

In an article entitled "The Law of Genre", Jacques Derrida suggests that there is no such thing as a pure genre; in his view, genres mix and intertwine in a web of influences and contamination, for no literary movement can, in fact, emerge out of nothing, counting on its predecessor for support, either for its construction or deconstruction (57). Likewise, contemporary culture owes much to the Victorian Age, an era of great scientific and technological development; so it should not come as a surprise that Victorian aestheticism, with its tropes and motifs, has remained influential in literature and art until today. Neo-Victorian Studies have emerged, at the end of the twentieth century, as an attempt to define and understand the ways in which such structures and ideas have remained – and are re-defined – in contemporary art and literature.

Neo-Victorian Studies, as a recent field of study, still battles with a solid definition of Neo-Victorianism, which nevertheless allows for its broad discussion and theorization. However, many academics have defined it in terms of appropriation and adaptation of Victorian structures, motifs or themes. Mark Llewellyn, in "What is Neo-Victorian Studies", has engaged in a vast exploration of this term, setting some of its limits and connotations and exploring the possibilities embroiled in the relationship between the Victorian past and contemporary culture. His reading suggests that Neo-Victorian fiction can assume different facets, but, in broad terms, it can be recognized in works that set themselves in the Victorian period or in fiction that engages in the re-writing of the historical narrative of that period. In Llewellyn's understanding, this re-writing would consist on the representation of "marginalised voices, new histories of sexuality, post-colonial viewpoints and other generally 'different' versions of the Victorian" (165). Although this definition might seem to constrict itself to the Victorian works that have been created after the Victorian period, the author goes a step

¹ Ana Antunes Simão is an MA student at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, NOVA University of Lisbon. Her current research interests include the Female Gothic, Victorian literature and the graphic novel. She received her BA in Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures majoring in English and North American Studies from the New University of Lisbon (FCSH-UNL).

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further in his reasoning, explaining how the genre regards new forms of approaching the Victorian age, together with the exploration of the aesthetics and moral values of the period. Neo-Victorianism does not aim "to indulge in escapism masked as historical narrative" (169); instead, it aspires to gain understanding on how different moral and ethical values have remained embedded in society to this very day. Neo-Victorian fiction promotes an examination of past values as a way to better understand present ones, thus allowing for the comprehension of how they come together or where they differ.

Born in the twentieth-century, Neo-Victorian fiction seems to be a fruit of the post-modern nostalgia for the past, the concern with looking back to past traditions, to renovate present literature with forgotten narratives. The combination of the self-consciousness of post modernity with the fascination with the Victorian era reveals a new form of fiction based on such appropriations.

The graphic novel *From Hell* (1989-1996), authored by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, is one such work that engages with the Neo-Victorian genre. Focusing on the 1888 murders in Whitechapel, London, the novel tries to trace back the theories on the murderer, in an attempt to unravel the identity of Jack the Ripper. *From Hell* not only goes back to the Victorian period, but it tries to portray it with authenticity. From characterization to dialogues, the research reveals itself as a Neo-Victorian work in its most conservative form.



V for Vendetta, on the other hand, a graphic novel written between 1982 and 1989, by Alan Moore and David Lloyd, is not set in the Victorian era. The story is placed in a dystopian future, where, after an atomic Third World War, England finds itself under a fascist regime, headed by the right wing Party, Norsefire. V, the protagonist, emerges in this environment as an avenger, one whose vendetta takes in the overturn of this regime through a forced awareness of the people, a cry for action and, even more, for political activism.

Following what has already been defined as Neo-Victorianism, this novel does not seem, at first, to engage with the genre. If one takes into account Louisa Hadley's investigation, which, notwithstanding, defines Neo-Victorianism as "contemporary fiction that engages with the Victorian era, at either the level of plot, structure or both" (4), one realizes that *V for Vendetta* might engage with the genre in an unconventional way.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate how *V for Vendetta*, both the graphic novel and the movie (directed by James McTeigue and released in 2006) appropriate Victorian tropes and transpose them into the future, thus creating two different but very similar expressions of Neo-Victorianism. Following on a logical train of thought, this research initiates with some reflections on the sensation novel and how it relates to *V for Vendetta*. The second part of this article will focus on how V, the protagonist of both the graphic novel and the movie, can be directly compared to the image of Oscar Wilde, including other remarks on the characters and their relation to aestheticism and the decadent movement. The final section is dedicated to the Shadow Gallery and V's personal collection of interdicted cultural artefacts, particularly the one portrayed in the film.

I – *V for Vendetta*: The Sensation Novel

The sensation novel is a subgenre that became popular in the 1860s, in Britain. This form of fiction conventionally focused on themes such as murder, fraud, adultery and madness, forms of transgression that arise at the heart of the domestic environment, usually employed by upstanding citizens. The name of the genre derives from its capacity to generate sensations on the reader, to stimulate terror, pain, fear or even passion. Anything but emotional indifference was acceptable. Books of the genre soon became best-sellers but literary critics dismissed them as cheap literature, a kind of fiction that could corrupt the mind and lead people away from the Victorian moral values. Although the sensation fiction genre lost its power during the seventies, the sensation novel remained present in literature through the detective novel, suspense fiction and mystery novel (Brantlinger, 1). Following on Derrida's argument, this subgenre unavoidably survived all the genres that emerged afterwards, its tropes and motifs remaining in contemporary literature, for all genres are embedded in their predecessors, carrying their legacy throughout time. As follows, one can manifestly place *V for Vendetta* as a descendant of the sensation novel. However, this connection can be further

developed through its elements of detective novel, and the structures that envelop the graphic novel.

As Brantlinger explores in "What is 'Sensational' About the 'Sensation Novel'", what remains as the most prominent feature of this genre is its mysterious character, how it always features a secret or even several secrets. The ways in which the narrator purposefully keeps information from its characters - and, most significantly, from the reader - as well as the strategies used to create this phenomenon, are examples of how sensation structures have remained alive in contemporary fiction. *V for Vendetta* derives from such features. The plot revolves around secrets, information that is consciously kept from the reader. Starting with the protagonist, his identity is, throughout the novel, held by the narrator. As the plot progresses, we learn that V was imprisoned in a concentration camp, Larkhill, and probably subjected to scientific experiments; he actively exploded the camp and everyone that was inside with it, forever being marked by the fire of such a detonation. However, the reader is never certain of the reasons behind his incarceration, although some clues are provided. He covers his face with a Guy Fawkes mask and wears a wig and hat to cover his head. To this attire, V adds a dark sombre suit, followed by dark gloves and an inscrutable cloak. His true identity remains hidden behind the letter by which he identifies himself and, in addition to his clear agenda to overthrow the government, this scheme goes a step further in its form of personal vendetta. Moral ambiguity remains attached to this character all the way through the novel. One understands his reasons, but he is a murderer, nevertheless. All information regarding the character is given to the reader through fragments, which function as a strategy to keep the reader interested in the progression of the story, but some mysteries remain never to be explained, not even by the authors, who, until this day, have kept the reader in the dark about V's identity.

Another aspect that places *V for Vendetta* in this subgenre is the importance given to the "subordination of character to plot" (Brantlinger, 12). The circumstances determine the characters' lives, manoeuvring them through the structures and specificities of plot – that works as destiny. Evey does not have any control of her life during the story, especially from the moment she first meets V. This encounter changes everything she knows about the world and, more importantly, about herself. The mysterious protagonist saves her from being raped and killed by members of the regime's police and then kidnaps her, in an attempt to keep his own identity in the dark. From the moment she walks into V's Shadow

Gallery, Evey understands how much the government is keeping from its people. In V's house, Evey learns that pre-war culture goes far beyond what she knew or even expected. From West to Middle East, the Shadow Gallery is full of books, paintings and statues representative of most cultures in the world, all banned from the civil eyes, all stolen from the government. Such a discovery plants the first seeds of discontentment in Evey. Later on, the character is arrested and incarcerated by what, at the time, she believes to be the government. This prison was created by V, an illusion of Larkhill, meant to free Evey from all the constrictions imposed by society, meant to change her. Enduring constant torture and interrogations, Evey keeps her integrity, learning that her ideals are more important than her life. This realization frees her from prison, from society, from herself. But this experience was imposed on the character; it was never an act of free will. V too, freed himself from all that society had imposed on him when he exploded the Larkhill camp. Through these experiences, they are reborn, turned from victims to avengers.

The revelations are made throughout the novel in an abrupt form, shocking the reader, as well as the characters, who are themselves kept in the dark about the mysteries revolving around them:

[T]he narrative persona shares the knowledge of the crime with the criminal characters but does not share it directly with the reader. The narrator therefore takes on a shady, perhaps even criminal look reminiscent of the old idea that a detective must be in secret sympathy with criminals in order to catch them (Brantlinger, 15-16).

The detective arises, in the graphic novel, to substitute the narrator in his task, to reveal the secrets embedded in the story. He too is ambivalent; his moral values are always put into question, for he works for the government, a totalitarian regime that oppresses its people. Yet Finch, the detective, knows and condemns the horrors committed by some elements of the party. His life's ordeal becomes V's arrest, but he can identify with the character once he learns the truth about his past. As Finch gradually discovers the secrets held by the narrator, so does the reader. He follows the clues the narrator places in his path, although he does not understand, at first, what motivates the criminal's actions. In order to

reach this understanding, Finch will go to Larkhill and experience, with the help of some drugs, what might be a similar experience to V's. When facing such crude reality, Finch too is able to free himself, or so he thinks. But this freedom, driven by his obsession with V, albeit leading him to V, also leads him to madness. At the end of the novel, V is killed by Finch, but what the former represents lives on through Evey, who upon his death assumes both his identity and political burden.

By turning *V for Vendetta* into a sensation novel, Alan Moore is not only replicating Victorian literary structures, but further taking the genre into a whole new level of complexity. Moore is pushing the boundaries of Neo-Victorianism by transposing the story of *V for Vendetta* into a detective story, placed in a dystopian future.



Oscar Wilde

II – Appropriating the 'Wilde Figure'

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), the Irish playwright, novelist, essayist and poet, became one of the most popular and polemic personalities of the Victorian period, his reputation owing much to his involvement with the aestheticism and decadent movements. Aestheticism gave emphasis to the aesthetic nature of art in detriment of its social or political criticism. Art should not serve a didactic purpose or convey any form of moral or ethical message, but rather provide pure pleasure through its beauty. This movement was closely

linked to the decadent movement, which focused on artifice and art, in detriment of the natural world.

The figure of Oscar Wilde is, nowadays, directly connected with Queer Studies. His dandy character remains in the contemporary imaginary as an expression of femininity, an exuberant manifestation of camp behaviour. His decadent aestheticism is regarded as a form of escapism, a shallow, effeminate and, particularly, passive form of art. Wilde was, in fact, arrested, in 1895, for gross indecency and convicted to two years of hard labour, an episode that marked his legacy in the twentieth century, turning him into a queer victim of Victorian repression. Ellen Crowell, in "Scarlet Carsons, Men in Masks: The Wildean Contexts of *V for Vendetta*", calls attention to how this Wildean image is one constructed in the twentieth-century, that in nothing reflects the impression popularized at the end of the nineteenth-century. In reality, during the *fin de siècle*, the Wildean decadent aestheticism was regarded as a threat to social order and Victorian values, considered radical, anarchic and a form of transgression.

Wilde's relevance to Queer Studies comes precisely from such a perspective, one that places Oscar Wilde as a reactionary, as one who fought against the pre-determined values and norms of the Victorian period, while staying true to his own identity. Following this train of thought, Crowell will place *V*, from *V for Vendetta* – both the graphic novel and the film – as a Wildean figure.

V for Vendetta was written in direct response to Thatcher's regime, a critique to its homophobic policies, xenophobic tendencies, severe conservatism, and alleged return to Victorian values. So it does not come as a surprise that Alan Moore appropriates the 'Wilde' figure, transforming and adapting him into an avenger, providing him with a similar – or even queer -- past of repression and abjection that would fuel his social activism. It is not the first time Moore uses Wildean figures in his own work. In *From Hell*, Oscar Wilde makes an appearance, playing himself at a party. In *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (1999-present), although Wilde is not portrayed, the main character of his only published novel – *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) – is one of the members of the League. So the connection between *V* and Wilde becomes clear, leading the reader to believe that such link was, in fact, created in a conscious and deliberate way.

As Crowell points out, the first parallel between Oscar Wilde and V for Vendetta comes from their appearance. V is always portrayed wearing a Guy Fawkes' mask; the reader is never allowed to see his face, and in the graphic novel, only one character has that privilege – Dr Delia Surridge. Other than that, he always wears a black cape, a hat and a wig, in public. His dandy look is complemented with refined language and the theatricality of his behaviour. V's image is easily reminiscent of Napoleon Sarony's 1882 portrait of Oscar Wilde, where he too is dressed in a dandy fashion with a hat shadowing half his face and a cape perpetuating some form of mysticism in his character. V's form of dressing seems, in effect, not only inspired by the gallant style, but by Oscar Wilde's "signature 'aesthetical' costume of his early career" (Crowell, 26).

These ideas, ultimately, take a new level of understanding when one remembers one of Wilde's famous aesthetic philosophies – used nowadays by the Anonymous movement, who also wear a replica of V's mask to hide their identities – "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give a man a mask, and he will tell you the truth" (Wilde, 2012: 167). V's mask is ultimately what allows him to be the avenger he becomes. The mask gives him a new identity full of symbolism. When he dies, his ideals remain through Evey, who, by taking the mask, assumes V's identity.

In *V for Vendetta*, the reader is confronted with an antihero who is equally well acquainted with both literature and music as with the use of explosives to aesthetically blow up governmental buildings, permanently deconstructing the stereotypical connection between art and passivity. Although the reason for V's imprisonment is never revealed, the reader is given some clues on the subject throughout the story, such queer evidences that might lead one to assume that V was arrested for his homosexuality. Delia Surridge, a former doctor in Larkhill, has kept detailed notes on what happened in the camp, especially to V, who by now, we know inhabited room V. These notes reveal to the reader how magnetic V's personality already was back then, but, even more, it shows the reader the activities V kept to entertain himself. These include gardening, to be more specific, growing "beautiful roses" (Moore and Lloyd, 81), and interior decoration. Although this kind of activity seems strange in such a place, the reader soon learns that these were allowed, to V, for their outward innocent character. Not only that, but, because they seem harmless, they are associated with femininity and, therefore, passivity. V is immediately seen in light of all the stereotypes perpetuated by contemporary society and, as such, queer. Once again, Moore is playing the reader and V's

captors. Through these hobbies, V has access to fertilizers and solvents, which, combined, can produce explosive reactions that he will use to free himself from Larkhill. Moore is then creating such stereotypes that associate queerness and aestheticism with passivity in order to deconstruct them and demonstrate how these can be destructive and deadly (Crowell, 28-29). Such an association between queer aestheticism and destruction, activism or even terrorism, thus connects V with the nineteenth-century understanding of Oscar Wilde – becoming at once a critique to both Thatcher's conservatism and authoritarianism, and the Victorian repression and homophobia.

Chapter 11 from *V for Vendetta* is dedicated to Valerie, a character that is only portrayed through a letter, found by Evey, while she is incarcerated in the illusory version of Larkhill, created by V, in a hole in her cell. Valerie is a lesbian actress who, due to her sexuality, was imprisoned in the concentration camp. She eventually died, due to the torture she was submitted to. The letter is written as an autobiographical account, in which she reports her life from the moment she realized she was homosexual to the years she spent with her lover, until she was arrested. As Crowell so clearly explains, 'this autobiographical letter, written . . . by an imprisoned lesbian named Valerie, records, preserves, and viscerally evokes a queer English past, one that cannot be eradicated by prison, torture or exile' (30). Evey reads this letter every day since she first found it, a light at the end of the tunnel, for this letter advocates resistance:

I shall die here, every inch of me shall perish ... except one. An inch. It's small and it's fragile and it's the only thing in the world that's worth having. We must never lose it, or sell it, or give it away. We must never let them take it from us (Moore and Lloyd, 159-160).

Valerie remains true to herself, right until the end. The act of writing this letter allows her to preserve her past and her identity. She does not denounce her lover, keeping her dignity intact, maintaining her integrity. Such a statement gives Evey the strength to endure the torture and humiliation she is subjected to in prison, she too, remaining faithful to herself, never denouncing V throughout the process, keeping her own morals and dignity unscathed. This letter is what, ultimately, allows Evey to free herself from all the constrictions and fears

imposed by society. She is not afraid of torture or death anymore. Whatever comes, she will remain true to her ideals, and even in death these can keep on living, like Valerie's had.

As mentioned before, this incarceration was an illusion created by V, in an attempt to free Evey from those same fears she ended up facing, but the letter was real. V had found it in his cell, during his stay at Larkhill, and it was this piece of paper that allowed him to become the character he embodies in *V for Vendetta*, a reactionary, a vigilante. The effect the letter had on Evey was very similar to the one it had on him. This autobiographical letter ultimately transformed, both Evey and V, from victims to avengers. Such a report works in *V for Vendetta* as a weapon, revealing how the queer martyr can inspire political awareness and, furthermore, reaction.

As Ellen Crowell so rightly reveals, Valerie's autobiographical letter might be understood as an allusion to Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* (1905). This work, also a letter, recounts the author's relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas, leading to his conviction for gross indecency. Later on in the text, Wilde engages in a description of his spiritual and emotional journey during his imprisonment, reporting the physical and emotional torture to which he was submitted in prison. Both Wilde and Valerie, arrested for their sexual orientation, wrote biographical letters that stand as a form of resistance; faced with tremendous torture, they both remained true to their own values and ideals, allowing for their survival through reports on their lives.

Focusing on the cinematographic adaptation of *V for Vendetta*, directed by James McTeigue, one realizes that the parallels made between the film and the figure of Oscar Wilde are much more emphasized and developed in the movie than in the graphic novel. In addition to the elements already analysed, others are added to the film to create a clearer allusion to the author, his aesthetic philosophies, and life.

First of all, V's first terrorist act, in the graphic novel, consists on the explosion of the Houses of Parliament. In the movie, on the other hand, V blows up the Old Bailey first, leaving the Houses of Parliament for later. Such an action becomes relevant because Oscar Wilde's trials, and consequent conviction, took place in the Old Bailey (Crowell, 38). Additionally the emphasis given to V as a collector and protector of art and culture further associates him with the author. Nonetheless, the most recognisable feature that turns the movie into an

expression of Neo-Victorianism, through its connection to Wilde, is seen in the character of Gordon.

In the graphic novel, Gordon is a secondary character, created to support and develop Evey's character. When Evey is on the run, Gordon gives her shelter, protecting her from the government. Their relationship soon develops into a sexual and emotional one, which will last until Gordon is killed by members of the political police. In the movie, on the other hand, Gordon assumes a crucial role. Like V, he too keeps a clandestine art gallery, with pieces stolen from the government and others of a homoerotic nature. He is a non-assumed homosexual and a famous television personality. Gordon hosts a TV show that satirizes England's society and culture in a way that, miraculously, allows him to avoid censure. Moreover, Gordon's part is undertaken by Stephen Fry, an openly homosexual personality and human rights advocate who plays a big role in queer activism. The film makes clear that Gordon is supposed to "stand as a clear double for the anarchic V, [who] becomes distinctly rather than vaguely Wildean through casting" (Crowell, 39).

Another interesting change in the adaptation refers to the designation of the roses V grows throughout the story, a form of honouring Valerie and a signature on his murders. These roses, in the graphic novel, are called 'Violet Carsons' (Moore and Lloyd, 63), but, in the movie, their name is changed to Scarlet Carsons. In Crowell's understanding, this change was created to emphasize the Wildean character of the movie (42). The name links the roses to Lord Queensberry, satirized by Wilde as the "screaming scarlet marquess" (Holland, xvii), and Edward Carson, two individuals that played a central role in Wilde's conviction.

The emphasis given to the roses, particularly in the movie, through Valerie, whose flat in London "always smelled of roses" (*V for Vendetta*, 01:15:52), seems an echo of the opening sentence in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "the studio was filled with the rich odour of roses" (Wilde, 2010: 5). But the parallels between *V for Vendetta*, both the movie and the graphic novel, and the Victorian period do not stop here. In a Shadow Gallery full of worldly cultural artefacts, other connections of the same nature are to be expected.

III – The Shadow Gallery



The Shadow Gallery, as portrayed in the movie *V for Vendetta*, is a part of V's subterranean home. The objects found in this gallery were stolen from the Ministry of Objectionable Materials, created when most forms of art were banned from public view and possession. V recaptured these objects, preserving them where he knew they would be safe. Artefacts, music, paintings and books decorate the ambience of his home, turning it into a space of worldly cultural preservation. The outlawing of cultural art, by the Norsefire regime, in England, stands, in this future, as demonstrative of the repression of past times and liberties, the suppression of its creativity and progressiveness, but furthermore a suppression of beauty, intellectual thinking and pleasure. V does not let himself be repressed; instead he consciously immerses himself in culture and deep rational thought.

As James Keller proposed, V's gallery might be interpreted as an echo of Yeats's Byzantium. This analysis follows an interpretation of the poem "Sailing to Byzantium" (1928), an understanding of the ancient city as the place "where the riches of the ancients as well as two and a half millennia of Western culture are enclosed, sustained, gilded, and canonized, [which] signifies the treasury of the West, but also the gateway to the East." (Keller, 166). The Shadow Gallery, in a much smaller scale, becomes not only a remembrance of the splendours of a world that has perished, but an in-between space, where the past is retained, glorified and studied in the present to inform and prepare for the future – as Byzantium. This gallery works as a reminder of the civilizations that have disappeared, vanished from the face

of the world, these relics being the only proof of their existence. Keller furthermore develops his reasoning, explaining that:

The implicit universality of the artefacts generates a variety of potential significations, suggesting the trans-historical contest between oppression and liberation, between democracy and tyranny, or between progression and regression, a carnival of political contestation in which the forces of liberty are pitted against the forces of restraint with one or the other gaining the upper hand only briefly and only within a limited region of influence (168).

Fascism has won, and with it restriction, suppression and tyranny, but V is aware of the other spectrum and of what is necessary for it to be achieved. In his understanding, anarchy is the only possible solution for the country and this can only be achieved through a period of chaos. The artefacts are in fact what keep him 'sane', what keep him focused on his goal, his vengeance and the liberation of the people. They work as a remembrance of what liberty is and how it can be achieved.

This form of collecting art can be reminiscent of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century British custom of accumulating artefacts as a reminder of imperial power, dominance and supremacy over the world.

V does not restrict himself to high culture; elements of popular culture are also portrayed in this gallery. Aside from all the paintings and sculptures, V keeps a jukebox, a television and the technology necessary to project movies in his home. Movie posters sit alongside famous paintings and his taste in movies goes from old to recent ones. His eclectic taste furthermore emphasises the Shadow Gallery as a place in which past and present, high culture and low culture, East and West, merge (Keller, 171).

Elements reminiscent of a Victorian past are provided in a discreet way, through small details that might go unnoticed by an inexperienced or inattentive eye. These elements range from butterfly shadowboxes on the walls, so popular during this period, when studying nature was a common hobby, to the blurred image of a painting that might be interpreted as a portrait of Prince Albert, wearing his red uniform with a blue stripe. Although these details

might seem irrelevant, the idea that coincidences do not exist is perpetuated throughout the movie, leading one to believe that every frame was thoroughly studied and analysed, decided upon its symbolic meaning.



A painting worth mentioning, for its relevance to this analysis, is *The Lady of Shalott*, painted by the Pre-Raphaelite John William Waterhouse in 1888. The painting was inspired by Tennyson's namesake poem (1832), and depicts the lady sailing down a river, after leaving the tower in which she lived in reclusion due to a curse. The Lady of Shalott, as depicted in the poem, fell in love with Sir Lancelot, a love that could not be consummated due to her impossibility to leave the tower. She was restricted from looking at the world outside directly, having to see it through the reflection of a mirror; she would then transpose this reality to a tapestry. After seeing Sir Lancelot through the mirror, the lady glanced at Camelot, unable to control herself, thus bringing the curse upon her. The painting depicts this lady, during her escape from the tower, sailing down to Camelot, at a time when she already knows her death is near.



Alfred Tennyson

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, composed by a notable group of prominent Victorian painters, was founded in 1848 by William Holman Hunt, D. G. Rosseti, John Everett Millais, William Michael Rosseti, James Collinson, Thomas Woolner and F. G Stephens, with the intent to reform the world of arts. Following Ruskin, the Brotherhood strived for forms of revolutionizing the art of their time by "testing and defying all conventions of art;" by emphasizing "precise, almost photographic representation of even humble objects, particularly those in immediate foreground ... thus violating conventional views of both proper style and subject;" by "encourag[ing] artists and writers to practice each other's art," and by "looking for new subjects" (Landow, n.p.). To do so, the painters would use literature as one of their inspirations, drawing on authors such as Keats, Tennyson and Shakespeare.

The placement of *The Lady of Shalott* in the adaptation of the Shadow Gallery in *V for Vendetta* becomes relevant for being a cultural production of the Victorian era. As such, it becomes one more element that seems to have been consciously set in this context as a pretext for its connection to the period.

Conclusion

In analysing *V for Vendetta*, one becomes aware of all the meta-historical elements embodied in the text. Both the movie and the graphic novel go to great lengths to combine past, present and future in plot, structure and aesthetics. Just as the Victorian period is reported, so are the Contemporary, Medieval and Classic Eras.

Although not a field of inquiry pursued in this article, it is still interesting to comment on how both Moore and McTeigue appropriate the aesthetics of the Orwellian regime in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), to create the Norsefire regime. Despite following distinct ideologies, these governments track similar type of strategies of repression and control of their

people. They are both set in a post-apocalyptic future, after an atomic world-war. People fear another attack and this fear is further fuelled by the government, as a form of maintaining control over the country. The regime becomes necessary to protect individuals from a possible external threat. People from both regimes are carefully monitored and governmental propaganda covers the walls on the streets. The news are forged and random acts of violence, taken by the political police, are common, enacted as a form of legitimizing the regime. Alan Moore and David Lloyd clearly drew on the aesthetics of this regime as inspiration for *Norsefire's*.

The construction of this novel undoubtedly reveals Moore's concern with the course England was taking during the eighties. Through a critique to Thatcher's regime and the Victorian political thought that, in their turn, are transposed to the *Norsefire* regime, Moore is alerting to the cyclical character of history and the dangers of a conservatism taken to such an extreme. In portraying this fictional fascist government, the novel is offering the means to construct and deconstruct such totalitarian regimes. Through this perspective, *Norsefire* might be seen as a Victorian reminiscence of the imperial power and V as a manifestation of a Wildean figure who fights and resists the Victorian ideal.

V for Vendetta, with its extensive use of Victorian tropes and structures similar to that of the sensation novel, although not a conventional Neo-Victorian work as *From Hell*, can still be identified as an expression of Neo-Victorianism.

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