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Wojciech Lewandowski (iD)
University of Warsaw, Poland

INTERTEXTUALITY AND THE DEPICTION OF IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS. THE CASE OF *V FOR VENDETTA*

ABSTRACT

Intertextuality seems to be Alan Moore's trademark. In his most famous comic books and graphic novels, such as *V for Vendetta*, *Watchmen*, *Lost Girls* or *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, he often refers to other texts of high and low culture. Therefore, a certain level of cultural competence is required to decode various messages hidden by the British writer. In *V for Vendetta* intertextuality is employed to convey certain political and ideological messages in a more subtle and indirect way. Through various allusions and quotations, Moore presents his views on the condition of the depicted society as well as on the political clash between a fascist state and its anarchist enemy. Intertextual references are also included in the graphics of the comic book. It is the aim of this paper to discuss if, how and to what extent intertextuality can influence the complexity of the graphic novel's message and be used to indirectly convey particular political and social ideas.

Key words

intertextuality, graphic novel, ideology, conflict, politics

Introductory remarks

"Almost every word and phrase we use we have heard or seen before. Our originality and craft as writers come from how we put those words together in new ways to fit our specific situation, needs, and purposes, but we always need to rely on the common stock of language we share with others" (Bazerman, 2004, p. 83). Using direct or indirect references to other texts seems to be a common practice among men of letters. If skillfully employed, intertextuality can provide additional meaning to a work of art, regardless of its form, as well as place it in a wider cultural and socio-political context.

As a relatively new phenomenon of popular culture, comic books and graphic novels are gradually gaining more and more research coverage. Various disciplines of social science and humanities are looking at different aspects of this medium, including its history and development (Rhoades, 2008; Szyłak, 1998), its nature (McCloud, 2015) or its fans (Brown, 1997). From the point of view of political science, it might be interesting to see in what way they depict social and political problems or ideological debates. A particularly fascinating aspect are the ways in which comic books and graphic novels convey political messages and to what extent intertextuality can be used in that regard.

Although the medium is capable of dealing with serious political as well as social issues, it has rather been perceived as a part of mass culture aimed at providing entertainment, not as a means of serious political debates. Moral panic of the 1950s in the United States over the contents of the comic books consumed by young readers and their possible contribution to juvenile delinquency influenced perception of the medium and to some extent limited its opportunities for aesthetic evolution (see Beaty, 2005; Hajdu 2008). The second half of the 1980s brought changes to mainstream comics as their authors turned to serious topics and offered more politically oriented stories, making them tools of indirect political communication, rather than a means of simple propaganda.

V for Vendetta by Alan Moore and David Lloyd is one of the most intriguing political graphic novels[1]. It can be seen as an essay on conflicting political ideologies as well as on different models of social and political organization. The writer

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[1] This article draws upon my reflections on intertextuality of the *V for Vendetta* graphic novel presented in the book *Od faszystowskiej dystopii do anarchistycznej utopii. Idee polityczne w powieści graficznej «V jak Vendetta» Alana Moore'a i Davida Lloyda* (2019).

Alan Moore used intertextuality in part to enhance *V for Vendetta*'s meaning and to place it in British as well as more universal ideological, social and cultural context. Intertextuality seems to be Moore's trademark. In his works, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* serving as the most vivid example, he often refers to other text of high and low culture. In *V for Vendetta*, through various allusions and quotations Moore aims to present his views on the condition of the depicted society as well as on the political clash between a fascist state and its anarchist enemy.

It is the aim of the article to discuss if, how and to what extent intertextuality can influence the complexity of a graphic novel's message and be used to indirectly convey political and social ideas. Therefore the author will analyze and interpret selected intertextual references appearing in *V for Vendetta* in order to evaluate the way they were exploited by Moore to express and communicate the main political and social problems depicted in the graphic novel. The text will focus on allusions used by Moore to portray the conflict between an oppressive fascist state and the resistance towards it. Such analysis might also help to understand current popularity of the symbols of political resistance/revolt created by the British authors.

1. *V for Vendetta*

Alan Moore's (writer) and David Lloyd's (artist) graphic novel *V for Vendetta* was published between 1982 and 1989. Two out of its three books originally appeared in a British independent comic book magazine *Warrior*. After it shut down due to the financial problems, the authors were able to continue their work in the United States. The first collected edition of *V for Vendetta* was published there by DC Comics in May 1989 (Kibble-White, 2005, p. 277)[2]. In 2009 the Absolute Edition of *V for Vendetta* was published by DC Comics, supplemented by graphic material not included in the previous collected editions (Moore & Lloyd, 2009).

V for Vendetta tells the story of a masked hero known as V, who intends, and finally succeeds, to topple a Norsefire party regime established in Great Britain after a limited-scale nuclear war. A newly set up fascist regime has offered its citizens security and order in exchange for total obedience. Undesirable "elements" had been placed in detention camps where they were murdered or made subject

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[2] For more information about "Warrior" magazine's significance for British comics, see J. Chapman, *British Comics: A Cultural History* (2011, pp. 227–231).

to medical experiments. V, a victim of the latter, takes revenge on those who caused his sufferings, at the same time trying to undermine their political power. Assisted by an initially reluctant aide Evey Hammond, he carries out a series of terrorist attacks that result in a systematic dissolution of the power structure of Norsefire Party. The oppressive nature of the fascist regime is contrasted with V's anarchism based on freedom and mutual cooperation between free individuals. However, the open ending of the novel suggests that V's dream might never come true.

The representation of the ideological conflict between fascism and anarchy is a central issue in *V for Vendetta*. The graphic novel is set in a classical dystopian setting, which enables Moore to show the limits of the society of perfect security. Instead of living in happiness, the citizens of Great Britain are subjected to political oppression and humiliation. This was in fact a representation of the authors' fears ignited by the actions of the conservative government of Margaret Thatcher (Moore & Lloyd, 2009, p. 7). For Moore, anarchy based on principles expounded by the protagonist was the desired political environment.

V for Vendetta is a masterpiece of political comic and an important step in its authors' careers. Alan Moore is considered one of the most influential comic book writers. His other major works include *Watchmen*, *Lost Girls*, *From Hell*, *Promethea* or *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. *V for Vendetta*'s artist David Lloyd worked on such comics as *Sláine*, *Hellblazer* or some of Garth Ennis' *War Stories* (namely *Nightingale* and *J for Jenny*).

Popularity of *V for Vendetta* as well as its overtly political character led to a movie adaptation. Directed by James McTeigue with the script written by the (then) Wachowski Brothers, it premiered in cinemas in 2006. Besides Hugo Weaving who was cast as V, Natalie Portman (Evey), Stephen Rea (Eric Finch) and John Hurt (Adam Sutler) also appeared in the movie[3]. The cinematic adaptation was focused on the political discourse between totalitarianism and democracy as ways of organizing the state. The movie widely commented on contemporary American politics, which infuriated Alan Moore, who disavowed this adaptation of his graphic novel[4].

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[3] Featuring John Hurt as a head of totalitarian government might be seen as an ironic reference to his earlier role as Winston Smith in *1984* (Radford, 1984).

[4] See: Bill Baker, *Alan Moore. Wywiady* (2010, pp. 141–144).

2. Intertextuality

Before analyzing various textual references made by Alan Moore and David Lloyd in *V for Vendetta*, it seems necessary to define the phenomenon of intertextuality. The task is quite difficult due to varying views on its nature and practice. Charles Bazerman describes intertextuality as "the relation each text has to texts surrounding it". He also adds that "intertextual analysis examines the relation of a statement to that sea of words, how it uses those words, how it positions itself in respect to those other words" (2004, p. 84). From this perspective, pre-existing texts have an impact on any text ever created. Moreover, such influences are present regardless of whether the author intends to create such a link. The degree to which texts correspond to each other is a criterion in Bazerman's definitions of levels of intertextuality. Whenever intertextuality is intentional, it is obtained by a range of means like direct or indirect quotation or mimicking a given style (Bazerman, 2004, pp. 86–89).

The term "intertextuality" itself, says Matthew Freeman, originated from the works of Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva; the latter used it in her *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* published in 1980 (2006, p. 5). These two scholars shared a view that all texts are related. Poststructuralist theories, on the other hand, provided an approach oriented at a narrative itself by saying that intertextuality is in fact "an expansion of story across text" (2006, p. 5). Consequently, a text can be interpreted as a stand-alone creation or as an element in a web of interdependencies.

William Irwin is far more skeptical about the term. He perceives it as redundant and insufficiently explained – a mere fancy piece of campus jargon. While respecting that the term was introduced by Kristeva and Barthes, he claims it is just a "stylish way of talking about allusion and influence" and that the creative input of an author is compromised if we claim that their text exists in relation to other texts. His preferred term is "allusion" as one more accurate in capturing "authorial-textual phenomena" (Irwin, 2004, pp. 227–242). What is interesting, this is exactly the term that Orvis Evans, Michael Foote and Ross McDonald choose in order to describe the way Alan Moore's *V for Vendetta* is immersed in a wider cultural context.

When analyzing the phenomenon of intertextuality we seem to consider the factor of sources used and the factor of author's intention (how consciously they were used). The latter will usually be crucial: whatever is intentional will provide us with the greatest insight into the characters' motivations and

the resulting meanings of the text. In the case of a political treatise such as *V for Vendetta*, it is most important to identify ideologies that are included in the text by the means of intertextuality and the way in which they are presented.

3. Moore's Politics of Intertextuality

As mentioned before, Alan Moore is famous for extensive use of intertextuality in his work. For example, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* is a series of graphic novels set in worlds created by others, and characters are also borrowed from famous classical novels or stories. However, in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* Moore often plays with the stereotypical images associated with well-known characters, giving them literally a second life[5].

Annalisa Di Liddo points out that Moore's "use of intertextuality is in fact of a crossover kind, in that he tends to blend several forms of art: not only literature but also film, painting, music, the theatre and so on. But the presence of literary quotations, allusions and connections is particularly pervasive in his work" (Vallorani, 2009, p. 225). Moore's signature skill that involves starting from a similar social and political standpoint as authors of the referenced texts and yet arriving at a new meaning.

Another signature is that panels of Moore's graphic novels are also abounding with visual allusions – references to any discipline of arts you can think of. *V for Vendetta*, *Watchmen*, *Lost Girls* and all other texts call for an extremely focused reading if all links to movies, songs or theatre plays are to be discovered. Besides attention to detail, a reasonable level of cultural polish is required – just think of correctly identifying cinema posters partly covered by elements of a scene and the meaning they convey[6].

Alan Moore himself listed at least some of texts that gave flavor to *V for Vendetta*. He published an article *Behind the Painted Smile* clarifying what his sources of inspiration were (republished in the collected edition of the graphic novel):

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[5] Character of Wilhelmina (Mina) Harker (née Murray) from Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* is a good example of such transformation. Instead of being a stereotypical female heroine waiting to be saved by a brave male hero, she becomes a leader of the eponymous League and a strong woman who transcends traditional female social role.

[6] There are many annotations to Alan Moore's graphic novels or comic books available online, showing the vastness of Alan Moore's usage of intertextual reference. For *V for Vendetta* annotations please consult: Madelyn Boudreaux, An Annotation of Literary, Historic, and Artistic References in Alan Moore's Graphic Novel, *V for Vendetta* (2012).

Orwell. Huxley. Thomas Disch. Judge Dredd. Harlan Ellison's "Repent Harlequin! Said the Ticktockman." "Catman" and "Prowler in the City at the Edge of the World" by the same author. Vincent Price's Dr. Phibes and Theatre of Blood. David Bowie. The Shadow. Nightraven. Batman. Farenheit 451. The writings of the New Worlds school of science fiction. Max Ernst's painting "Europe After the Rains." Thomas Pynchon. The atmosphere of British Second World War films. The Prisoner. Robin Hood. Dick Turpin… (Moore, 2009, p. 372)

An appropriate, full interpretation of *V for Vendetta* demands that the audience should both know the sources enumerated by Moore and read the panels for their profound cultural meaning, as opposed to limiting the reading to the surface story. Annalisa di Liddo noticed that in Moore's case "his wide use of intertextuality is usually not displayed for its own sake, but that it aims at expressing the author's worldview" (Vallorani, 2009, p. 226).

Not surprisingly then, almost every allusion in this graphic novel, aimed at presentation of an ideological conflict, is politically meaningful. A dystopia itself, the text cites or emulates elements of the realities from some of the most renowned dystopias: *1984*, *Farenheit 451* or one of the most famous British comic books series *Judge Dredd* (see also: Chapman, 2011, pp. 152–161; Lewandowski, 2013, p. 114). Like other fictional regimes, the Norsefire government is cruel and prefers to keep the citizens in the dark, denying them both relief and intellectual ferment that culture – mostly literature – can offer.

Apart from intertextuality detectable in the general construction of the reality of *V for Vendetta*, there are numerous cultural links neatly intertwined in the graphic. Most importantly, the books crowding the shelves in the "Shadow Gallery" (V's hideout) include Thomas More's *Utopia*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Karl Marx's *Capital*, Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, a book on French Revolution, a volume entitled *Decline and Fall of…* (which will be Edward Gibbons' *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*) and two volumes of Shakespeare works. All these books are shown fairly early within the text (pages 12 and 22), setting the ground for the main dispute, and all of them carry a political meaning strictly related to the plot. *Capital* and *Mein Kampf* convey that we are in a totalitarian reality, while an anti-slavery manifesto *Uncle Tom's Cabin* suggests the condition of the individual in Norsefire's Britain. The reference to French Revolution on the other hand lends itself to at least two interpretations: one suggests that the government came into power through revolutionary methods, with all the risks coming with it, and the other implies that the main character is about

to rebel in a violent way. The book is peppered with such fine-drawn allusions, providing a reader with ideological suggestions as to the story.

Among the many intertextual references, one is special in that frames the entire story. On page 22, V invites Evey to examine the Shadow Gallery, containing artefacts of culture under his custody. A reader can see part of a book spine with a sole word visible: Monte. V owns a copy of *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas, a novel telling a story of unjust imprisonment and revenge. As we can guess at this point, V – a former prisoner too – will be taking revenge on his jailers. Yet, as the whole nation seems to be unfairly subjugated, he will be retaliating in their name as well[7].

4. The regime

Being an overtly political graphic novel, *V for Vendetta* uses a lot of intertextual references to political and philosophical treaties as well as other texts of culture dealing with political themes. Such allusions are used to enhance political dialogue, encourage criticism or provoke discussion. In this instance, intertextuality might help readers to grasp the political ideologies discussed within the graphic novel's text by introducing commonly perceived symbolic representations. Alan Moore and David Lloyd use a plethora of such references throughout *V for Vendetta*. The author would like to focus first on symbols of totalitarian power, and in the next part of the article, on those related to resistance and revolution.

A figure of a strong, almost omnipotent leader, supported by a team of closest advisors and collaborators is a typical characteristic of any totalitarian regime. The leader is also a head of a political party that dominates the political scene[8]. In *V for Vendetta* the character of Adam Susan, the leader, is a composite of different historical totalitarian dictators. Just as them he is detached from his people and prefers to build his authority on fear instead of trust. He prefers to spend his time with "Fate" a computer or computer system that knows everything about everyone (with which Susan is secretly in love) (Moore & Lloyd, 2009, pp. 49–51; see also Ooms, 2015). He knows his citizens only through "Fate" and is unable to relate to them. What is even more dangerous for him and his

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[7] More information about relations between *V for Vendetta* and *The Count of Monte Cristo* can be found in James R. Keller, *V for Vendetta as Cultural Pastiche: A Critical Study of the Graphic Novel and Film* (2008, pp. 78–89).

[8] In *V for Vendetta* Moore deals with the fascist form of a totalitarian regime. General remarks on the nature of such a system are based on Paxton, 2005 and Traverso, 2011.

regime, his obsession with the computer system might be turned against him, as "Fate" can be hacked and used to overthrow the government (Moore & Lloyd, 2009, pp. 245–246, 293).

Connection between Adam Susan and totalitarian leaders outside of the graphic novel's diegetic world is made during the speech V broadcast on the regime's television after taking over the studio. In one panel he is pictured standing in front of the screen divided into four parts, each displaying a head of a totalitarian regime. Three of the leaders are easily recognizable: Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. Half of the face of the fourth one is hidden behind V's arm, but considering that the narrative is taking place in Britain, we might assume that the person on screen is Oswald Mosley, the leader of the British Union of Fascists. It might also be read, as Paul Moffet suggests, as a placeholder for any authoritarian leader that the reader can think of (2017, pp. 51–52). V's message in that panel states: "In fact, let us not mince words… The management is *terrible*! We've had a string of embezzlers, frauds, liars and lunatics making a string of catastrophic decisions. This is plain fact" (Moore & Lloyd, 2009, p. 160). The familiar image of totalitarian dictators places Adam Susan's character within a larger historical and political context, especially taking into consideration that Moore and Lloyd referred to classical examples of such leaders and to one politician being a part of British historical heritage. V's comment suggests that totalitarian power had never been long lasting and beneficial for a society.

Reference to Oswald Mosley[9] and his fascist party is also visible in the images, Norsefire Party uniforms resemble to some extent the ones worn by the members of the British Union of Fascists[10]. Moore gave a lot of attention to the organization of the fascist party in the diegetic world. He focused in particular on rivalries between the party's branches in the face of the regime's collapse. The power structure of the party consists of several departments named after body parts: The Finger (secret police force), The Eye (visual surveillance), The Ear (audio surveillance), The Mouth (broadcasting propaganda on television and radio), and The Nose (police department). Government, as well as the whole state, is like an organism whose health is necessary for proper functioning. Moore

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[9] John Hurt's role in *V for Vendetta* movie seems to be modeled on Oswald Mosley.

[10] Compare: Moore & Lloyd, 2009, p. 33, and the picture from 1934 British Union of Fascists Demonstration in the Hyde-Park (1934, 2016). On page 33 of the graphic novel you can also see the birth of fascism masterfully depicted in just a few panels.

references here organicism, a strain of political thought that originated from ancient philosophy; it was popular, among others, in Nazi Germany.

Totalitarian regimes have striven to create a new model citizen, a perfect man unaware that other social orders are possible, and thus accepting the new rules unquestioningly. However, a new citizen might not always fulfill hopes placed in him. What happens if s/he turns against the government that created him/her[11]? Moore discusses this issue in *V for Vendetta* alluding to Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein, or Modern Prometheus*. V is a "Frankenstein monster" created by the Norsefire regime in a series of medical experiments conducted at Larkhill Detention Camp (Moore & Lloyd, 2009, pp. 105–108). In contrast to the creature from Mary Shelley's novel, V frees himself from his creators and turns against them. His imprisonment (presumably for just being "undesirable"), tortures he is subjected to and medical experiments performed on him set him on a path towards a personal as well as political vendetta. He is a son of Frankenstein, rebelling against his institutional fathers[12]. Like the original Frankenstein monster, V brings horror and destruction in a violent rebellion against the Norsefire regime.

5. Resistance

After rescuing Evey from the hands of Fingermen, he takes her to the roof of the building and before blowing up the Houses of Parliament, he recites a popular rhyme: "Remember, remember the fifth of November, the Gunpowder treason and plot. I know of no reason why the Gunpowder treason… …Should ever be forgot" (Moore & Lloyd, 2009, p. 17). Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot, an unsuccessful attempt to demolish the House of Lords on the 5th of November 1605, are ubiquitous references in Alan Moore's and David Lloyd's graphic novel. Guy Fawkes was a member of a conspiracy against the unjust Protestant regime repressing Catholics (Fraser, 1996; Keller, 2008, pp. 17–21). Although the plotters were caught and executed, the memory of the event survived. The *Observance of 5th November Act 1605* made the 5th of November an annual thanksgiving for

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[11] More information about V as a new citizen can be found in: Lewandowski, 2015, pp. 26–41.

[12] A poster of a classic Universal monster movie *Son of Frankenstein* is hanging in V's wardrobe; see: Moore & Lloyd, 2009, p. 12. More information about the political dimension of Mary Shelley's novel can be found in Craciun, (2016).

the failure of the Plot[13]. Bonfire Night or Guy Fawkes Night celebration became a part of British culture. However, over time the perception of Guy Fawkes and his deeds evolved into considering him a rebel against unjust power rather than a traitor[14]. Moore and Lloyd used Guy Fawkes' figure as a champion of freedom who fights for the liberation of British citizens.

Guy Fawkes' mask, designed by David Lloyd and popularized by the movie adaptation of the graphic novel, was adopted by various protest movements as their symbol, Anonymous and Occupy Wall Street Movement being the best-known and most visible examples (see: Kohn, 2013, pp. 89–104; Soncul, 2014). Adoption of Guy Fawkes figure as a contemporary symbol of resistance, to the satisfaction of the graphic novels' authors (Halleck, 2013; Lamont, 2011), demonstrates the ability of popular culture texts to express social anxieties, and at the same time expands the meaning of *V for Vendetta*.

Besides Guy Fawkes, Moore and Lloyd evoked other motives associated with social and political resistance, one of them being Ludwig van Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*, "sometimes referred to as the victory symphony" (Beethoven's Vth…, 2016). What connects these two elements is the letter V, to which different meanings might be attributed, one of them being victory. Beethoven's symphony itself includes various references to other revolution-promoting, engaged music such as that of Luigi Cherubini. Beethoven's symphony appears several times in *V for Vendetta*, most notably during the murder of Bishop Lilliman (Moore & Lloyd, 2009, pp. 70–71, 73–74).

The other piece of classical music playing an important part in the *V for Vendetta* narrative is Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. V, as a conductor, orchestrates the destruction of the Post Office Tower and Jordan Tower where surveillance and propaganda branches of the government are located. As Tim Summers puts it, "The 1812's programmatic connection with combat and nationalistic defence, as well as the cannons that explicitly link musical performance and warfare, make the work suitable for use as an emblem and instrument of revolt" (2015, p. 146).

Another musical reference within *V for Vendetta* text is Martha and the Vandellas' song *Dancing in the Streets*, which V and Evey listen to in the Shadow

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[13] The *Observance of 5th November Act 1605* was repealed in 1859 by the *Anniversary Days Observance Act*, but the status and character of the 5th November celebration was not changed.

[14] The changing perception of the Gunpowder Plot and Guy Fawkes is well depicted by James Sharpe in *Remember, Remember: A Cultural History of Guy Fawkes Day* (2005).

Gallery. As Orvis Evans, Foote and McDonald point out, the song was the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement in the early Sixties. Apart from introducing the part of cultural heritage wiped out by the political regime hostile to citizens of different race or sexual orientation, a reference to this particular track "launches *V for Vendetta* into a historical period, connecting the work to a series of events associated with a time in history when civil rights were of paramount importance" (Evans et al., 2010). Such intertextual reference also supports the interpretation of *V for Vendetta* as a political manifesto advocating freedom in an anarchistic way.

One of the aims of V's opposition to the fascist regime of the Norsefire party was to establish a social order based on anarchistic ideals of social cooperation[15]. Anarchy, according to V, is not a chaos but a form of social order that demands a certain level of responsibility from individuals. As he explains to Evey, "This is only the land of *take-what-you-want*. Anarchy means 'without leaders'; not 'without order'. With anarchy comes an age of *Ordnung*, of *true* order, which is to say *voluntary* order. This age of *Ordnung* will begin when mad and incoherent cycle of *Verwirrung* that these bulletins reveal has run its course" (Moore & Lloyd, 2009, p. 278) Association of V's ideology with anarchism is also suggested by V's symbol (letter V framed in a circle), similar to the symbol of anarchism. Such similarities might "bring political and ethical philosophies into the text in a very subtle manner, also projecting V's character into the contemporary anarchist movement" (Evans et al., 2010).

Alan Moore and David Lloyd also resist the stereotypical depiction of anarchy as chaos where no rules bind the members of a society. *The Land of Do-As-You-Please*, the title of *V for Vendetta* third book, is a direct reference to Enid Blyton's story from the book *The Magic Faraway Tree* (2007, pp. 92–100). Blyton depicts the land where all dreams come true, but the travelers cannot stay there due to the laws inherent in the nature of the place through which they travel. Anarchy, as V explains, is not the state without any rule. Rules exist, but are not enforced by a coercive government. As Rebecca Rowland claims, through a children's novel Moore and Lloyd tried to explain anarchism, and the evoked story is a metaphor of Evey's education towards accepting that ideology (Rowland 2014). Education rather than revolution is also the author's preferred method of social change towards anarchism (Moore in Killjoy, 2009, p. 44).

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[15] More information about anarchy as social and political ideology can be found in Laskowski (2007) and Grinberg (1994).

It is necessary to notice, however, that the inconclusive way the graphic novel ends might suggest that introducing anarchy is by no means an easy task. It requires a certain level of cultural, social and political competence, which might not be present in the diegetic society, or in the real one. As Moore and Lloyd show, Britain in *V for Vendetta* will either engage in an anarchistic order or it extremely quickly will return to authoritarian rule (Moore & Lloyd, 2009, pp. 364–365). Real decision is always in people's hands, as the authors suggest.

Concluding remarks

Comic books and graphic novels are well suited to become tools of political communication. Brian McNair sees political communication as "purposeful communication about politics". and according to him it "incorporates (…) communication about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics" (McNair, 2003, p. 3). Looking from that perspective and considering the multi-level relations between comics and politics, it makes comics a perfect vehicle for political education, declaration of views or, in general, a philosophical discourse about the state of the society. Comics were also used as an instrument of political and social propaganda, especially during the times of political unrest or war (Goodnow & Kimble, 2016; Strömberg, 2010, pp. 36–67; Wright, 2003, pp. 30–55). This was possible due to the medium's formal uniqueness. Combination of images and text seems to be more attractive to the human brain, so it engages more intellectual powers than text or pictures alone (Strömberg, 2010, p. 9).

Interpretation of a political discourse of such complicated nature as in the graphic novel *V for Vendetta* is quite challenging. Authors must maintain a proper balance between the political or philosophical aspects of a comic book and its entertainment value. Intertextuality comes as a helpful tool in such instances, enabling the authors to allude to texts that symbolically represent specific political and social behaviors or ideologies. In the case of *V for Vendetta*, the clever usage of intertextuality by Alan Moore and David Lloyd enhances political messages in the novel. The reader might focus on decoding political ideologies the text confronts, assessing their philosophical backgrounds and interpreting them. Thus intertextuality becomes an important part of the communication process, influencing the complexity of the graphic novel's message; it is also used to transmit political and social ideologies or agendas.

Apart from enhancing the value of the political message presented in a graphic novel, intertextuality also places it in a wider historical, cultural, social and

political context. Therefore a certain level of cultural competence is demanded to decode various messages hidden by the British writer and artist. Use of intertextuality makes the interpretation of *V for Vendetta* a more challenging, but at the same time more satisfying experience. In this conceptual context, *V for Vendetta*, originally written as a protest against Margaret Thatcher's government, gains certain universality and shows an everlasting clash between an individual and a political regime.

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