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Date

On the Road to Dystopia

In the graphic novel, *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore, control of England has been seized by the Norsefire government. Norsefire has taken away people's rights including free speech, privacy, and freedom. The government's actions in *V for Vendetta* surprisingly resemble recent actions made by the new Trump administration where we see racism and sexism used to control the American people. Unless American citizens wake up and see the changes happening around them, we are doomed to end up like the citizens in Moore's dystopia. Now is the time for Americans to stand up for what is right and stop the destructive direction the country has taken because as V says in the story, "People shouldn't be afraid of their government. Governments should be afraid of their people" (43).

An effective divisive strategy used in the story by the Norsefire government to maintain control of the people of England is racism. Once Norsefire was in power they released racist propaganda like the television show "Storm Saxon" which depicts black people as rapists and criminals who can barely speak English. By the end of the show the white protagonist saves his girl by killing the "...black cannibal filth!" (108). Additionally, the often repeated Norsefire slogan "Strength through purity, purity through faith" (11), carries a not so subtle message about race that harkens back to Hitler's racist tactics. By racially dividing a population, people fear one another and a fractured people cannot and will not rise up. Today in the United States, our top government officials have recently come to power on platforms of open racism and xenophobia. There is no doubt that the spike in hate-crimes since Trump's election is a sign that

we are a people divided, and Trump has not only taken advantage of this but he has driven the wedge further as intolerant Americans feel they have won by voting the Ku-Klux Klan endorsed candidate into office. Now that he is in office, Trump continues to appoint people to high government positions who have a history of making racist comments and actions. None more prevalent than Jeff Sessions who used his power as a United States Attorney to intimidate black voters. Coretta Scott King even protested him becoming a judge by writing a letter describing his racist and intolerant ways, going as far as to say that allowing him to be a federal judge would, “irreparably damage the work of [her] husband [Martin Luther King]”. A racially divided nation is a disempowered citizenry and the truest death of democracy.

The Norsefire government further divides its people by strategically disempowering women by giving only men decision-making power. Women under the rule of Norsefire are not allowed leadership positions nor given any voice. When we first meet Evey, the main female protagonist, she is on the street at night trying to earn money as a prostitute because her day job doing factory work does not pay enough for her to survive, and as an orphan, Evey has no protection from a father. The women in the story are all forced to be dependent on men or risk becoming destitute and powerless without them. Rosemary, whose husband was high up in the Norsefire government, has to start dancing on stage for money when her husband dies. V captures this in his song “The Vicious Cabaret” as he sings, “. . . the widows who refuse to cry will be dressed in garter and bow-tie and be forced to kick their legs up high in this vicious cabaret” (90). Presently in the U.S., women’s freedoms are also at risk. Trump before taking office had repeatedly disparaged women publically by calling some fat or ugly, or by just referring to how he grabs them by their body parts; however, now that he is in office, he is working to legally disempower them. Most recently he has cut funding to Planned Parenthood

which provided access to safe abortions. With this misogynistic act, Trump is commandeering women's power even over their own bodies. A society that disempowers its women, effectively removes half of the people who could oppose them.

Dystopian novels are warnings to complacent democracies that if we are not actively vigilant in protecting our freedoms then we can easily and quickly lose them. Inaction and complacency can destroy democracies and make way for leaders who keep us divided in fear, but this does not have to be the case. When V breaks into the city's main TV station, he broadcasts a reminder of who is to blame: "We've had a string of embezzlers, frauds, liars and lunatics making a string of catastrophic decisions. This is plain fact. But who elected them? It was you! You who appointed these people! You who gave them the power to make your decisions for you!" (Moore 116-117). In the end of Moore's story, the citizens each put on identical masks to V and gather together in opposition to the government they will no longer allow to control them. It is time that we as America citizens also band together and look at ourselves to ask why we are allowing our country to be run by self-serving people who divide us by fear and hatred for their own benefit. Perhaps we have been stunned temporarily into inaction but as V states, "Noise is relative to the silence proceeding it. The more absolute the hush, the more shocking the thunderclap" (194).

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