew how it was..." (II: 22: 3), to a dark purple and black when he shows anger and regret throughout the two page scene, "But if I thought you were in on this...I'd kill

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you...Kill you” (II: 22: 4). The situation is impossible for him to explain or comprehend: the changing colours seem to represent the instability and turmoil of his mind. According to comics analyst Hannah Miodrag, the alternating panel colours:

Remains peripherally visible even as we focus on one panel at a time [...] accentuating, what Wolk describes as the ‘tick-tock’ effect of these interlocking strands, foregrounding the page as an integrated unit and drawing each sequential panel to its complex whole (Miodrag 136).

Although the reader concentrates on one panel at a time, they are simultaneously aware of the overall effect of the whole. Everything Blake had done for his country, his actions in Vietnam (IV: 19: 5), his fighting and keeping order on the streets, government assignments including his likely participation in the assassination of Kennedy (IX: 20: 5), now seems based on a lie and were distractions from the mass murder scheme. The system he believed in turned out to be controlled and motivated by money and capitalism. The sacrifices he made for his country seemed trivial after understanding the destructive plan underway all along. The bloodied smiley and the Comedian’s scarred face represent “the political side of Watchmen: smiling faces covered with blood...A forced smile on a horrified face (Romero- Jódar 158). The disappointment and shock in the structure of a society he believed in led to his political trauma. It made him careless of his life; he did not even bother to defend himself in the final fight that led to his death.

Sexual Violence

While looking at a photo of her and the Minutemen, Sally Juspeczyk has a flashback of a violent memory. After a photoshoot, Sally told the gang to start heading to Owl’s for a beer without her, “I gotta change”, she said (II: 5: 7). Blake followed her into another room where he attempted to have sex with her. She responded by violently scratching his face. To this, Blake punched her in the stomach and face, and then kicked her on the ground where he proceeded to mount her. It is unclear whether he succeeded in penetrating her as there is no indication of passing time. In one panel only their arms are shown, his strongly holding hers down. Beside their hands, there is a display of King Mob’s Ape Mask perhaps signifying Blake’s animalistic

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and criminal-like behavior. When Hooded Justice appears looking for Sally, she looks to be limp on the ground under Blake whose pants are below his waist (II: 5: 9-10).

According to Luckhurst, Rape Trauma Syndrome can be defined as “the acute phase and the long-term reorganization process that occurs as the result of a forcible rape or attempted forcible rape” (Luckhurst 71). This experience is not fully digested during its occurrence and therefore, women do not typically make a police report straight away. Because of the delayed symptoms, Rape Trauma has been integrated with PTSD (ibid). As terrible as this experience was, it did not hinder Sally from secretly being with Blake afterwards who eventually impregnated her with her daughter Laurie. The self-blame Sally felt for what happened could provide reasoning for her decision to return to him. In the ‘Probe Profile: Sally Jupiter’, she is asked to comment on the incident. She said, “I felt like I’d contributed in some way. Is that misplaced guilt[...]? I really felt that, that I was somehow as much to blame for... for letting myself be his victim” (IX: 22). Self-guilt and the feelings that the victim has brought this upon themselves is common after sexual assault (Shwendinger 4). Blake psychologically abuses Sally, giving her reasons to blame herself. He said she had “announced [she was changing] loud enough” and she must “have some reason for wearin’ an outfit like [that]” (II: 6: 1-2). While she was bleeding on the ground, Hooded Justice told her, “Get up... and for God’s sake, cover yourself (II: 8: 1). Even Rorschach had referred to her as a “bloating aging whore” (I: 9: 4). In addition to Sally’s rape trauma, she endures personal blame and disapproval from her fellow crime fighters.

Heedless of the Comedian’s savage behavior, Sally continued to spend time with him, similarly to how Rosemary did not choose to leave her husband after years of physical and psychological abuse. As mentioned previously, one of Abraham’s explanations for women remaining in these relationships includes ambiguity and confusion concerning the relationship (Abrahams 17). Because Sally feels the rape or, near rape was her fault, she does not hold him accountable and possibly thinks she deserved it. Readers may assume that she later considered it a compliment that he had wanted her so desperately, considering that she finds it “flattering” to have people “slobber” over her in a porno comic (II: 5). Sally’s feelings towards Blake could be

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interpreted as love. When Laurie and Hollis Mason leave her place of residence, she hurriedly closes the curtains, picks up the photo of the Minutemen and kisses it. Red lipstick can be seen circling Blake's face as she cries. The colour of Sally and the photograph in these panels are pink, a colour often associated with love. Beside her on the table is a bottle of nostalgia, hinting at her feelings of loss for both a time and Blake (XII: 30: 4-7).

Rebecca Scherr addresses sexual violence in comics where she describes rape as a “part of the war machine, one form of violence among others” (Scherr 2). Ethics of representation she says, are important to consider in these touching subjects where an “overabundance of sexual images” could be problematic (ibid). The Comedian joined the fight against communism in Vietnam as military advisor where he outwardly expressed his “madness” and committed “pointless butchery” (IV: 19: 5). Gibbons uses muted colours during the Comedian's sexually violent scene which ends in murder. This scene can be observed in Figure 22. The colour choice works to present the death in a more cautious manner. When a pregnant Vietnamese woman approaches Blake after the war to take responsibility for his child, he gets fed up and shoots her in the stomach. The monotone colour of her body lying on the ground spares readers from the gruesome reality of her appearance. The depiction of her is lifeless. Closure is necessary to connect the gun shooting off in the panel prior to her laying on the ground (II: 15: 1-2). It is unknown if she was impregnated willingly or not, but by choosing to shoot her in the stomach, the area of proof of their sexual endeavors together, could be considered sexually related.

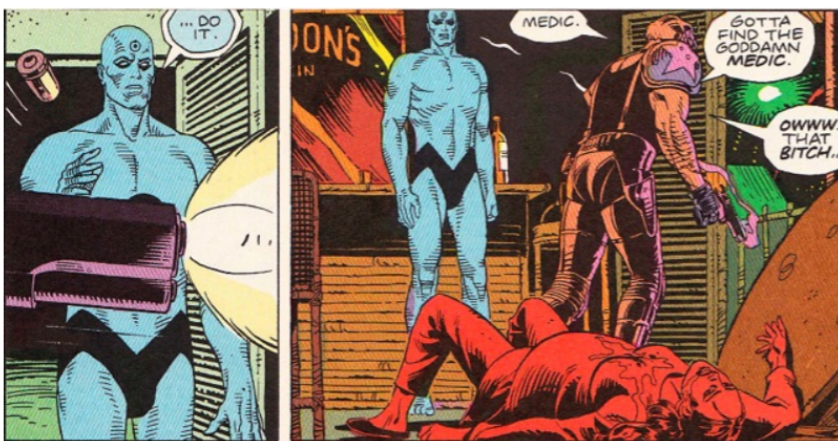


Figure 22: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986), (2: 15: 1-2). “Pointless Butchery”. Ranker, The Most Violent Moment in the Watchmen Universe. <https://www.ranker.com/list/watchmen-moments/stephanroget>. Date Accessed: 12/05/19.

In *V for Vendetta*, there is proof of alcohol serving as a factor behind Mr. Almond's physical aggressions towards his wife. Prior to the murder of the pregnant woman, the Comedian is drinking "rotten cheap bourbon" (II: 13: 6). Gaby Zipfel examines how forms of violence "manifest a hierarchy of masculinity and femininity through action" which can create a patriarchal relationship, allowing the male to feel powerful and therefore, making violence more legitimate (Zipfel 32). She emphasizes the importance of the humiliation element that is also inflicted on the victim during these sexual occurrences in which the perpetrator is well aware. Specifically during war, she notes that there is ambiguity in whether a perpetrator is committing "crimes of violence that makes use of sexuality, or whether sexuality is actively relished in these crimes of violence" (ibid 32). By dominating this woman and then shooting her, Blake has made an aggression towards Vietnam that potentially has less impact on him because he believes it is part of the war. Before he shot her, she had sliced his face with a knife. Sally had also deeply scratched his face only some years prior before he attacked her. Like the bloodied smiley, the Comedian continues to smile with his scarred face, up until his political trauma.

2.5 Jon Osterman (Dr. Manhattan): Trauma and Time

Up until this point in this chapter, the characters that have been addressed are fully human and therefore, most relatable to readers. Dr. Manhattan was once human although a life-altering accident that occurred within the Intrinsic Field at his place of work left him with superpowers. His connection with humanity increasingly becomes distant as time passes. This section will describe the traumatic accident and the transformation of Jon. Regardless of being the most powerful being on earth, Jon continuously experiences symptoms of trauma by physically reliving moments of his life in which there is no escape and no possibility of altering them. This section addresses chapter four which relies heavily on "icons of suffering" and the importance of braiding which makes the reader aware of the haunting repetitiveness of the intrusive image and its relation with the passing of time. Jon's section in the narrative jumps from memories, times and places, illustrating the non-linear possibilities of the graphic novel, similarly to how

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Rorschach's timeline does. Trauma topics to be addressed include flashbacks, life review experience, the reliving of trauma, and the intrusive image.

Jon, otherwise known as Dr. Manhattan, reveals personal details in chapter four of the events just prior to the punctual traumatic moment that permanently altered his life. Punctual trauma can be defined as the result of a "sudden overwhelming event" (Gibbs 15). This is why Caruth's model of trauma involves the belatedness of symptoms, as the traumatic event occurred "too soon, too unexpectedly to be fully known" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 4). Jon's narration takes readers through each point in time, indicating that he was conscious throughout the traumatic experience. When locked inside the intrinsic field with no escape, his face can be seen pressed on the glass in horror. "No! No, No, No!" (IV: 7). He experiences a flashback right before the blast. According to research studies, "... memories are stored in prefrontal, medial temporal, and parietal cortices and they are the last part of the brain that continue to function when we get close to death" (Donnelly 2017). This experience has been coined as "life review experience" (ibid), which explains why Jon experiences a flashback before believing he is about to die. Figure 23 displays this flashback which takes Jon to the first time he and the woman he loved, Janey Slater, touched hands on a cold glass of beer (IV: 8: 3-4). This image is an "icon of suffering" as it reappears two additional times in the chapter, reminding him of this lost love he once had. Individuals involved in a study conducted at Hadassah University reported that time was non-linear during a life review experience. "It was like being there for centuries", one had said (ibid). Another reported it felt like "A moment, and a thousands years...both and neither. It all happened at once, or some experiences...were going on at the same time as others..." (ibid). These non-linear and simultaneous experiences mirror the effects the accident has on Jon afterwards, which will soon be addressed. One study quotes a survivor as having reported, "I was not in time or space" (ibid). The final panel in this death scene suggests the full magnitude of the event, taking up most of the page. Readers witness his skeleton being ripped apart with one eye open, implying his awareness of the experience.

By controlling "atomic structure" (IV: 13:2), Jon is able to reassemble himself from nothing through a number of stages until he finally appears as a blue, hovering, god-like figure

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(IV: 9-10). Jon and Janey continue where they left off in their relationship regardless of Jon's new form. Although, normal life proves impossible because America's defense strategy needs him to pose as a nuclear deterrent against the world. As time progresses, he becomes increasingly distant from others. He continues to contemplate himself and all the ways the accident could have been avoided. The near death experience becomes Jon's life. His new state allows him to defy time and space as we know it, being able to exist in the past, present and future simultaneously. During the present time of the story, Jon is on Mars considering all of the events leading up to his accident, away from "clocks...seasons, without hourglasses ..." (IV: 26: 2). He looks for someone to blame, "Am I to blame, then? Or the fat man? Or my father, for choosing my career? Which one of us is responsible?...Who makes the world?" (IV: 27: 2-3). As "god-like" as he is, he does not have insight into the one question all humans have wondered at one point or another; why are we here and who are our creators?

On Mars, Jon holds a snapshot of him and Janey which is the most recurring "icon of suffering" in this chapter. He drops it and while it falls, he is reliving moments from the past. He experiences the hands touching on the cold beer in 1959 (IV: 24: 8) while also being present during the moment he is with his current girlfriend Laurie being told of the Comedian's death in 1985 (IV: 25: 1). Jon's experience of time resembles the unstable, traumatized psyche that could be described as what Freud refers to as "repetition compulsion" (Luckhurst 9). Luckhurst describes this as the constant returning to "scenes of unpleasure" (ibid). Readers witness what Jon has lived through from one point in time to the next and are asked to consider how it must be to live all of these moments at once with no control over them. Dr. Storolow closely describes traumatic experiences and their relation to time which resemble Jon's:

Because trauma so profoundly modifies the universal or shared structure of temporality, the traumatized person quite literally lives in another kind of reality, an experiential world felt to be incommensurable with those of others. This felt incommensurability, in turn, contributes to the sense of alienation and estrangement from other human beings that typically haunts the

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traumatized person. Torn from the communal fabric of being-in-time, trauma remains insulated from human dialogue (Storolow 2015).

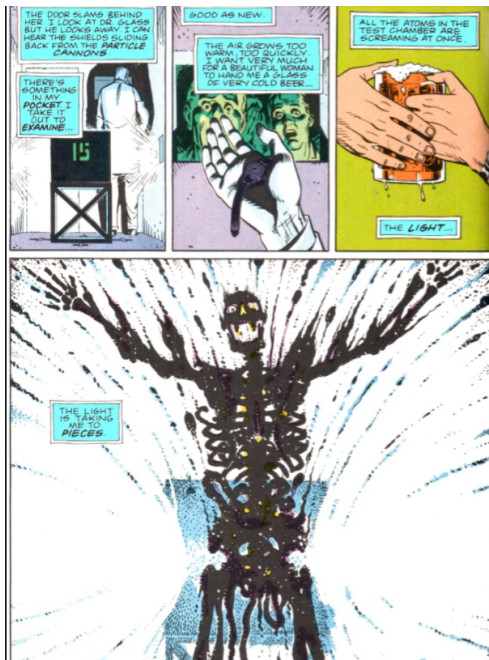


Figure 23: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986), “Changed Forever”(4: 8). imgur.

09/28/2014. <https://imgur.com/gallery/GtfGr/comment/275297979>. Date Accessed: 12/05/19.

Those who are close to Jon continue to demand answers which are difficult for Jon to provide. It makes him feel increasingly distant and unable to relate. They will never understand what Jon endures daily or how he perceives the world. Janey told him during an argument, “Jon, you know how everything in this world fits together except people” (IV: 16: 3). Before being introduced to Janey, Jon hears her saying this as Laurie walks out on him. He has a flashback of her voice (III: 5: 9). He constantly relives his past as the traumatized do, and must cope with others not being capable of understanding the perplexities of his trauma; this isolates him.

The picture of Jon and Janey smiling together (Figure 24) has a similar effect as the photo of Rosemary and her husband together in *V for Vendetta* (Figure 25) which also reappears a number of times. They resemble traumatic loss which appear as what van der Kolk calls a ‘flashbulb’ memory which is “like a photograph” and “not a narrative” (Luckhurst 149).



Figure 24: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986), (IV: 5: 7). “Janey and Jon” ComicsVerse Web: <https://no.pinterest.com/pin/452682200044637346/>. Date Accessed: 05/05/2020.

Figure 25: Lloyd, Moore. *V for Vendetta* (1982). “Rosemary and her Husband.” *V for Vendetta* English Project, Web: <https://sites.google.com/site/vforvendettaenglishproject/home/close-reading-analysis>. Date Accessed: 05/05/2020.



Another important “icon of suffering” in this chapter is the image of cogs falling which resembles the beginning of when Jon’s life changed direction. Ironically, him and his father were in the business of time, as watch repairers. After the Hiroshima bombing, his dad insisted that his son choose atomic science as a career path since “these are no times for a repairer of watches...” (IV: 3: 3). Jon’s father threw the pieces of a pocket watch Jon was working on off of their balcony. This panel is revisited on the final chapter page where Jon, while reliving the experience, tries to change what happened although this is impossible. He says, “I am standing on a fire escape in 1945, reaching out to stop my father, take the cogs and flywheels from him, piece them all together again...But it’s too late, always has been, always will be too late” (IV: 28: 4). He is stuck in all of the times he has lived or shall live, yet he cannot do anything to

change the outcomes. It is like a traumatic nightmare in which events unfold and the dreamer has no power over them.

There are several falling actions in this chapter which could be seen as the measure of time moving and the people in Jon's life coming and going as they grow older and he remains 30 forever. The cogs are falling, the photograph is falling, sand is falling "through his blue fingers...haphazard, random...disorganized..." (IV: 24: 2) and lastly, meteorites begin to fall around him on Mars (IV: 28: 5). This falling is unstoppable even for someone with powers like Jon; just as traumatic symptoms are unstoppable and uncontrollable. The way they fall and the way these images and ideas are presented in this chapter mirror the instability of the traumatized psyche which could be described just as Jon has described the falling sand.

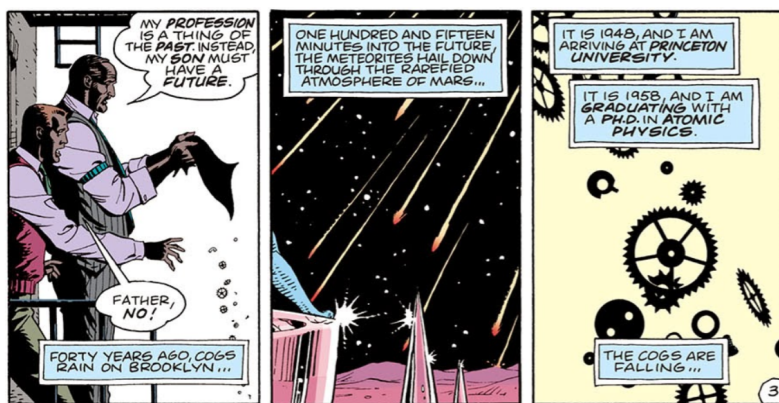


Figure 24: Gibbons, Moore. *Watchmen* (1986), (4: 3:

7-9). "Inescapable Falling". Read Comic.com, *Watchmen* 04. <https://read-comic.com/watchmen-04/>. Date Accessed: 12/06/2019

2.6 A Stronger Loving World

The power of Dr. Manhattan's presence on Earth does not prevent Veidt's plans from succeeding. In the final two chapters, character story-lines converge as Veidt's teleported monster blows up, destroying half of New York City. This section will address the events prior to the attack and the final chapter of *Watchmen* which illustrates the extensive damage of the punctual trauma that takes place in New York. The panels displaying the explosion and the aftermaths will be discussed in full as they show how a collective trauma can be demonstrated in the graphic novel form and how collective memory relies on the power of the photograph. An examination of the theme of time and the act of counting down in the narrative will take place.

Just prior to the atrocity, *Watchmen*'s most minor characters were brought together on the street. Proof of Dr. Long's personal development after having met Rorschach is exposed when he chooses to break up a fight over having the chance to reconcile with his wife. "Gloria, I'm sorry...Those people...They're hurting each other..." he says, "Gloria, please! I have to. In a world like this...It's all we can do, try to help each other. It's all that means anything..." (XI: 20: 6-7). The newspaper vendor finally speaks to a young man who has been sitting nearby reading throughout the story. He tries to connect with him, "It's like, you been coming here weeks [...] we ain't exactly close...So...What's your name? Whaddaya doin' here?" (XI: 23: 4). The will of these characters to do good before it is too late increases the emotional climate for readers who await the approaching danger.

At this point, Rorschach and Night Owl are at Veidt's secret location looking at the yellow clock labelled "New York"; time is running out as the hands are minutes from midnight (XI: 27: 2). Meanwhile in New York, the street fight continues (XI: 27: 3). On the following page of the graphic novel, there are two rows of six slim panels and one large panel below the rows; this page can be observed in Figure 26. The first row shows the faces of the individuals who had been near the fight. Each is looking in horror at what Veidt has sent to New York (XI: 28). As there are a greater number of frames and therefore gutters, the pace of the sequence seems to speed up. Each panel from the first to the last one on the page, becomes whiter than the last. This is a "cinematic fade" effect that slows the reader's pace to a halt, as the final large panel is completely white (Mythopoeia 2017). In the middle row, the newspaper vendor and the young man run towards each other and touchingly to the reader, they embrace becoming one. The final panel of them together represents a black spotted faded shadow, which could be seen to mimic an actual Hiroshima shadow of a person running, imprinted on concrete steps after the explosion in 1945. The real photograph of the shadow in Japan can be observed in Figure 27 and its shape can be compared to the panel of the two men fading away in Figure 26. The shape of this shadow Gibbons has drawn also appears to look like the shape of the blood stain on the Comedian's smiley pin and could be further argued to represent a clock's hand approaching midnight. The shape of the blood stain on the smiley can be observed in Figure 28. If these

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connections are deliberate, then Gibbons has placed this symbol throughout the story as a way of reminding readers of the approaching punctual trauma at hand and as a real-world reference to the Cold War and the “Doomsday Clock” which first appeared on the cover of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* in 1947 (Vuori 256). It represented “the imminence of nuclear annihilation” based on a political global assessment (ibid). In 1949, the adjustment of the clock began as a warning of the remaining time left until catastrophic “doom” when the Soviet Union was conducting its first nuclear tests (ibid). The emphasis on the theme of counting down in the narrative can be seen on the clocks at the beginning of each chapter. As each chapter passes, the minute hand moves closer to midnight. It is not a coincidence that the hand strikes 12 o’clock midnight at chapter 12. In this chapter, the destruction of half of New York takes place.

Following the faded image of the two characters, the final white panel which “halts” readers is striking to the eye. It seems to allow the reader a moment to comprehend the reality of what happened and its blankness functions to heighten the truth of the great loss. Unlike the black panel that prevents readers from seeing something horrific, the white panel may represent a nothingness, as the explosion was blindingly bright and all had been obliterated. The blankness of the frame could also resemble the blank canvas in which Veidt had planned to begin the world anew.

The next chapter begins with six wordless splash pages which are full paged frames (Mythopoeia 2017) that function to capture the extent of the damage done. The size of the frames emphasizes the scale of this punctual traumatic event. As one goes through the pages, there is an overwhelming feeling invoked because of the seemingly never-ending body count from different corners of the city; gutters as well as the act of page turning, stretch time. An actual witness to these aftermaths of the explosion could retain these images as “flashbulb” memories, preserving them as “snapshots” which Luckhurst describes is done, “in memory of particularly shocking or momentous events” (Luckhurst 149).

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Figure 26: Gibbons, Moore *Watchmen* (1986), (XI: 28). “Fading to Nothingness”.

Countdown: The Representation of Time Through Dave Gibbons’ Art in “Watchmen”. The Colossus Crawls West. 02/04/2013. <https://colossuscrawls.wordpress.com/2013/04/02/countdown-the-representation-of-time-through-dave-gibbons-art-in-watchmen/>. Accessed: 24/03/20.



Figure 27: Gibbons, Moore *Watchmen* (1986), “The Shadows of Hiroshima: Haunting imprints of people killed by the blast”. Nixon, Tim (04/05/16). The Sun UK. Date Accessed: 08/04/20. Web: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/news/155844/the-shadows-of-hiroshima-haunting-imprints-of-people-killed-by-the-blast/>.



Figure 28: Gibbons, Moore *Watchmen* (1986), (I: 1: 1). “The smiley in chapter I”. Comedian’s Badge, Fandom, Watchmen Wiki. Date Accessed: 05/11/2020. Web: https://watchmen.fandom.com/wiki/Comedian%27s_badge.

Photographs of mass trauma that exist in the real world serve as “an intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance, linked specifically to cultural or collective trauma” (ibid). Luckhurst refers to the photograph as a “privileged medium of postmemory” (ibid). The moment of the trauma is captured and preserved. It is the closest someone can get to its occurrence. Though a reader could have no connection to such an extensive trauma, personal, familial or otherwise, they are reminded of something comparative in history when examining these splash pages. It is likely the tragedy of Hiroshima will be remembered since its historic presence was profound throughout the story. The Hiroshima lovers can be seen on the walls of the city (XII: 7: 2). There is an abundance of visual rhetoric and symbolism in these splash pages alluding to the end of the world. An apocalyptic biblical reference is made on the first pages using the name “Pale Horse”; a band that was advertised to perform at Madison Square Garden (XII: 2-3). In Revelations pale horse is ridden by Death (Revelation 6:7-8), suggesting that Death did come to New York and claimed many lives. An ironic advertisement for “The Veidt Method” is falling down above burning and bloodied bodies reading, “The Veidt Method...I will give you bodies beyond your wildest imaginings” (XII: 6). This confirms Veidt’s promise in a way that his fans would never have anticipated.

Amongst the blood and bodies, newspapers are scattered all over with the front headlines reading “WAR?” (XII: 1-6). What survivors, other Americans and the rest of the world will soon gather is that the war they expected was not what caused the explosion. The true threat is extraterrestrial which concerns everyone on Earth. With this new common threat, Russia and America must join forces. Violence globally comes to a halt. Veidt’s numerous television screens

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confirm this, “Suspension of hostilities...”, “Immediate end to hostilities until we’ve evaluated this new threat to...”, “And end the wars in Afghanistan as a gesture of...”. He celebrates his victory with his arms in the air and tears in his eyes, “I DID IT!” (XII: 19: 5-7).

On a single page, New York is shown after some time. The presence of Veidt Enterprises lives on through new advertisements. Although the streets are being cleaned up and it looks like the city has come far in its physical recovery, the creators draw readers attention back to the trauma endured by using a newspaper which lays on the sidewalk. The headline makes readers consider the suffering of survivors; it reads, “NY survivors reveal nightmare [...]” (XII: 31: 5). The punctual trauma marks a historical event of “...such singularity, magnitude, and horror” (Forster 259). Witnesses, survivors, America and the world as a whole would have been impacted by the event. Experts claim that where disruption caused by punctual trauma has taken place, a post-traumatic transformation will occur within the individual and community (Schaub 7). An examination of the event’s reality is necessary in beginning to understand its “intrusiveness”, and “disruptive factors” which paves the way to move forward and for survivors to transfigure the trauma, “allowing [them] to arrive at a new understanding of the transformed self” (ibid). Part of this process involves the sharing of testimony. To better understand the self, is to have attempted to place what happened into narrative form. According to Graham, survivors of mass trauma also seek “recognition of that pain, disturbance, dislocation and horror from others” (Dawson 66). This is again the desire to “share the burden of pain” (Leydesdorff cited in Dawson 67). Moving forward, the world of *Watchmen* will be recovering from the event for generations to come.

Before heading to Veidt’s secret location, Rorschach had sent his journal anonymously to the “New Frontiersman”. The final page of the graphic novel suggests that its secretive contents concerning the reasons for the Comedian’s death may be leaked to the public. The truths of what happened to New York would not only disrupt the healing process for the nation as they had been set on a certain narrative of what happened, but it would cause the greatest conflict between countries that the world has ever seen as the idea of a common enemy would be destroyed. The final panel of the graphic novel leaves readers hanging. The choice of revealing the contents of Rorschach’s journal have been left in the hands of a young article writer who now has the power

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to decide whether or not the world shall remain at peace with itself or if nations will again turn against one another. The writer's shirt is marked with the iconic smiley face which he drops ketchup on. The smear of red looks like the bloodstain on the smiley button's initial appearance in the first panel of the graphic novel. This could be considered an extensive form of Groensteen's braiding (Grice 36) which demands the reader to consider all that has happened between the smiley's first appearance to its last.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to illustrate how the graphic novels *V for Vendetta* and *Watchmen* respectfully address the complexities of the traumatized psyche by visually mimicking symptoms of PTSD through sequential art. The depiction of trauma using words and images are given meaning when reader participation is applied. Unique to the graphic novel form, readers are challenged to consider the importance of what is shown and what is not, which in the graphic novel language, is showing something. Readers make connections through closure and determine the pace of the narrative which allows for a more controlled and safe space for topics of sensitivity to be addressed. Participation makes readers witnesses to not only the plights of the fictional characters, but to their own reactions and experiences throughout the reading. This is a subjective and interactive form of literature that challenges ordinary ways of thinking, interpreting and understanding our emotional reception to art.

The trauma tendencies of the graphic novels' structures allow their audience to understand the sufferings of characters at a deeper level as the inescapability of trauma is visually illustrated. The stream of consciousness method invites readers to witness characters' minds which have been opened onto the pages, revealing their pasts and what it is that haunts them. This visual technique creates sympathy from readers towards characters. Stream of consciousness is often used to display flashbacks which begin with an intrusive image that reminds them of the traumatic experience they recall. This is the graphic novel attempting to make a representation of what cannot otherwise be represented. In other words, the graphic novel form attempts to make the most sense of trauma by mimicking its symptoms. Other tendencies I

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addressed in this thesis include the use of “icons of suffering” which are repetitive images that one can see a number of times throughout a graphic novel. These icons remind both readers and characters of individual or mass and punctual traumas that have shaped cultures both in the world of the novel and ours. They emphasize the fact that trauma is visual and inescapable, following individuals for years if not for their entire lives. The final trauma graphic novel technique I discussed is the splitting of the time-line which resembles the fragmented and dissociative psyche of the traumatized. Both narratives jump from different story-lines and character perspectives which allows readers to be acquainted with a variety of characters and experiences. I have addressed a number of characters who have endured and faced varying traumas which have shaped who they are in the current time of the story. Different traumatic experiences were discussed in this paper using trauma theory as an attempt to demonstrate how realistically Moore, Lloyd and Gibbons have illustrated trauma and trauma symptoms. His characters closely resemble real people and therefore, make these fictitious narratives relatable to what we know of suffering in the real world.

Two significant characters from each narrative that are similar in a number of ways are V and Veidt. Alan Moore shares that all we know of Veidt is “...what he himself chooses to tell us. Yes, there are blanks...he doesn’t choose to go into his feelings” (Berlatsky 51). Like Veidt, V is also a mysterious figure who readers know little of. Both characters share comparable methods of renewing the world. Perhaps the name letter “V” is no coincidence. They both go to great lengths towards attempting to make the world a better place. Their intentions are seemingly good, but are morally ambiguous as they feel no remorse for taking lives in order to get closer to their objectives. After killing half of New York, Veidt believes he has “...saved Earth from Hell” (XII: 20: 1). Although, the job is not nearly complete; there are still ways to go in “help[ing] her towards Utopia” (ibid). V similarly attempts to “build a better world” by ridding it of its “explosives” and “destroyers” (3: V: 222: 1-2). Ironically, part of his process is using explosives to destroy the destroyers. Both characters use violence as a means of achieving peace. One of the more significant instances occurs in the Prologue of Book Three when V stands as a conductor over music sheets which can be read as “Tchaikovsky's 1812 overture”, an orchestral

arrangement that celebrates the victory over the Napoleon invasion of Russia in 1812. As he moves his baton, government buildings explode to the rhythm of what readers can interpret as the music playing (Prologue of Book 3: 185: 9). He essentially finishes the job Guy Fawkes failed to do in 1605 (Reich 2015). There is no indication that lives were lost, but the destruction of the government buildings is symbolic in that V has taken down the corrupt system they are representative of. The orchestrated performance inserts the idea that V is not a terrorist but an artist. Veidt also uses a creative method to destroy by sending an engineered, unearthly creature to commit murder rather than using a typical man made weapon.

Both of these characters believe that some level of destruction and elimination of people, is part of the process towards an improved world. Once they had reached their goals, there was still more to do. V anticipates his death and creates a protégé in Evey who will take on his work after he is killed. V's death is one of the most human things that happen to him in the story, as it is nearly impossible to kill him because of his superhuman strength. With Veidt playing the role of God, he too at last shows human weakness when he needs Jon Osterman to confirm if what he did was right, "Jon, wait, before you leave...I did the right thing, didn't I? It all worked out in the end." Jon replies, "'In the end'? Nothing ends, Adrian. Nothing ever ends" (XII: 27: 5-6). Like Evey has more to do in her quest, so does Veidt; the world will never be perfect. Moore demonstrates this in his inconclusive endings. All readers know is that Evey has now taken on the role of V and Veidt's whereabouts after Jon leaves him remains unknown. Readers are left to assume that those individuals will be continuing their work in some way.

Although V and Adrian Veidt share similar dreams for their worlds, their pasts are what make them considerably different. V has experienced trauma physically and mentally, whereas Veidt has had a secure upbringing and had not faced anything known to readers as "traumatic". It is possible that because V understands trauma and pain as a victim, he is more sensitive to the consequences of trauma and hurting others. The only characters he kills are perpetrators which some may argue is more morally acceptable. Veidt on the other hand believes "someone had to take the weight of that awful necessary crime" (XII: 27: 1). Being the smartest and richest man in the world, there must have been an alternative way of coming closer to a utopia without the

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murdering of innocent people. Releasing his creature was like releasing an atomic bomb. From his remote location, the task was easy; he was not there to see the aftermaths. Veidt as a destroyer, could be considered one of V's "iridescent blooms" which "are often the most dangerous" (Book 3: V: 220: 8). Either way, Moore has created these intricate characters who both want a new start for the world. Perhaps Moore suggests the impossibility of this task but he also asserts that making a positive difference in the world is possible through characters like Rorschach and Valerie, who remain with their integrity intact until their deaths. Valerie inspired both V and Evey to be good and to never change or give up on what they believe is right. Rorschach changed even the heart of Dr. Long who wanted to be a better person after their psychotherapy sessions. Perhaps it is not so much the large actions of characters like Veidt or even V that will save the world. Maybe Moore is trying to say that the future of the world is dependent upon the little decisions made by ordinary people everyday.

V for Vendetta and *Watchmen* draw attention to real history and societal issues in which readers are to consider within these fictional but alternative worlds of our own. Moore's fantasy layer invites a large audience to enjoy these narratives and his influence has been extended to the film adaptations of these two graphic novels which have been loved worldwide. Both mediums have proven to be timeless in that though they address events of the past, they continue to be relative to current events. Political warnings in both *V for Vendetta* and *Watchmen* could be argued as critical today as political developments in the last decade continue moving in what many consider a concerning direction. Reactions specifically to mass migration and the power of the avaricious financially advantaged have led to a resurgence of more radical right sided politics. A most recent pandemic has exposed how leaders choose to face and respond to the challenge of keeping their nations safe and cared for. Though not all reactions have been positive and worst of all, many lives have been lost, there is still proof of individual integrity through the sharing and kindnesses being passed on. These caring and respectful actions are what Moore urges in the moral embedding of his stories which appear to be more essential every day. The power of integrity is immeasurable and it is up to each individual to decide what type of world they wish to live in. I hope that my approach to the depiction of trauma in these graphic novels

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has enlightened my readers of the potential that sequential images have in telling stories that address complex issues such as human suffering and the traumatized psyche.

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